

ABSTRACT

Title of Document: WHERE COLORS BLEND INTO SOUNDS

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Tzveta Kassabova creates an interactive environment for the audience, with dancers acting as guides through experiences of taste, touch and other sensations. The work plays with perceptions and shifting realities as it incorporates different approaches to scale and proximity. Corridors, entryways, and rooms are strung together, leading the audience into a maze of unexpected situations that are designed to evoke sensory memories and associations.

WHERE COLORS BLEND INTO SOUNDS

By

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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

MFA
2009

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Dedication

To my grandmother Maria Stoianova who spent the last thirty years of her life
without enjoying the gift of seeing.

Acknowledgements

THANK YOU TO...

Pepka for flying from Bulgaria with two days notice to take care of the little Kamen.

Paul for building the sets with me and for never getting scared of my ideas. **Gretchen** for all the painting, sewing and window blind weaving and for being next to me.

Anita for all the lovely drawings and all helpful ideas around the space and the installations. **Cynthia** for making hundreds of lines on the sound wave and installing the window view. **Sara and Patrik** for staying so connected to the project and for the worm donation. **Sue** for teaching me so many things through the years and for always helping me when I need it. **Lisa** for dyeing the anti-slip and the shirts for me and for always allowing me to bounce ideas. **Stephanie** for teaching us to take measurements. **Emily** for helping me out. **Jessica** for giving me so many helpers and being the best event coordinator. **Steve** for letting me borrow the rope. **Tim** for all the help with the props. **Harold** for the beautiful lights. **Bob and Jeff** for arranging for the stones to come on time and magically making the elevator work just for my show.

David, Michelle, Sharon, Betty, Sheila, and Nicole for helping with some of the thousand projects. **Laura** for making hundreds of yarn balls and for being an errand girl. **Ashley** for helping me with the string installation. **Emily** for bringing me the most delicious dinner and sewing scarves with me. **Kwame** for sewing with me. **Sera** for sewing so many buttons. **Kelly** for sewing so many scarves and for taking the smell installation in her hands. **Christine** for the pleasant hours sewing together.

Aleksei and Martin for always writing beautiful music for me. **Dan** for jumping with

such enthusiasm into the project. **Mim** for being a friend. **Angella** for always being there for me through the years spent in the Dance Department. **Katie** for painting troughs and brackets and bringing goodies to rehearsal. **Laura** for finding fabric and for questioning my ideas. **Ronit** for the lovely conversation. **Ann** for fire proofing heaps of leaves. **Ryan** for building the last pieces and making me defend my project all the time. **Brooke** for making the program and writing the description. Christine and Lillian for the special photo shoot. **Rob** for the ‘free’ postcard. **Alvin** for always finding me a space to work. **Susan** for letting me borrow her craft. **Stacey** for her voice and her thousand questions about the piece. **The musicians** for making it all come alive. **My lovely angels** for their dedication and enthusiasm. **My gorgeous dancers** for giving me the time to create this piece and for trusting me even when I was stumbling on the way. **Ed** for teaching me to dream. **Thank you all so much.**

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Chapter 1: Where Colors Blend into Sounds - Introduction

“What if we designed for all our senses? Suppose, for a moment, that sound, touch and odor were treated as the equals of sight, and that emotion was as important as cognition.” These are the opening sentences of the book *Sensory Design (1)* by Joy Monice Malnar and Frank Vodvarka and these were the questions I put in front of me when I started thinking about my dissertation.

Can I create an entirely sensory experience for the audience?

Can I create a performing space that will allow the audience to be immersed into the dance and to feel it with their body, rather than just observe it?

What dance will grow from this attention of our entire human awareness and sensory capacity?

I set myself to create an evening-length, cross-disciplinary collaboration that explores human senses and perception and that would address the subject matter through the choreography, costumes, design of the space and the art installations.

I sought to build an audience interactive performance focused on the individual experience of the work. As an integral part of the main concept, I wanted to exploit the architectural features of the Kogod Theatre at Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland from the very beginning of the process and to create a distinctively site-specific piece. I firmly believed that this venue offered a unique opportunity to integrate the audience into the piece by breaking apart from the conventional house setting. I wanted to situate the audience on all four sides, and so to focus the space in the middle and to open it up by placing movement and sound

behind the seating area. I planned to have live music, and to explore the idea of musicians changing positions throughout the performance, and to play with the direction of the sound. One of the key concepts of the work was that each audience member was guided through the performance by a dancer. I started calling them angels. That led me to design the piece for a very limited audience. I was excited about using the corridors surrounding the theater and crafting installations through which the audience would explore the subject in a very experimental way. Another essential part of the project was that no one would be able to see the entire performance. Much like in real life – there are many things that happen simultaneously and in order to do one of them, one needs to miss everything else. I wanted to sharpen the audience's awareness of what is seen and what is missed, and at times to create situations in which they are led out of a situation before they are ready to go. I also hoped to create a very personal work with a very distinct flavor. Somewhere in the process, a huge, nearly obsessive desire surfaced - I wanted to give a gift to each person in the audience. (This proved to be my leading impulse when working on the installations and the angels.)

Recently, I have become more interested in engaging the audience as a participant in my work. I had participated in several projects of Shua Group – representing movement based art of Joshua Bisset and collaborator Laura Quattrocchi. The artists create audience-interactive experiments, site-specific dances, and large-scale physical installations in public spaces and landscapes. I was inspired by the way each work encourages observation, interaction and transformation of the body and its

surroundings. As a preparation for my thesis work I did a collaborative pilot project that dealt with a very different subject matter, but exploited some similar problems. 'Where Colors Blend into Sounds' creates a situation for observing the actions and choices of the audience who is confronted with work that requires their direct participation.

It took me a year to finish the project. 'Where Colors Blend into Sounds' was performed in the Kogod Theater at Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, March 5-7, 2009. There were four performances and an open dress rehearsal, and about one hundred and thirty people saw it. The project turned out to be by far the biggest and most layered and dense work I had created. I was involved in all aspects of the project - clarifying the concept, designing the space and the installations, creating the costumes, choreographing the dance, coaching the angels and the actors, and most of all - putting it all together. There were so many people who made this project possible. I would gladly copy the thank you notes from the program of the show, but I would especially like to thank the forty performers involved.

In this paper I would like to focus on the propagation of ideas. I will try to retrace my steps and expose the process that led to the creation of the work. Even though different elements were created simultaneously, I will separate each building block and discuss it alone. It seems to me that I still don't have the distance necessary to write a conclusion, so instead I have made a wish list. I am sure that some of the questions and expressed interests can help me in further projects or may grow into

separate works, but that is for the future. As an attempt to evaluate the project I conducted a survey with the angels and I am offering the results as the last chapter.

This paper is divided into sections dealing with:

Space

Rope

Installations

Costumes

Sound

Angels

Dance

Wish list

Survey

For the writing of the text I would like to thank my mom Dora Kassabova for taking care of my little child, Lillian Cho for proof reading, Martin Gendelman for writing about his process, Peter Noonan for showing me amazing books, Ronit Eisenbach for the lovely discussion and Meriam Rosen for her enormous help.

Chapter 2: Space

I believe that dance is a visual art form. I have always been fascinated by the concept of space and am constantly trying to address it in both my choreography and design. To me the clarity and detail of the visual environment serve as an invitation for the audience, creating a situation that emphasizes the images and feelings that the dance evokes. I view every piece as a site-specific work, even if it is performed in a conventional theater space. I like to play with the lines, curves, colors and textures already existing in the space, and to transfer them into the movement itself, the costumes, set design and the general concept of the work.

From the very beginning of the project I knew I wanted to make it for the black box theater in Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. I had already created several works for the Dance Theater in the Center, some of them pushing its limits as a performing space. In *Alissa* the environment was ever changing by the constant positioning of the wings at different configurations and thus obtaining a space with multiple exits and entrances. In *grid* a stark black and white place was created by combining sharp lights, white costumes and wigs, exposed mirrors for background and grid of hanging extension cords. In *Sumiko* a poetic Japanese tale was told in three different ways, spatially separated by vertical panels that served as screens as well. The duet *to blue* used video projections on both the cyc and floor as the only source of light. It cut a trapezoid shape on the floor, limiting the dance space. The space was changed by accumulation of carpet dots flying down from the catwalks. My biggest project prior

to my thesis was *Unfolding* - a collaboration with the composer Martin Gendelman, who graduated with a D.M.A. degree from the University of Maryland School of Music. The piece explored different aspects of the act of opening, using various media - musical gestures, dance movement and the space itself. Spatially the piece evolved from one confined in a reduced, compact place (downstage of the main curtain), crowded with 80 music stands, to an open place with the emphasis on the vastness and depth of the theater. This was achieved by opening first the main curtain which doubles the space and towards the end of the work the traveler - once more doubling the space by exposing the mirrors.

For my thesis project I wanted to face the challenge of a new space, so I had to wait for an extra semester to obtain permission to use Kogod. Luckily, there was a nearly two week period in which the theater was available, so my load-in day was a week before the final dress rehearsal. I didn't realize how crucial to my project this extended period was, but looking back I know I couldn't have done it without that extra week.

With the assurance I could use the space, I would often sneak into the theater and imagine how I would change it. I loved how big and empty it looked. I liked the color of the walls and the horizontal tracks that run along the sides. I was fascinated with the labyrinth of corridors around it. I loved that there were so many possibilities. I gradually started to narrow down the spatial concepts I wanted to play with.

I wanted to experiment with audience on four sides. I was hoping to create a focused space in the middle, but also to open it up by placing music and dance behind the seating area. I needed to have an audience of at least 25 people, which translated in having seats for around 50 people (counting the angels). I wanted each couple – audience member and angel - to be a little separated. I wanted to be able to flip the front, so that the audience would face the walls at times and the dance would happen close to the walls and even up on them. (My unrealized dream was to have dancers suspended from the ceiling and partnering with the wall.) As part of his concept for the music, Martin Gendelman was planning to explore movement of the musicians in his score. He was to have three musicians and four percussion stations in the corners of the space. The last big idea was to have installations in the corridors.

One of the first decisions I made was to use the already existing platforms for the seating area. I made a model of the space, together with models of the eight types of platforms available, and started playing. I created versions of a circular space with several ails. All of a sudden, the theater seemed very small: if I wanted to have 25 feet of open space in the middle and to keep several feet along the walls for dancing, I couldn't seat 50 people in the seating area. Much later Anita Chan who just graduated from the Department of Architecture joined me and created several versions of her own. None of them could seat enough people. During the process I added a huge rope as a main stenography element in the main space. The rope was pulled up and through a system of pulleys and accumulated in one of the corners of the space. At that point we started working with just one opening towards the corner where the rope is piling

up. We had a very good estimate of the size of the middle circle and the space along the walls, which helped us in rehearsals. The seating remained a puzzle for me to the very end. The night we were putting down the platforms I walked into the theater without a detailed plan and just improvised. It was very scary.

A decision to have two levels in the seating area was forced by not having enough 8'' legs for the platforms. Some of the platforms were put directly down on the floor. The created steps fit very well with the jagged asymmetrical shape of the seating area. The steps did contribute to the already high level of trip hazard, but luckily the audience was careful enough.

A major visual element in the space turned out to be the lines of the marley. I have to admit that I never took a second to consider it. I was going to use the lines of the walls for a reference, which was going to look random, since in performance one doesn't see both the circle and the walls that often. Fortunately, Paul Jackson – the technical director of the project, started laying the floor when I wasn't in the theater and he established the diagonal as a main direction. It made so much sense – it connected the central circle with the corner where the rope was accumulating and it opened up the circle by visually showing the only exit out of it. In the section when all the angels are on the floor, I had to change the choreography of the grid and to reorient it with that newly recognized direction.

After we built the circle, it became obvious that the music stations couldn't be placed as planned in the corners. The space already looked somewhat small and crowded and by leaving the space around the walls I had hoped to open it up somewhat. The other consideration was the lighting. Harold Burgess – the lighting designer of the show, had placed two light instruments in each corner so that the performers could be in side lights when dancing close to the walls. Placing the musicians in the corners was going to strongly interfere with the lights. I put the musical stations still outside, but very close to the seating area. There were some disadvantages that came with that choice. The movement of the musicians, that both Martin and I were hoping to create, wasn't that noticeable with the new set up. Only two of these transitions were clean: one of the musicians - Anna Viviano's walking on the diagonal while playing the triangle with the three dancers around her, and the linear set up for the fourth movement in Martin's score. The last was a duet in music and duet in dance - all four performers were on one line: the musicians just outside, and the dancers just inside the seating area.

I had a great desire to change the space in the course of the performance. I played with this idea in several different ways.

- Shifting front by turning the chairs was used several times in the piece. It immediately changed the setting and the visual perspective.
- Once the rope started going up it had an ever changing visual influence both on the central circle and on the growing pile in the corner. It turned into a visual

manifestation of the time passed. It also created a new, enlarging, contrasting circle in the middle.

- I had close to a hundred bags of stones, piled in the edges on the outside of the platforms. One by one all the performers join in running around the circle, taking bags and spilling the stones on the floor. The stones were another way to change the space. I was very attracted to the huge sound that was produced and I always felt that out of it something new grew. This was the beginning of the live music, the whole periphery was covered with stones and from that moment on there was certain softening in the dancing.

- Other spatial changes were achieved by taking the shirts and collars that were initially part of the décor of the walls and putting them on as costume.

- Yet another way to influence the space was by cleaning completely the middle space, by introducing the long sleeves of the changed costumes and the lines they made on and off the floor.

- In the circular set up of the main space one was always aware of the audience. The pedestrians in the room were as important to the work as the dancers themselves. Because of the installations there was a constant flow of people in and out of the space. Even the empty chairs that were left behind had a presence – one would wonder where those people are and what they were experiencing at the moment.

- Another big visual change happened when all the angels were in the middle circle. That section influenced the space in two different ways – by the change of density of the space and by the change in color. This was the first time color was introduced into the middle circle. I wanted it to happen really gradually, over a long time, so that the

audience was barely aware of the change. We had to shorten the section, so the color did not in fact creep on stage as inconspicuously as I had hoped, but it always made me happy to see it there – so vibrant and alive. I also hoped to put a question in the audience’s heads ‘Was my angel wearing green the whole time and how could I miss it?’

One of the peculiarities of the project was that it spread out so much spatially. We literary used every inch of the theater and the surrounding spaces. I loved the idea of that expansion and the transparency of the space, but it also created a lot of problems. There wasn’t any back stage. Everything that was in the theater or in the corridors was completely opened to the audience. We had to integrate all the props as part of the set. It made it very hard to document the work by video and photography. But there was a remarkable thing that happened - the work swelled so much that the audience didn’t know where it end. Actions that didn’t have anything to do with the work were treated as part of the piece. In a way, the awareness that one has in performance was brought into the real world. There is no performance that can be more intricate, more rich and beautiful than the world; it is just that we often don’t have eyes for it.

Chapter 3: Rope

I do believe in chance. From being a dancer in other choreographers' works and from my own processes I know how seemingly random major decisions for the work are taken. Is it just chance? Yes, there is a lot of that, but at the same time one has to see it, to recognize it, and to make it work. During the creation process the work lives within my mind and heart all the time. It settles there, creating a filter through which the world is seen. In that state, I feel hungry for images, for ideas. I turn into this greedy monster ready to snatch the smallest crumbs from the world around me. I definitely found the rope by chance, but I was waiting for it. It happened relatively late in the process. In the middle of December 2008 I was performing as part of *500 Clowns The Elephant Deal* at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. Part of the set is a huge structure with pulleys and a long rope. The rope started as a coil on the floor making a circle 2-3 feet in diameter. One day I was just walking on that circle and I saw it – what if the whole inside circle is made out of coiled rope? The next very natural step for my imagination was that the rope would get uncoiled. At first I was thinking that it would happen from the periphery to the center and that the rope would just disappear (probably be pulled up to the catwalks). I started examining how hard it is to dance on a rope. I obtained 50 feet of rope, coiled it, and was shocked by the tiny little circle I had at my feet. After some calculations the reality hit – in order to cover my middle circle I needed *a mile* of rope. No way! I figured it was better to forget the idea this very second! Well, I did not forget the idea, and the rope led me through mountains of humanly impossible problems and to some of the most

beautiful and serene images in the piece. It turned into a remarkable ever-changing visual image, into a timekeeper, into a partner, and into a door to let the audience back into the piece.

The rope was the first thing that the people entering the space saw – a huge coil of off-white rope, the loose end rising directly up from the center and pouring down in one of the corners of the space, suggesting the beginning of a messy pile. It immediately defined the circle as a building element for the whole space. The vertical of the rope in the middle, the coil, the thin ring of black floor, the raised seating, the chairs, the brown space to the walls, the walls of the theater, and even the circle of the installations that they didn't yet know about – these are all concentric circles. The rope also makes one aware of time. One feels the hours spent arranging it inch by inch on the floor and the sense of past – there is a story coiled there that is yet to be told. It reminds one of the rings on a mighty tree and the years it took to grow. And there is a very strong sense for the future – one just knows that it would be pulled up, up, up endlessly and monotonously, until it was gone. And the pile in the corner would keep growing. And the blackness in the middle would expand. And it would all transform from a carpet into a mountain, from care into disregard, from order into chaos. Who does not want to see into the future at times and just to yield and calmly watch it come?

Another very welcome quality the rope intrinsically has is texture. It is made of tiny strings, it is slightly rough, it is twisted – what did it do to the hands that laid it down? What will happen to the feet that will walk on it? The flat surface is not even. There

are ridges and grooves leading from the periphery to the center like an oversized record. What is the music recorded there?

One of my major interests in the rope was that it was visually showing the time passed. It was like a huge sand clock – one side slowly disappearing in order for the other to grow. It was elucidating the change and preparing us for the end. Even before it started going up one was aware of the time by the rope getting messier and messier for people dancing on it. I felt that it offered the returning audience a way in. It confirmed that time had passed and things had changed, and it also offered comfort from the initial lack of recognition of the situation and became the bridge for the audience to join back in.

I have to admit that there were so many difficulties with the rope, to the point that two days before the performance I nearly cut it out all together. At that point we had still never practiced whole sections of the dance with rope and I knew the dance had to alter to accommodate it. The hugeness of it made it so difficult to rehearse. If everything went well, it took three hours to coil it on the floor, but most often it was twisted and tangled so much that we needed to abandon it and rehearse without it. It took a long time to figure the right pulley system that would lead it into the corner, and the ways to lay it down without creating the twist. The dancers did an amazing job of figuring it all out in the very last moment. They had to learn to dance on it, to pull it up, to pay attention to the moving rope and to partner with it.

I am very pleased the rope stayed with us.

Chapter 4: Installations

The installations in my thesis started as one of those decorative ideas that kept growing and growing until finally overtaking the whole work. Originally, I envisioned a section, during which the audience would be taken through the corridors around the theater and exposed to unusual sensations. The number of audience members and the ever-growing number of situations I wanted to share with them made the installations expand into an activity, ongoing through the whole piece. The installations influenced the structure of the work, the overall movement and the visual picture in the main stage.

The installations were the most labor-consuming part of the project. I started preparing for them months in advance. It required coming up with the ideas, obtaining permission to realize it, getting the materials, building props, installing them into the theater, and maintaining them during the show run. It took weeks in the fall to hand pick all the leaves, months to work on the weavable for the white room, and several days of putting the pins on the wall, just to mention few examples. A lot of the installations experimented with the idea of many of the same – 6,000 pins, 200 pounds of apples, 30 bags of leaves, 10 pounds of rice, a lot of plastic balls, packing popcorns, stones, flowers, jars, thousands of strips from blinds. The scale was much bigger than what I was usually accustomed to, and at times I felt completely overwhelmed by the huge amount of work. But there were also unexpected rewards. I

got a very strong sense of the beauty of having done something with my own hands, obtaining knowledge and appreciation and developing connection with the objects.

Most of the activities were very repetitive and meditative, so being immersed in them for hours every day put me in a surreal place that got transferred into the thesis work itself. There was something really strange in gluing stones on a board for hours, during one of the busiest days of my life.

The installations were also the part of the piece that I got the biggest amount of help with. During the winter break I started working with Anita Chan who had just graduated from the Department of Architecture. It was wonderful to have a person to bounce ideas with, to talk about the work, and to share the responsibility to some extent. Anita also made beautiful drawings of the ideas for the different spaces, and worked on the seating area. When we got to the theater I received help from the students working for 'Events' and most of the angels. I have to mention the incredible help I got from Gretchen Dunn – from painting the sets to sewing scarves, from putting pins in place to weaving blind strips. She was priceless support for me during those intense days. Paul Jackson was another person who contributed to the project significantly and without whom I couldn't have prepared in time and within the limitations of my budget. Paul built the set, helped me with the technical side of the project and figured out the strategies about the rope. Paul also documented the performances and even participated in one of the installations. It was again a pleasure working with him.

Once again the big challenge with the installations was that they existed only for the performance week. I planned them, prepared the props and furniture that went into them, talked about them with the performers, but we physically had them for a very limited time.

Another big issue was that technically the space occupied by the installations was not part of the theater. While I could do anything that I could think of in the main space, in the surrounding corridors there were a lot of regulations that limited my options. There are fire codes, regulations for the use of the facilities, and sharing the public space with other productions. The leaves and the fabric used needed to be fireproofed, an opening of three feet needed to be maintained in all of the corridors, the floors needed to be leveled, no props could be left unattended, the handles and the bars of the doors needed to be visible, the exits needed to be marked, there needed to be enough light, only push pins could go into the walls, and only blue painters' tape could go on to doors. I have a much better understanding and appreciation of the rules now, but before I was aware of them I tried to break every single one of them.

With the amount of installations I settled on, even when severely limiting the time spent in each one, it took around 20 minutes to go through all of them. I decided that it would be too strange to miss that much time at once from the action happening in the main space, so I broke them into three loops. The loops consisted of different number of spaces to visit. Each loop was going counter clockwise, and was designed

so that the visitors never retrace their steps. In this way the audience was taken away and brought back three times during the performance, while walking a huge circle on the periphery.

In the installations I constantly played with the element of surprise and the idea of giving a gift. I was hoping to create an enjoyable experience, to make people smile, and to give them a little better understanding of their body as a whole.

1. The pins corridor – It occupies one of the long and narrow corridors. 6,000 yellow head pins were put in a grid on the side closer to the theater. The grid has consistent steps vertically, but horizontally the spacing changes, creating a density wave. There are three dancers in green costumes doing a unison floor phrase that creates some audible sound from brushing body parts on the carpeted surfaces. There are multicolored balls of yarn at the entrance. The audience is asked what color they relate to sound and are encouraged to pick up a yarn and string it on the grid. An inspiration for this corridor was the work of the German sculptor, op artist and installation artist Gunther Uecker. At the beginning of the 1960s he began hammering nails into pieces of furniture, musical instruments and household objects, and then he began combining nails with the theme of light, creating his series of light nails and kinetic nails and other works. I had experimented with stringing a thread in collaboration with the participants in the *Placing Space: Architecture, Action, Dimension*, a collaborative summer course at the University of Maryland offered to

undergraduate and graduate students of spatial design and movement. Another interest of mine was relating color to certain senses. I had conducted small surveys with those questions and was looking for a way to include them in the performance.

2. The leaves room – one steps pass a curtain and finds him/herself in a tiny room with leaves up to the knees. There are shelves on two adjacent sides with rows and rows of apples. The audience is encouraged to take an apple. I wanted to create a surprise by completely changing the season: the smell of the leaves and the apples, the crunchy sound the leaves make underneath one's shoes, the sensation of leaves touching one's legs, and of course the visual picture. All the leaves were hand picked months ahead, carefully stored and fire proofed. An inspiration for this room was the smell from my childhood that I still remember - the quinces that we used to put up on the wardrobes to ripen. Another image that probably subconsciously influenced me, but came into my awareness well after the performance was Andy Goldsworthy's *Snowballs in Summer* that happened on June 21, 2000. Thirteen giant snowballs were placed on the streets of London, left to melt in the heat of the longest day. As they disappeared they left behind the materials that the artist packed into the snow sculptures: sheep's wool, crow feathers, chestnut seeds, ash seeds, Scots pine cones, elderberries, barley, metal, barbed wire, branches, chalk, pebbles, and highland cow hair.

3. blind exploration – the audience is led with closed eyes and is encouraged to walk on different surfaces and to touch different things. This was probably the first

installation that came to my mind. It was directly related to touch as a way to explore the surrounding environment. This installation also requires the audience to allow being led and establishes a level of trust that is usually not seen in a performance. The audience is put into a vulnerable position, but at the same time they are given a lot of care and warmth. I found two quotes that are very relevant when talking about this installation:

“... haptic perception reminds us that the whole self may grasp reality without seeing, hearing or thinking”

Eugene V. Walter, *Placeways* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 135

“...Tactile experiences teach us about the differences between soft and hard, coarse and fine, wet and dry. These experiences form a complex net of references, which are the basis for our reactions when we move in relationship to object in space.”

Thomas Thiis-Evensen, Archetypes in Architecture (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, 1987), 25

I also wanted to create an uneven floor to walk on. It was not possible to do it on a large scale, but I managed to play with the idea on small platforms with different surfaces such as stones, grass, soft mattress...

I found a confirmation of the idea in *Sensory Design*.

... variation in the level, position, and surface of the path, all of which compel us to pay attention as we walk it. Curiously, this concern may result in an increased biological sensitivity to the qualities of the path generally. Herman Schone notes that utricles (statoliths, or stabilizing organs in the brain) in a normal upright head position tilt backwards in approximately 30 degrees off horizontal, thereby reducing effectiveness. Thus a man walking on an uneven surface tips his head forward about 30 degrees, so that he can take in the ground ahead of him at a glance. This tilt brings the utricles into their most sensitive position. This suggests that uneven pathways heighten our awareness of surfaces by obliging us to bring our sensory organs into the best alignment to perceive them.(104)

4. flowers – the audience’s eye opened and the first thing one saw was a wall covered with artificial flowers. I wanted to play with the element of surprise. I felt the actual realization of this installation departed the most from the original idea and was probably the most unsuccessful one. In the original I was hoping to change the viewpoint – for a long time I knew I wanted them to look up, but I didn’t know what they would find there. I wanted it to be something that would make most everyone smile. After the idea of the flowers came, I wanted to create the sensation that the place is flipped upside down – there was going to be a colorful, fresh meadow of flowers – just that they are on the ceiling. The audience was going to be asked to climb up a ladder and pick up a flower - giving a normal reaction to an abnormal situation. There were several images that were leading me: a picture of a light I took directly above me, a picture of women looking up, and several of the art works of Gregory Crewdson. In his photographs, he creates a very odd situation in a detailed realistic space. My reaction is always asking myself, “What happened there?”. In the case with my installation I had to give up my desire of having real flowers, because of financial expenses and time limitations. Several boxes of artificial flowers were

tightly woven on a mesh with size 6'X4'. I was planning to have two of them and cover completely the ceiling, but there were too many details that needed to be take care of. The corridor was a fire exit, so I couldn't cover the fire sign, if I covered the light on the ceiling, another lighting option should had been explored, I couldn't cover the ceiling with one piece only, so there was a slack at the place the two pieces joined. In the middle of working on it the panel with the flowers was stretched on one of the walls. It looked like a huge carpet of flowers I decided to leave them like that.

5. Party scene – this is another installation that depended on the surprise of suddenly being put in the spotlight and the confusion that is created around that. It was meant to be strange, slightly uncomfortable, but very welcoming. It also opened up a way to offer refreshments and involve more sensory systems into the experience. Initially I was imagining the space covered with people. I couldn't organize finding so many volunteers, but luckily some of the students from Paul Jackson's production class helped with this scene. For most of the performances there were four people wildly welcoming the arriving pair and singing happy birthday to the audience member. The place was decorated with balloons; there were a lot of party hats, whistles, paper cups and plates. The treats were chips, candies and pink lemonade. The scene depended a lot on volunteers' ability to create excitement and celebration. A wonderful inspiration was John Cassavetes' film, "A Woman Under the Influence," especially the scene with the surprise party towards the end. I wish I had found more volunteers for the performances.

6. White room – it is a very small room, completely padded with white textured surfaces. The audience was given a glass with water and a flashlight and was asked to play with the reflections of the water surface on the walls and ceiling. There were two major inspirations for this room. The first one is a light installation by Olafur Eliason that I saw at the Hirshhorn a few years ago. A suspended transparent ring with reflective edges is rotating randomly and casting reflection and refraction on the surrounding walls. The second one is a picture taken by Miranda Litchenstein of a man lying in an anechoic chamber, found at Orfield Laboratories Inc., certified to be the quietest place on earth. I got very interested in the sound qualities of a space and how these qualities change as one moves through different spaces. In a world where something is always happening, people are always moving, and equipment is always buzzing, most people don't know what silence really is. I was very interested in silence too. I wish the audience was left to explore the room alone and was free to spend more time there. The material I used for the walls and the ceiling was strips of blinds woven together. This was a left over idea from a sculpture that I made in an art class, two years ago.

7. Good morning – this is another scene that is meant to produce a slight confusion. Two actors pretend that they are having breakfast in their house and their guests (the audience member and the angel) have just woken up and joined them. The actors offer everybody tea, coffee, and toast, while trying to engage the newcomers into a trivial morning conversation. I took the idea of the situation from the rabbit and the mad hatter's ongoing tea party in *Alice in Wonderland*. I wanted to create a situation

that screams breakfast – it smells like breakfast, it tastes like breakfast, it sounds like breakfast and yet it is not.

8. Smell installation – there were 25 jars hanging down the stairs with different smells in them. The audience was invited to open and smell a few of them. The inspiration came from a picture I had taken of Moss’s design store window in New York City. Even though I had the idea for a long time, the realization was a last moment solution that I completely handed over to my friend and performer in the project Kelly Bond.

9. String field – strings hanging from the ceiling in a green unified color light field. I wanted to experiment with three-dimensional space that completely surrounds the viewer. I was interested in the material brushing the skin and the movement of the strings caused by the movement of the body. I played with single strings for a while, but they were getting tangled pretty easily. I had been collecting the strings of the destroyed blinds and at some point it became clear that I needed to use them. There was something very attractive to me in the efficient use of material and not throwing anything away. And the strings did work. There was something quite simple and elegant about them. The idea of the color field came while rehearsing in Studio 2 at the Dance Department. The lights were off and when the heaters turned on and colored everything a saturated red. I liked how much the room was changed.

10. Video and light installation – this is my second collaboration with video and light artist Dan Ribaud. A graduate of the UM theatre department, Dan has been designing lighting and video since the turn of the century. The installation he created was a direct continuation of his work from our first project *Locus*. He is interested in creating a loop of live feedback and its projection. Visually it realizes as trailing motion. For this piece he invited the audience to play with a flashlight. The movement of the light was picked up from the camera and projected back with a slight delay.

11. Pottery lady - I invited potter Susan Greenleaf to be part of the performance and to share her craft with the audience. To me pottery is very closely connected with our experience of touch. Watching her work always makes me feel the smoothness and dampness of the clay and always creates a desire to grab a piece and squish, and mold, and press and form. It always makes me think of the beauty of the human hands and to appreciate more what they can do.

12. Elevator dance – to me this was a silly play with one’s expectations. I felt that the set up, “If you press 1 I will do an elevator dance for you,” was much more important than what the angel actually does. Some of the angels kept their dances improvised, but some preferred to set the movement. It was just a few seconds so we talked about using just one strong idea. I wish I had time to really work on these dances.

13. Measuring down the big hallway – a pedestrian-looking performer approaches the audience member and asks them to hold the edge of a tape measurer. He runs down the corridor measuring its length. He shouts out the distance and relates it to the length of the rope in the main space. This action is meant to make the audience aware of distance. I was also interested in the vibrations of the tape in the audience's hands and of playing with the idea of invisible performance.

14. Wind lady – the audience member is invited into a very small room. One is left in the middle and asked to close his/her eyes. Stacey Mastrian, a composer and singer, circles around them producing little noises on the walls and gently whispering. The idea of this installation was to play with sound that surrounds the audience member. A few years ago I took David Kriebs' sound design class at the Department of Theater at University of Maryland. I got very interested in travelling sound. Another inspiration was a sound installation I saw at the MOMA by Janet Cardiff. There were 40 speakers on stands around the room, each one had its own voice, and together they joined into a beautiful choir surrounding the observer. It took me a while to step away from the idea of electronic sound, but after working with Stacey Martin on "Locus," I was convinced that her voice would give me more possibilities, and above all, human interaction. We worked together on finding the most relevant vocal material. Initially I had imagined it all happening in a completely dark room. We could not realize it since the corridor was a fire exit. After the first try with the audience many questions arose, but they were magically solved by asking the person to close their eyes.

During the process of creation the evolution of the audiences' experience over time became more and more important to me, so where they just came from and where they were going to became at least as important as what they were experiencing in each space. For example, I was really designing the contrast between the atmosphere in the party scene and the removed, quiet feel of the white room, or in another instance, nearly creating the surprise of seeing the flower wall after being led with closed eyes for a while.

Most of the installations suffered from the short amount of time the audience got to spend there. Nearly from the very beginning I knew that probably there would be places where the audience would want to stay longer than the prescribed time. With the amount of the installations it got brutal – we had between a minute and a half to two minutes per space. At first I was trying to justify it by using the concept of being taken away before one is ready to leave and also the idea of missing out. But once the installations turned into a reality, it became clear that some of the places that were created needed much more time to reveal – a conspicuous example was the 'white room'. Of course, there are elements that one perceives immediately - the color, the different acoustic qualities, the reflections-but in order to feel the essence of the place, one needed to be alone in there for few more minutes.

Chapter 5: Costumes

Although I am very happy with the final result, the costumes for this piece didn't come easily to me. I spent months tossing from one idea to the next, from one mock up to another, from even making the fabric for the garments myself to buying readymade clothes. I believe the first thing I settled on was the material I was going to use. Muslin is fabric that is traditionally used for creating the mock up of a garment. After the mock up is created traditionally, it is fitted to the person and then it is changed according to the notes taken during the fitting. I wanted my costumes to have the unfinished look this material suggests. I was hoping that if I made the costumes out of muslin, they would hold that potential for change.

I wanted to create costumes that have simple, but unusual shape and that have potential to change during the piece. I started with a vague idea to recreate the shape of the five figures in Juan Munoz's work *The last conversation piece*. I had also taken a picture from a magazine of a woman in a dress resembling the rounded at the lower part shape of the Munoz's figures pretty closely. Unfortunately the material was very different from what I had decided to use and the garment wasn't suitable for full body dancing. At that time I was still thinking that in the last section the dancers might be moving nearly in slow motion and wearing very sculptural costumes, so I kept the idea with me.

A great inspiration for me was a book on radical ideas in fashion called *Breaking the Mode*. A piece by the designer Rei Kawakubo confirmed my instinct on the fabric to be used. The short abstract about her work clarified my ideas and convinced me that precisely muslin was the right material for my work. I ended up completely recreating a piece by the designers Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana. It is a shirt with a lot of buttons and button-holes, giving endless possibilities for the person who wears it. It can change its form and shape, to reveal or conceal the body. In my piece we created a trio around the idea. What was of interest to me was the detail of the hands and fingers buttoning the buttons. I also liked that the movement was occurring because of a task and that as a result the look of the dancers was changing

The innovative designer Chaloyan Hussein was also represented in *Breaking the Mode*. The piece that was shown is a sport dress with a lot of zippers and ties that allow the silhouette of the garment to transform completely.

”The dress can be opened to reveal or tighten to cover the layers of cloth beneath, or to expose more or less the body. The identity of the dress, like that of the wearer, is mutable.”

Breaking the Mode

I loved the idea of it, even though it was too tailored for the piece I was working on. I remember considering for a brief moment the possibility of something like that being the costume for the ‘angels’. I am only happy I didn’t go down that road – it would have required an enormous amount of work. It still confirmed my desire to create a costume that could change.

While researching Hussein's amazing work I recalled a piece I had seen years ago and had admired since. It is from Hussein's award winning collection *Afterwards*, from his 2000 show at the London Fashion Week. It explores the notion of wearable, portable architecture and in it furniture was literally transformed into garments.

The idea of efficiency with the materials, changing the use of objects and not leaving anything behind was most directly developed with the anti-slip. There was a very practical reason for the anti-slip - when we first started dancing on the coil of rope it wouldn't stay flat. We needed less slippery surface than the marly we used, so that the rope can grip better to it and stay in place. The anti-slip seemed an obvious solution. I ordered it and Lisa Burgess, a costume designer at the University of Maryland, dyed it black for me because I needed contrast with the rope. I had four rectangular pieces and needed to create a 15' circle. I designed a way to connect the pieces using the 'golden ratio' creating a Fibonacci spiral. Initially I was planning to have the connecting lines in a contrast color, so that the design can be easily seen.

While playing with the material I got interested in the color texture and variation created after dyeing and juxtaposing the different pieces together. Eventually I used black gaffers tape to connect the pieces. One could still see the connecting line, but the attention was brought not so much to the one dimensional contours of the design, but instead to the two dimensional surfaces.

The designed underlying circle was all very practical, but at the same time had much deeper roots.

[The Golden Ratio is a universal law] in which is contained the ground-principle of all formative striving for beauty and completeness in the realms of both nature and art, and which permeates, as a paramount spiritual ideal, all structures, forms

and proportions, whether cosmic or individual, organic or inorganic, acoustic or optical; which finds its fullest realization, however, in the human form.

Zeising, Adolf, *Neue Lehre van den Proportionen des meschlichen Körpers*, Leipzig, 1854, preface.

Some of the greatest mathematical minds of all ages, from Pythagoras and Euclid in ancient Greece, through the medieval Italian mathematician Leonardo of Pisa aka "Fibonacci" and the Renaissance astronomer Johannes Kepler, to present-day scientific figures such as Oxford physicist Roger Penrose, have spent endless hours over this simple ratio and its properties. But the fascination with the Golden Ratio is not confined just to mathematicians. Biologists, artists, musicians, historians, architects, psychologists, and even mystics have pondered and debated the basis of its ubiquity and appeal. In fact, it is probably fair to say that the Golden Ratio has inspired thinkers of all disciplines like no other number in the history of mathematics.

Mario Livio, The Golden Ratio: The Story of Phi, The World's Most Astonishing Number

There was also the idea of revealing something as the rope was being lifted up. I had solved a problem, but had created another. The new one was how to get rid of the 15 feet circle of ant-slip. The new solution was to turn it into a huge skirt. In the piece this became Ashley's solo.

Another very influential idea for my costumes was a design by Jean Paul Gautier. I found it in the same book *Breaking the Mode* and there the piece was described as 'kinetic sculpture', since the silhouette of the dress changes with every movement of the wearer. The idea is very simple and very non-traditional - the lining of the dress is twisted and pulls on the top layer. Even though the look of my versions was very

different from the original (I was using much heavier fabric), there was something very promising in my result. I loved the wrinkles that were created. I loved the twist sensation that was transferred to the body of the dancer. The only problem was the shape of it. I cut many, many dresses. I played with the length and width of the lining compared to the top layer. I played with the amount of twist by adjusting the length of the dress and the number of rotations of the inside dress. Nothing quite worked, so I abandoned the idea for two months and headed in a completely different direction.

Just a few months before I had created the costumes for a site-specific collaboration piece 'Locus'. The six performers wore different pieces that had all been constructed with the same method - I applied white latex paint over black costumes. Each material absorbed the paint very differently, but in general the details and the textures tended to pop out. After developing the technique it became so easy - I was at that beautiful place where there are no mistakes and everything works. I was striving to find a place like that for my new piece. I believed that if I managed to find a material that was interesting enough and specific enough and used it to create the costumes, then that might happen.

Breaking the Mode helped me again - this time it was a sample fabric by Yoshima Hishinuma. The fabric seemed wrinkled, pressed, printed on and then the wrinkles were opened up. I decided to experiment with making wrinkled fabric by pressing muslin with wrinkles and sewing along the fabric to stabilize them.

Even though it was time-consuming, I immediately liked the created material and for some time believed that I had found the solution for the costumes. I was going to make dresses, skirts and tops out of that fabric and all my dancers were going to wear different garments.

Another idea that started as part of the costumes and grew into a separate section of the dance was the long sleeves. The idea came from Romeo Gigli's jacket with sleeves resembling the shape of 1560's women's dress. The short puffed sleeve with a narrow under-sleeve was achieved by gathering what seems twice as long as normal sleeve up the arm. I exaggerated the idea - my sleeves were nearly thirty feet long. I liked the way the sleeves looked when gathered up - it was the idea of wrinkles again. It was also making the arms much bigger and the dancers had to change the way they moved because of that. I loved the act of gathering the sleeves up - it seemed very relevant that someone other than the wearer had to do the action. It was also something so tactile, that anybody could relate to. And finally, the lines of the sleeves created intriguing patterns on the floor. Soon the idea came about to lift them off the floor and to use them as ribbons crossing and uncrossing each other resembling an old Midsummer celebration tradition.

The maypole is a tall wooden pole erected to celebrate May Day or Midsummer. It may be decorated with several long colored ribbons suspended from the top, festooned with flowers, draped in greenery, hung with large circular wreaths, or adorned with other symbols or decorations, depending on local and regional variances. The English variation, of the originally German tradition, includes dances

around the pole weaving the ribbons in and out to create striking patterns probably derived from the picturesque, Italianate dances performed in mid-19th century theatricals.

Another very important piece of research came to me just by chance. I was talking about the costume ideas for the piece with a theater graduate student and she took out of her bag a magazine featuring Ma Ke's collection *Useless*. It wouldn't be exaggeration to say that those were some of the most beautiful images I had ever seen. I could stare at them for hours, being enchanted by the balance of organic and yet different shapes, and the abundance of intriguing details. They were theatrical, yet very personal, allowing the imagination to soar in many directions. I was truly happy to see the muslin again and the unfinished edges. I was in love with the collars made out of ruffles and I had to have them.

The final decision about the costumes was forced after a photoshoot. I improvised with the wrinkled fabric, but soon it became obvious that the twisted dress was the most developed option I had. And the most important thing was that I liked it.

I couldn't understand why I had neglected it for months. I got my answer during our next rehearsal - no matter how hard we tried, we couldn't recreate the shape we had at the photoshoot. The shape depended to a large extent on exactly how the dress was put on. That day I stayed after rehearsal trying every single mock up I had. In my frustration I ripped the neck line of one of the dresses. The first thing that got me was the sound of the rip.

It was surprisingly loud. There was a surprise in it and also anticipation. A second later I realized that the tear had literally opened many more options. It gave opportunity for the dress to be twisted on the body, and by doing so to achieve much better shape. It is an action that can happen on stage - the audience can watch the costume being made out of a very ordinary nightgown shape, to recognize the change and to tacitly relate to the twist. I finally had it. With their texture the dresses also reminded me of the rope. I just had to put something over the initial straight dress, because I didn't like the look of it. The jackets with added wrinkled fabric were designed for that.

Now that I had gone through months of work on the costumes, having tried hundreds of ideas and having taken inspiration from so many different sources, I found it fascinating how close to the initial image my final costumes were. I had created Juan Munoz's figures from *The Final Conversation Piece*. The idea of the rounded shape, the wrinkles of the bodice, but most of all the feeling of it got transferred on stage through the costumes.

Chapter 6: Sound

Martin Gendelman was the first artist I approached after I started working on my thesis project. He wanted to work with me on a percussion trio and we decided to include that into my piece. We both had developed interest in spatially moving the performers and changing the configuration of the musical stations throughout the piece. He wanted to put the movement into the score somehow. We came up with the idea of having four percussion stations and three musicians, and to place the stations in the corners of the space. In this way movement was going to occur naturally. We wanted to play with different spatial configurations like line or triangle, and with sound moving through space. In Martin's words:

The concept that originated the percussion trio, which offers a sound frame to good portion of the piece, has a musical/sonic side as well as an interactive one. The former can be observed as the piece goes through some gradual but evident changes of timbre - from metal, to wood, to skins or drums and through the distinctive moods of each of the seven parts. The latter affects several levels of the piece, from the number of performers that play at the same time, to their position in the hall, to some very specific musical devices that allow for a stronger connection between movement and sound - such as certain pauses, rhythmic phrases, and layers.

The general form of the piece was thought out as a continuum, with internal sections shaped by proportional values that carry the tension, from a soft but rather dissonant beginning, to a very energetic final part. Nevertheless, this continuum is interrupted in between some of the parts - notably between the sixth and seventh sections - in order to give space for other actions to happen. The interruption is obvious, but because the drama continues with other music sources and dance movements - the tension is not lost, but rather upheld until the trio returns for the final section.

An important ethical question arose in the process. Martin wrote his music in seven sections. We started rehearsing with music relatively late in the process, so we had already created a lot of material. There were several movement sections that couldn't be matched with any of the sections in the music. I made a decision to keep the movement material and to bring a prerecorded sound of a water fountain. The problem was that from my choreographer's point of view this section belonged between the 6th and 7th movement in the music. On the other hand Martin had written the score considering certain proportions in the overall piece, so the idea of splitting his music and inserting a completely different section was at least foreign to him. I didn't want to be disrespectful, but I was the one who had to take care of the work as a whole. I am glad we reached agreement – at the end Martin said that it happens all the time if one writes music for a movie – the director can decide to use only 15 seconds of it.

This is my second project using live music but I am still surprised at how differently musicians and dancers work. I am always reminded that there are so many things that I take for granted in rehearsals. So in order for the rehearsals to go smoothly, I needed to verbally explain to the musicians what the expectations were, the anticipated problems, and I also to clearly state their role in the overall work. I had to remind myself that they are not disrespectful; rather the rules in their world are much different. I feel they started enjoying the rehearsals much better after I explained the project in full. It goes the other way too. There are needs that musicians have that I am completely unaware of. It was a complete surprise for me that when the lights go

off the music stops. I didn't know that musicians need to take visual cues from each other, and that they cannot play if there is a dancer in their line of vision.

In general, I never set my dances to music. I rather find cues in both the dance and the music and try to match those, leaving the timing between them more open. In working with live music there is a big question with communication. It becomes clear how different are the languages the dancers and the musicians are speaking. We really had to put some effort in trying to understand each other. It always takes time to agree on and to be able to recognize the cues in the other media, and to learn to work with each other.

Martin had time to write only 20 minutes of music, so I needed to find other sources. I approached Aleksei Stevens – a New York based composer who has written music for two works of mine before. He was going to write two electronic pieces – the music for the opening of the work (about 20 minutes) and a 10-minute section for what I thought would be the last section. Knowing that there would be live music Aleksei expressed an interest in including the musicians over his prerecorded music, by writing an improvised score for them. This decision really bridged the different parts of the work.

The unique set up of the work gave plenty of opportunities to generate sound in a nontraditional way. The most designed one was the sound of the falling stones. At first I wanted to introduce the stones because I wanted to change the space visually. After I tried throwing just one bag of stones, my interest shifted completely to the sound they made – it was loud, intense, and irregular – I could imagine it intensified

by the sound of 25 people running. I talked about it with both of my composers and they wrote their music considering it and even thinking of the stones as part of their score – for Aleksei this was going to be the end, and for Martin the stones were the beginning. Other ways to sonically influence the space were made by simultaneously shifting 50 chairs or talking to the audience. There were wonderful natural swells and ebbs in the background sound during the pre show. There was also the constant increase of the sound, while sharing the story about a fabric that reacts to the level of noise in the environment around. It peaked after about a minute and cut off completely to set the space for the rise of the rope. An unpredicted influence was the sound of pairs going in and out of the installations. It kept the space constantly open. There were a few moments that I wished I could avoid the noise so I could obtain more concentrated space, but generally I believe it was a wonderful addition.

A lovely element was the natural fade in and out that was created by physically entering and leaving the main space. The main space was relatively loud, while the installations were quiet, so by turning the corner or opening a door the acoustic qualities of the space were changing completely. This was true for walking from one installation to the next as well. There is a huge difference in the way sounds travel in a carpeted corridor or in an open lobby, a cement stairwell, elevator or huge open hallway. In a way it was like making an audio map of the spaces around the theater.

Chapter 7: Angels

I believe the idea of the angels came as a solution to the problem of how to show the audience installations as part of the performance, how to move the audience from place to place, and how to control their pathways. It seemed that by attaching a dancer to each audience member I could save myself tons of explanations before the performance, drawing maps of the activities, or coaching ushers. I also had a preliminary idea to play with the density of the space, and having so many performers would help. Very soon I realized that having an angel attached to each audience member could give me much more control than merely showing them where to go at a certain moment. Through an angel I could play with the way the audience experienced the dance, I could change their perception, I could direct their attention, I could touch them, I could give them things, and I could talk to them. The possibilities seemed endless.

I did anticipate problems too. I had never before worked with more than four dancers, so naturally the plan of having to work with 24 was scary. I was very concerned about the atmosphere in rehearsals. Up to that moment I had always managed to achieve a very relaxed and creative environment, with a lot of contribution and feedback from the dancers. I had also always worked with hand picked dancers that were practically all friends of mine. I was aware that by expanding the group so much I had to give up some of the ways I had been working and had to experiment with new approaches. I knew that I had to develop material with a small group and then teach it to the big

group. I thought that I would not need technically skilled dancers, so I expanded the invitation to anybody. We were going to have one rehearsal every two weeks for the first two months and then pick up the tempo after the winter break. I soon had around thirty people signed up who were coming more or less regularly to the rehearsals. The angels were mainly students in my improv class or my beginning technique classes.

An unpleasant surprise was waiting for me at the end of January – I found out that half of my angels were not coming back for rehearsal after the winter break. I had less than a month to find and coach more than ten dancers. I was desperately looking for angels everywhere – asking students in the corridors, considering any friend of mine with or without performance background, and approaching dancers from the area. I had to teach each of the newly joined people individually for at least two hours before their first rehearsal with the group. I do not need to say how good I became in teaching that material and explaining the activities in the installations. I have to admit that out of that desperate situation I acquired an amazing group of angels. Very strong performers such as Kelly Bond, Sharon Mansur, Betty Skeen and Rachel Novak, and lovely souls such as Gretchen Dunn, Shannon Seeger, and Nicole Bryan jumped in and brought confidence, professionalism, and enthusiasm that made everybody excited. Rehearsals became a real pleasure.

As the idea of the angels was developing I started seeing them as whimsical, knowledgeable, slightly eccentric helpers of the audience, who guided them through the performance. I tried to build the role by giving the angels playful tasks and

unusual (magic) objects to handle. From the very beginning they were going to introduce themselves as angels. Then there was the trick with the program – it is printed with a tiny font so that it is nearly impossible to read – the angel pulls out a magnifying glass to help out. They keep producing different objects- a tape measure, a scarf, a poem. I was hoping they would emerge as little magical figures that the audience could trust. To me, both the installations and the angels were gifts for the audience. In rehearsals we talked about building a personal character with this image in mind. I tried to explain that, when giving a gift to someone, we change a little, that there is a certain performance element – it is still us, but we pull to the surface some excitement, some anticipation, and care. This was where I wanted the angels to perform from.

Even though I initially wanted the angels mainly to help with the installations, we did not have the installations up until the last week, and hence there were very few things we could actually practice for this part. For example, my idea was to close the audiences' eyes and lead them through a sensory experience by touching objects and walking on different surfaces. So we practiced how to be more confident in leading people with closed eyes – how to take care of them, how to sit them in a chair, how to make them comfortable, and how to be able to stop them at any moment. We also practiced the elevator dances – it was a creative task for them to figure out what they wanted to do and how to frame it. Because the time for the dance is so short (10-15 seconds) we talked a lot about a dance with a single idea.

Most of the time in rehearsals was spent on the activities that happened in the main space.

We worked on a floor phrase for what I was thought would be the last section of the dance, when all the angels are in the middle of the circle. We soon learned the material and practiced performing it in a ‘popcorn’ unison – everyone had to be aware of their own timing and at the same time reacting to the movement happening around them.

Another phrase that we had to practice a lot in rehearsals was the ‘face phrase’. It consisted of 12 hand gestures that emphasized the face. I wanted to get the audience interested in details, to question what they notice, what they pay attention to in a person even after talking with them for a while. I also wanted to explore the actual mechanism of seeing. My interest was awakened after reading *Eye Movements and Vision*, a book on principles of physiological optics by the Russian physiologist A. L. Yarbus. Yarbus stated,

The human eyes voluntarily and involuntarily fixate on those elements of an object which may carry essential and useful information. The more information is contained in an element, the longer the eyes stay on it. The distribution of points of fixation on the object changes depending on the purpose of the observer...(192)

One of Yarbus’ simpler illustrations is a study based on a portrait of a woman. The subject examines the photograph for about a minute with both eyes and their eye movements are recorded. The eyes – the most detailed part of the picture- received

such attention “that the examination of the portrait was in fact reduced to the repeated alternate fixation on first one and then the other of the girl’s eyes”(193).

I wanted to create a situation that changed the way the audience would normally look at someone. The section of the face phrase comes about 15 minutes into the piece. By that time each audience member had spent 10 minutes talking with their angel and probably had gone through one of the loops in the installation with that person. The action of the dance is interrupted abruptly by the question – “Do you know my face?” and a few seconds later with a more obvious one, “What is the color of my eyes?” They are left to think about that when their angel runs away and a complete stranger sits in front of them and performs a gesture phrase emphasizing the face, while staring into their eyes. I am hoping that the questions and the movement itself set up the audiences’ attention and forced them to remember as much detail from that face as they could.

Something else we needed to practice in that section was running. It seemed hopeless at first, but everybody got much better at it by the time of the performance. The angels learned to take bigger steps, to really move their pelvis’ in space and became confident in choosing their pathways.

One of the biggest advantages of introducing the angels was the opportunity to play with distance. There was a real chance to create situations in which the audience is watching something that is taking place in the far corner, while something else is happening just two inches away from their face. This was the case in two little sections we had - the ‘shifting’ and the ‘peripheral vision ’. The shifting is introduced

by two of the main dancers and is picked up by the angels. Each of the angels shifts back and front very close to their partner while the duet on stage continues. There was a play with the vision of the audience by revealing and concealing the stage. It was also the first time one got the sense of the mass of people. The more successful section, in my opinion, was the play with the peripheral vision. The audience is instructed to keep looking at the solo in the middle of the stage while the angels stay behind and only their hands are moving in and out of the peripheral vision. The section is improvised. We played with timing and finding references to the movement of the soloist and the music. We talked about symmetry and asymmetry and how does one or the other make the subject feel. When the activity was done to me I always was very aware of the space around my head. After a while it started feeling like it was part of me and that I could nearly feel the hands of my angel on my extended head.

Angels made it very easy for touch to happen. The measuring of the audience at the beginning of the piece broke the ice between the angel and his/her partner and set the tone for the types of interactions that would come during the piece. Stephanie Shawls – the Costume Shop manager at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, was the ultimate inspiration for that section. I had seen people being measured many times before, but the speed, the professionalism, and the efficiency with which she was measuring were remarkable. I had to stop sewing and stare at all 67 measurements to be taken. It was a perfect dance. Every movement was so precise and purposeful, graceful and polished from years of experience. Her voice was so confident calling

out the measurements she saw and asking weird questions like “Any tattoos or piercing?” and “Are you allergic to any detergents?” I was having flash backs from occasions when I was being measured – the strangeness of staying still, the desire to watch the hands working around my own body, the slight touch, the manipulation of my limbs and the numbers flying around that were meant to represent me somehow. It was all so magical, and it was all so related to my work. I could not believe I had not thought of it before. Even though Stephanie came twice to rehearsal to coach us as to how to take measurements, I don’t think we ever came even close to her amazing performance. But we tried. Each angel had to select 10-15 measurements, had to learn the professional terms, and had to know how to take them and to combine everything into a short routine. During the actual performance I was surprised by the abundance of movement in the space – audience members staying in peculiar poses, angels fussing around them, scarves being pulled out – it was all so dense. One could expect anything after that.

Another apparent situation where touch was involved was the ‘hand dance’. I thought of it as the dance with the audience. They were invited to dance, and once the connection with the hand was established, it could change but they had to stay connected through the whole dance. There was nothing else happening on stage during this section, but there was a lot to look at.

Another interest of mine was to somehow use the angels to tell the audience a story. In the fashion and technology book *Light into life* I found some extremely curious inventions that I wanted to share with them. One of the stories was on *HearWear*: It is

a wearable visual reflection of the auditory surroundings. It perceives sound levels and uses a scale of lights to reflect amplitude in clothing or accessories. The designers are working not only towards a better environmental awareness for most people, but also towards the unnoticeable integration of technology in day to day fashion and lifestyle.

Reading the description of *HearWear* made me wonder what would happen if I somehow created a very noisy environment while the angels were telling the story? This turned into a little set up section for the rope to start going up. After a relatively long dance phrase, the angels turned towards their partners and started telling the stories. At first it was nearly whispering, but later the volume was increased every 15 seconds so that towards the end the angels were close to screaming. We were trying to create a feeling that the intensity was increasing just because the background noise grew. After a minute or so, everything stopped abruptly and the rope started to be pulled upwards.

I faced several issues rehearsing this section. First, most dancers are uncomfortable talking on stage. Adding to the fact that I was asking them to actually scream didn't make it easy. What helped a little was that everyone was talking at the same time, so with practice the angels became more comfortable and less self-conscious. Another challenge was how to work on the material, but to still keep it fresh and interesting for the performers to do. How excited can one be while telling the same story for the twentieth time? (My little son Kamen is testing that out every day.) The same question came up with several of the activities performed by the angels in the main space to the point that I was actually thinking of canceling the last rehearsal we had

before going to the theater. I am not a big fan of talking over movement material. I usually prefer do it physically, but in this case I have to admit that just talking helped a lot. Most of the remaining uncertainties were about the order and taking the time to explain things that again calmed everyone.

Towards the end of the rehearsal process we developed several structured improv scores. One of them was ‘the fish flopping’. All the angels were on the floor, creating sort of a grid pattern, being either parallel or perpendicular to one another. They were shifting on the floor to another position. We developed different timing games- shifting completely randomly, or increasing or decreasing the intensity as a group, or playing with propagating signals. All the scores had a very strong time component for the angels, but for an outside observer the manifestation was a distinct and changing spatial pattern.

Since the movement was concentrated in a relatively small space, there were many angels, the movement was improvised, and it got pretty fast at times. The angels had to develop spatial awareness and sensibility towards each other. Even though we practiced in rehearsals, during the shows a few of the angels got too excited to perform and forgot that they were not alone on stage – I kept receiving complaints from angels who were hit or kicked or were scared to do the section. I am reluctant to admit that the crispness that we had achieved during the rehearsals was somewhat lost at the performances.

The major challenge for the angels was the installations. We had talked in detail about what to expect from each space. I had tried to prepare the angels for the short time we would have in the theater so that when we finally got into the space most of them would be efficient and take it as their own responsibility to get themselves acquainted with all the props and spaces. But the reality was that we only had the installations for the last three rehearsals before the performance. The angels worked hard and helped each other, so I felt that nearly everyone soon got comfortable enough. The biggest problem was the timing. Every angel had a very specific time to leave the main space, a strict order in which to go through the installations, and a strict time to stay in a certain space. We started practicing all that only two days before the opening night. We had to put clocks in each space, and during both the tech and dress rehearsals, we had a person giving cues every two minutes. The hardest part of all was eventually getting rid of the time cues and connecting it all to the action happening on stage.

Before going into the theater I had separate rehearsals with the main dancers and with the angels. We had had few run-throughs all together, but I realized that it was not enough for the angels to know the dance well enough. We had two crash rehearsals on trying to get the cues. The angels did the impossible and with a few running into each other everything went more or less smoothly. I am aware though what a huge amount of stress that was for the whole group, and I am sure it affected the angels' performance quality.

Another challenging situation was changing the order of the piece after the tech rehearsal. The last section of the piece was meant to be the part when all the angels are on stage doing the improv scores and the floor phrase. There is not much development in either the movement or the music. I always imagined it as this surreal afterthought. After the tech rehearsal I realized that it was not perceived like that at all. I was creating a long and boring confusion after the obvious end of the piece with the big dance section and the end of Martin's music. I had to shorten the angels' section, find a place for it in the middle of the piece, and build transitions in and out of it for less than half an hour. It was a lot to ask from the performers. I owe them a lot.

The angels were one of the key elements in the work. They could so easily influence the way the piece was viewed. There was a huge responsibility in their part, but in my eyes this is what made the role really exciting. We couldn't really practice in rehearsals performing for just one person, but I tried to talk with them about my own experience and tried to warn them that it would be scary but exuberant, challenging but rewarding. I had performed in works with a lot of people and sometimes even though I could appreciate the idea of the piece, it had been on the boring side to be one of the fifty dancers on stage. In cases like that I usually have other reason to participate then to challenge myself as a dancer. In this project, even though there were 24 dancers doing the same part, each one of them was seen as unique person. Even during the part when all the angels are on stage doing very similar activity I felt that the established connection with the audience member was strong enough to make

them look for their angel in the crowd. It is a little like going to a first grade recital – no matter how many kids there are on stage, for mommy and daddy there is only one beautiful angel.

There was one more thing I wanted to play with - I wanted to create longing at times. I was relaying that there is a sort of bond being created between the audience member and the angel. I was hoping that when the angel stepped away the audience would miss them and want them to come back.

At times I wasn't ready to trust the angels with the huge task they had. I wished I could clone myself, so that there were 24 Tzvetas guiding the audience through the performance. It seemed to me that this piece was so personal, was so much me. I couldn't imagine teaching anyone how to behave in a certain situation or how to react when the audience does something unexpected, how to approach them with a question or even how to just sit quietly next to them. I think the angels proved me wrong. There was such a fast learning curve – each performance was worth thousands of rehearsals, each interaction with an audience member was much more valuable than me trying to explain. To some extent they all succeeded. They brought their own reactions, they brought their own personality and their own ways which were often much better than mine. But above all they opened their hearts and were sincere and generous. In a strange way, I wish we were starting the process now, after having learned so many things together, after having experienced the performances and achieved a common understanding.

Chapter 8: Dance

I started rehearsals a year ago with just two dancers: Sarah Anne Austin and Liz Dawson. We didn't have that many rehearsals that semester, but there were several duets that found their way into the final piece. Some of the material for the angels was developed at that time too. By the beginning of November I started rehearsals with my core dancers – Katie Iacono, Lillian Cho and Christine Stone, who joined Sarah Anne and Liz. I had worked with almost all of them before. All but Christine knew each other well. All four of them had just finished working on Katie's thesis project. The group was very friendly, hard working and excited. At that time I started noticing Ashley Chapman. She was a transfer student and was taking my improv class. After two dances we had together I knew I wanted to work with her. She had a very intriguing timing and a great skill to both listen and initiate while dancing. So she joined the process. For a long time I felt I couldn't find the right approach with Ashley. She was much younger than the other dancers, didn't have so much experience, and didn't know much about my work, my process and my esthetic. She was very shy in rehearsals, unsecure in her choices. The situation changed completely after I started having individual rehearsals with her. She just needed a little more time spent on the phrases we were practicing, a little more coaching in order to develop material and above all she needed to feel that I appreciated and cared about her. Ashley's dancing and her attitude changed completely. She found her place into both the group and the work.

The first material that caught my attention was what later turned into the 'shift duet'. I was interested in having two solos that were both developed using the rocking back and forth, but are juxtaposed and not synchronized with each other. The essence of the developed duet was in changing the spatial relation between the dancers and the sense of revealing and hiding each other.

I used a painting of the contemporary American artist Susan Rothenberg for the leading image in a duet between Christine and Ashley. I was very attracted to the very strong desire to pull apart and the obvious physical connection between the two bodies on the painting.

We used a lot of different sensations for creating material. Each of the dancers developed the so-called 'smell solos'. They imagined that there are flowers attached to a part of their body of their choice. In the performance those solos were situated along the walls of the theater on the surface with rocks.

We played for a long time with several phrases that I brought to rehearsals. One of them was a very dense material with the essence of gestures of the whole body. This grew into a unison trio. Another one was inspired by the movement of an arm reaching out of a car window, floating over air currents. This turned into a rotating solo juxtaposed with the trio. I wanted to play with the very different feeling that the

two materials had. I was very interested in spatial configurations that were formed between the compacted trio and the floating solo.

A lot of sections were inspired by the idea of flocking and broken unison. A good example is the big dance section just before the rope starts going up which also repeats at the very end. There are a lot of arm and legs movements as well as propagation through space. Up to that moment everything was happening in the middle circle. I wanted to show that the space was too small for the energy of the dance and was finding ways to push the boundaries further and further.

Each one of the dancers had a solo in the piece:

Christine's solo opened the piece. She was the first one to step on the circle of rope, so for me it was an exploration of a new space. The solo was improvised. We talked about predominant arm and upper body movement. Spatially, it was exploring the whole circle at first and was falling into the center after the other dancers close up on her.

Lillian's solo was exploring two opposite modes of dynamics. It consisted of outbursts of full body, intense dancing and long pauses during which she was curled on the floor. The solo was improvised and was paralleled by a very ordered floor

phrase performed in broken unison by the rest of the cast. To me, it carried the feeling of Lillian being pushed from the group and forced to find another space.

Katie's solo came right after the rope started going up. She explored the newly created contrasting circle in the middle. She was using material she had created from her smell solo and a phrase addressing spiraling. Once we started practicing with the rope it became clear that she had to go away from the original set movement. The solo turned into a duet with the circling rope.

Sarah Anne's solo was one of the last sections developed. It was one of the few places in the work where the dance was created to the music – I was using Martin's movement 5. The solo was exploring a much bigger central circle with a very little periphery of rope. The movement material was developed by working very closely with the dancer and was revisiting material from the "shift duet". One of the images I appreciate a lot was Sara Anne turning, off center, while the rope keeps tracing its pathway around.

Ashley's solo started the moment the rope was gone. This was one of the sections with the biggest potential and at the same time the one that is the least developed. I was trying to show a reaction to a somewhat expected but crucial and colossal event. For me it holds two of the most beautiful images in the piece: Ashley curled up on the wrinkled surface of the anti-slip and Ashley walking around with the huge skirt.

Liz's solo came towards the end of the piece. It was developed from the image of light coming through a window and the contrast path it makes on the floor. The solo was framed by a task-oriented double duet. The long sleeves were being wrinkled up while the free ends gradually were shortened. That changing environment always reminds me of a work by the Dutch conceptual artist Jan Dibbets. In one of his works that I saw at Hirshhorn Museum there is a line of pictures on the wall, each one depicting the same frame of the window in the artist's house. The pictures are taken every six minutes from sunrise till sunset on the shortest day of 1970. This is probably the only part of the dance that I don't want to change.

Looking back at the process, I can relate it to exploring a huge space with closed eyes. There is a lot of anticipation, a lot of impulses, a lot of fear and loneliness, but also joy of things found on the way. There was a long path of moving slowly and carefully, short rushes of acting brave, few precious details found, but there was also a lot of confusion and not understanding of where I was. Up to now in my work as a choreographer I had been lucky to find, somewhere in the process, the place from where I could see the work. Then all of a sudden everything becomes very obvious and clear. The work starts revealing itself to me and sometimes shows a completely different face than what I was looking for. I feel this is the place where choreography becomes a real research tool. It starts bringing out information that wasn't known before. And even though there may be a lot of work still waiting to be done, I knew the direction, I knew if I am coming closer or going away. I just had to listen carefully and keep going.

With my thesis work I never reached that place, I believe I was very close to it few days before the performance, but then I couldn't do much. Now I feel I have a little more global view of the work, a little better sense of where it needs to go and much stronger desire to work on it. Too bad it is all over. I still don't know what the mistakes I made were. May be the project was too big. May be the other aspects of the work stole my attention from the dance. May be I just needed to work much more. May be I needed to see it all together in the actual space. May be I was trusting too much that the beautiful place would come. In any way this was a great lesson. In the process I learned a lot. I am also coming out with a hand full of seeds – thoughts, images and qualities that I would love to grow some day.

Chapter 9: Wish list

I wish all participants could experience the installations

I wish every participant knew much more about the piece

I wish I could show the performers a little attention and care the days of the performance

I wish I could remember in greater details how I came up with different ideas and how things changed and developed to become the performance

I wish I knew how to ask for help

I wish I had hired a videographer and photographer for the performances

I wish I had shared more of my ideas with the dancers

I wish I had invited more people to the show

I wish I started staying late early on

I wish I could coach each angel individually for the installations

I wish I saw all the elevator dances

I wish I didn't have to give up on the real flowers and had kept them up on the ceiling

I wish I had found more volunteers for the party scene

I wish I had given the angels more ideas about the pre show conversation and activities.

I wish the audience could spend more time in each installation

I wish the angels weren't with the audience member all the time in the installations

I wish I had the heart to cut half the installations

I wish I had followed my intuition for the dance in the middle

I wish I had a stage manager

I wish I found some way to really talk with more people after the performance

I wish everybody could be in the space when the stones were being thrown

I wish I had more time to fine tune the dance

I wish more children came to the performance

I wish I had started making the scarves much earlier

I wished I talked with the musicians before they started coming to the rehearsals

I wished I was not solely responsible for so many decisions

I wish I knew how to manage people better

Sometimes I wish I wasn't so polite

I wish I didn't work with so many ideas on this work

Chapter 10: Survey with the angels

As an attempt to evaluate the project and receive an informal feedback about the rehearsal process, the performance and the interaction with the audience I asked the angels to fill out a short survey. They could answer both verbally or with numbers - 10 being strongly agree and 1 strongly disagree. Only 10 of the 24 angels answered the questions.

1. Did you feel prepared for the performance task you had?

I DIDN'T THINK SO==BUT YES I WAS

Quite.

I thought I did, but when we made those changes last minute I have to admit that stressed me out quite a lot. But I think we pulled it all together.

Absolutely. It was incredibly nerve-wracking though when you changed the order of the performance the day of the first show, but it all worked out alright.

I felt prepared but it became a little confusing after the first night.

Yes pretty much, but not fully until we ran the whole thing in the theater

Yes, between rehearsals and going over my notes I did feel prepared.

I am not sure I would use the word “prepared,” but I felt I had enough of an understanding of my role and the performance to be able to perform my role with a light heart and with relative ease. By the last performance, I began to feel a level of engagement that I had not been able to establish during the rehearsal process or the first two performances. It was not just the familiarity with the cues (which I think was an all consuming factor for most of us angels...to the point where it was difficult to concentrate/fully engage in other aspects for fear of completely missing a cue) but the emergence of the character/identity of the show itself. I think we could have used at least another week of just performing it all together. The show was such a mystery for so long ... When we finally met, I needed to meet eyes with it for just a little longer.

I think it was nice that we were able to have audience members for our Tuesday rehearsal and Wednesday dress rehearsal because I felt prepared for an audience member by the time we had the shows.

I did. Being prepared was more of a task of ours because we are all different.

2. Do you think we had enough rehearsals?

I WENT TO EXTRA ONES. AND I DIDN'T THINK SO, BUT I DID HAVE ENOUGH

The gradation of the density of practices was a good idea; as the concert took clearer shape in your mind, the practices were more meaningful and more was accomplished.

10

Yes. As someone who was in the project from the beginning, sometimes it felt like too many rehearsals even because newer people had to keep being re-taught information that I had already learned. And the material wasn't particularly complex, just getting the order down and getting past feeling nervous about doing it in front of a real person became the real challenge.

There were enough rehearsals for me!

Yes

I came later in the process, but for me there were enough overall. 1 or 2 more in the actual space would have been helpful, because of the adapting and evolving needed, too bad about the snow day!

A few more would have been helpful.

Yes, I think we had enough rehearsals.

I do think we had enough rehearsals because a lot of the material was our responsibility.

3. Do you think we should have practice different types of skills during the rehearsals? Please specify.

WE PRACTICED SOME THINGS THAT WERE THEN ELIMINATED (NON-PASSING CIRCLE). FOR ME, THERE WAS QUITE ENOUGH TO LEARN, SO, NO.

It would have been very helpful to have rehearsed the timings at greater length.

For me, what we practiced during rehearsal was adequate. I think maybe for some of the people who had some what less training it may have been beneficial to do more of the fish flopping with that many people so they could practice special awareness.

Not really, I felt very prepared by the time of the performance.

I am a very fast learner, so everything was fine in rehearsals for me.

Maybe a few performance basics such as working just with voice projection that would have helped with the 2 stories with increasing volume to come together faster. Spatial awareness exercises for the fish flopping?

Encouraging the students to take ownership of knowing cues sooner. I had printed out the sections list you had emailed us and students kept wanting to borrow my copy, instead of just printing out their own, so if there had been hard copies available at rehearsal that might have been helpful for them to get their bearings sooner.

I think we could have spent more time being inside of the show. Going into the first tech, I had no idea what the length of time between angel events was like. I had really never seen the entire dancing portion of the show, so was not too able to recognize the progression. I think had we been more familiar with the movement (of the main dancers) it would have been much easier for us to understand our cues and to be a little more creative with them and at ease with them

I think the skills we practiced were all very useful for the performance. Perhaps showing people certain ways to interact would have been helpful.

We could have practiced timing the two minutes more.

4. Were the activities you were asked to do very different from your normal performance practice?

OH YES! THE INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY COUPLED WITH THE INTERDEPENDENCE (GOING OUT, COMING BACK) WAS VERY DIFFERENT.

I don't normally perform!

Yes, in my normal performance practice the movement is typically more technical and less interactive.

Definitely. I am used to actually dancing during rehearsals. But for this, it was more memorizing orders and trying to practice enough times so that everything felt natural.

The movement inventions were different, but the piece did not require a lot of constant movement, so I did not feel like we needed a warm up or stretch time which was a relief for me.

Yes very different

The installations were hard for me personally to imagine until I was actually there in the space. I do better with visual and hands on instead of having something explained verbally only, so some of the descriptions were hard for me picture until I was there.

Very!

For the most part, the activities were very different from anything else I have done, but I enjoyed it and I think it helped to expand my horizons and visions of dance.

Extremely different. I have never had to interact with audience members.

5. Did you enjoy the rehearsal process?

YES!

9

I didn't enjoy rehearsals when new people had to be taught information I had already learned once or twice. But in general, rehearsals were definitely interesting and I had fun learning and experiencing all of the different installations and movements.

At the very beginning rehearsal was hard and boring, because I didn't know what the piece was about or what would be happening but it came together very quickly ☺

Yes I thought it was to the point, no wasted time

Yes! I had fun seeing and relating to the students in a different way as a faculty member. It was nice to be part of a big diverse group in a nontraditional performance too.

Always!

I think the rehearsals became a little repetitive, but a lot of people didn't show up to rehearsals, so I understand why we had to keep going over things.

I did. It was laid back and we were free to explore our options. Also, you treated us with respect.

6. Did you have any problems manipulating the props in the installations and the main space (including tape measure, chairs, doors, jars....anything)? Please specify.

THE LARGE SCENT JARS WERE VERY HARD TO CLOSE QUICKLY, SO I ONLY USED THE SMALL ONES (AFTER I DISCOVERED THIS). THE GLASS

IN THE CLOUD ROOM DIDN'T REFLECT IN A VERY INTERESTING WAY—I WONDER IF CUT CRYSTAL WOULD HAVE WORKED BETTER. I BEGAN TO PUT MY PERSON'S HANDS IN TWO TEXTURES SIMULTANEOUSLY—MORE INTERESTING THAN ONE AT A TIME. BUT THIS ISN'T A DIFFICULTY.

The installation with the water and light was difficult to manipulate; it could have been a little more focused.

No all of the installations went pretty smooth for me.

For the most part, no. I had the most difficulty with the elevator scene, making it seem natural to just start dancing without the other person feeling awkward. It was also a little difficult to stay on top of time when the audience member either enjoyed themselves too much and wanted to stay in a room or felt uncomfortable and wanted to leave early.

There wasn't enough time for the smelling jars. And there was always a problem with either running into the person before you or someone running into you

I ran into other angels in the instalations

I did not have trouble manipulating the props, it took a while to figure out how I would store the various items in my bag and to move through the chairs and installations, but that just took a bit of time to work out for myself. The white room with the flashlight and glass of water didn't really click fully for me personally in terms of the light/water play but it was still an evocative room to be in.

Jars were harder for me, but nothing to actually complain about at all. The flashlight water reflection room never quite worked too well. That was always the most awkward, though I liked the transition from loud birthday party to this kind of quiet isolation chamber.

I was successful with all of the props.

no

7. Were the performances very different from the rehearsals?

YES—BUT IN AN EXPECTED WAY. DOING FACES FOR LIVE PEOPLE WAS VERY DIFFERENT FROM USING THE MIRROR OR JUST PRACTICE.

The performances were less intense, but much more focused. I thought they were different.

Yes, it is quite different having an audience member who does not know what to expect. Also, when I was partnered with a 3 year old it was great because he actually believed everything that was happening.

Yes. Practicing by yourself is one thing. But actually having an audience member to take care of is completely different. I had audience members who were fully engaged and ones who weren't, or felt awkward. Every time you had to adapt to the situation and the audience member you had.

The performance wasn't different from the Wednesday rehearsal but I think if we practiced the order in rehearsal many more times things would have flowed even more.

No

The floor phrase and fish flop section was less satisfying for me because of the smaller space available, and the collision potential in the fish flop....and because of my timings in the installations, I actually missed most of the central movement sections such as the partner hand dance, the peripheral vision play, the stories , the rock throwing etc. so I was a bit disappointed about that.

Pretty much completely.

I think the performances were very similar to the rehearsals we had the week of the performance, but they were very different from our angels rehearsals.

Very different. This is only because we were not in the space or we didn't have an audience member to guide.

8. Did you change the way you performed from show to show? Did you develop different 'character' for each show?

NO, BUT THAT WAS AN OPTION OPEN AND IT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED IF WE HAD GONE ON PERFORMING LONGER.

Not so much. I was a little more confident for some performances, but I wasn't actively trying to change anything.

Yes, I think it was important to act a certain way based on the person I was with. I had to act differently if

I had Liz Dawsons dad than say 3 year old Leo.

I matched my character to that of my audience member. For example, if they were very chill, I acted that way too, leading them through installations and letting them experience it for themselves. But when my audience member was very excited and

into the show, I participated more in their journey (ex. getting extremely excited during the happy birthday scene vs. acting casual).

The way I performed each time changed. This was just as exciting for me as it was for the audience member. However, I wish I could have switched orders in the entire performance so that I could have seen other aspects of the show.

No i was myself

In a subtle way, responding to the energy of my audience member, and then there were ongoing timing variations going to the installations that created changes as well.

For the first two shows, I had young college students. I found that I maintained a certain personality for those shows, but found some personality wiggle room and new approaches for them. The third performance I had a woman in her 50s. My character was very different from the other two shows.

I changed the way I performed for each show based on the kind of audience member I had.

No I didn't.

9. Did your performance depend on the audience member you had?

THREE OF MY FOUR PEOPLE I KNEW. SO IT WAS A TIGHTROPE WITH THEM NOT TO BE THE FRIEND, BUT THEIR ANGEL

Absolutely. The audience member affected how I approached the installations, and especially the hand dance we did.

10

Yes (see above).

My enthusiasm for the performance changed based on the audience member. For example, if I was nervous, I think I came off nervous, if the audience member wasn't really into it because they had to see it for a class, then I tried to get them engaged more and wasn't worried about screwing up.

Yes i did vary myself depending on my audience person

Yes, absolutely. One woman had studied dance and had been a dance critic for a period and was quite observant and curious from more of a dance/theater perspective. Another woman was not as knowledgeable about dance but wanted to respond to several aspects of the installation in terms of meaning/themes and linger.

Seems to.

Very much so.

Yes. I had a teenager one knight and I decided to cater to her and her age.

10. Do you feel you managed to establish connection with the audience member you had?

MY UNKNOWN PERSON HAD NEVER BEEN TO A DANCE PERFORMANCE BEFORE. I TOLD HER THAT THIS WAS A VERY UNUSUAL PERFORMANCE SHE WAS SEEING. SHE WAS SHY, UNUSED TO SUCH A VENUE. I THINK I FULFILLED MY ROLE OF CARER AND GUIDE.

I had a connection with all but one of the audience members. When students were required to see this performance for a class, it made them less enthusiastic as a student or graduate student who was actually interested and came of their own accord.

9

Definitely, each one.

I think I did a good job of establishing myself with my audience member

yes

Yes, definitely and it was very satisfying for me to do. It was a great moment, when he/she first sat down, to see what kind of rapport would evolve and how long it would take to get a connection, how it shifted during the performance....etc.

yes

For the most part I was able to establish a relationship. I had one audience member that was very closed off so it was difficult at first but I was able to get her to open up a bit by the end.

I did. There was always something different about each audience member. I tried to find something in common with each person/

11. Did you have difficulties performing any of the activities with your audience member?

THE RISERS WERE AT TIMES DIFFICULT. THE ANGELS MOSTLY KEPT TO THEIR SAME SEATS FOR ALL PERFORMANCES AND THIS (FOR ME) FACILITATED THE GOING OUT AND IN PROCESS. MY VISION ISN'T THAT GOOD!

None.

No difficulties at all.

The elevator scene. I found it incredibly awkward to randomly start dancing, particularly because I don't think they viewed me as this performance as a dancer. Also, the white room was a little awkward for me because they seemed to be done playing with the water within 15 seconds each time. I didn't even know how to explore the room after that.

No difficulties

some were hesitant about being involved

Not particularly. The blindfold section was the most challenging for me to work with my audience member on, because of the physical guiding and moving through the doorway into the flower room but I got a pattern going after a while.

*The biggest issue seemed to be time, I wish that could have been more flexible somehow in the installations, particularly my last person particularly felt rushed as she was wanting to take it in and just "be" in the spaces longer vs. that drive by feeling.

Just the flashlight reflection room. It just never quite worked.

I was unable to perform my elevator dance for one audience member because she was speaking to me and I didn't want to interrupt her. She was very talkative.

The hand dance was the one activity I changed with each member. With the older women, I decided to do it how we rehearsed. With the teenager, I had her dance with me.

12. Did you have sense of which activities your audience member enjoyed and which didn't enjoy? Please specify.

I COULDN'T TELL. SOMETIMES THEY WERE QUIET ABOUT SOMETHING AT THE TIME, BUT SAID LATER THAT IT WAS A FAVORITE. APPLES AND LEAVES, BREAKFAST, BIRTHDAY WERE FAVORITES. ALL HAD INTEREST FOR THEM, BUT THE CLOUD ROOM WAS THE LEAST CLEAR AND THUS PUZZELING..

Audience members were so heavily stimulated by all of the activities that it was not immediately evident which they seemed to enjoy.

The people seemed to really love the room with the leaves and the apples. Also, people really enjoyed the room where they were blind folded and touching things. I

think people were less interested in the room with the flowers and the birthday party... with the exception of Leo who thought the party was real.

All of my audience members loved the apple room (this was my favorite room as well), along with the birthday surprise and breakfast eating.

The leaves and the apples seem to be the most amazing one to all my audience members. Also, the touch installation if they could identify the objects they were touching

the technology room was a favorite

It depended on the person.....I didn't get a sense of ones they did NOT enjoy, it seemed as though they enjoyed all of them to some extent, although it wasn't necessarily obvious.

See above.

I think they all enjoyed the breakfast scene, apple room, and the singing the most.

I thought that the least enjoyable moment was the string wall because It felt rushed because of timing.

13. Were you surprised from the reactions of your audience member? Please specify.

THAT THEY WERE SO WILLING TO FOLLOW ME OUT TO THE INSTALLATIONS. MY LAST PERSON (BROOKE) THREW HERSELF IMMEDIATELY INTO THE LEAVES!

Not so much. Predictably, everyone was surprised by the installations, and bewilderment was also common.

No

Some were shocked just to learn it was an interactive experience. My first audience member was a shy freshman who couldn't wait to get out of the installations because she was nervous, intimidated, and felt extremely awkward. Yet my second day I had a man who played along with all of the installations and was completely enthusiastic about whatever I told him to do.

No surprises.

no

During the run and face gestures section, one audience member started copying the facial gestures back to me and that really surprised me, I think that was the first performance night too, I did not expect that!

For the most part, I feel they tried to play it cool. I could tell though that they were tickled by almost all of the events.

No, most of my audience members did not have any surprising reactions.

No

14. Did your audience members from the four shows react similarly to the same activities?

ALL APPROACHED THINGS OPENLY, WITH SURPRISE.

Generally. Some had more open minds that allowed them to be more present and engaged, but I think these were just different levels of the same emotions (ie. Surprise, wonder).

Basically.

They generally did. The biggest differences were the rooms with other people in them; my audience members who were less enthusiastic did not enjoy these rooms as much and did not stay as long. I think it was more fun for the audience members who actually pretended it was their birthday, had some breakfast, and asked the pottery lady questions.

All the audience members reacted differently. But Patrik's reaction was specifically memorable because he is very animated!

yes more or less

Yes and no. For example, at the breakfast table most did not have anything to eat or drink but one did...and that set our and my whole group's time off. In the apple room, only 1 of my audience members took an apple.

Your husband had a different perspective than other audience members, so he commented several times about what he thought a certain aspect would be like compared to what it actually was.

yes

For the most part they did.

Yes, except for the teenager. She was more involved with the installations than the older women.

15. Was there a big difference for you weather you knew your audience member or not?

I WANTED 'MORE UNKNOWNNS', BUT THE KNOWN FOLKS WERE ALSO INTERESTING TO WORK WITH, FROM A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE.

Yes. If the audience member knew me, they would expect me to approach activities in a certain way.

Some what of a difference. Honestly it made more a of a difference with age for me whether I knew them or not. For me my younger audience members were much riskier than the older audience members.

I didn't know any of my audience members.

There was no difference except for the conversation in the beginning. It was easier to talk to Patrik with more ease than the others because I have worked with him before.

yes

It was a big difference, the only one I knew was during dress rehearsal and that was a more causal vibe than the others during the shows. I preferred not knowing my audience member actually.

I didn't know any of my audience members.

Yes, I had Angella for one of my performances and she knew most of the installations and was very comfortable with everything so I feel my role was not needed.

There was. If I knew someone, I felt more comfortable guiding them and I knew what things I should indulge in because I knew their personality.

16. Did you talk with your audience member after the show?

A LITTLE. TALKED WITH OTHER AUDIENCE IN THE PICKING UP OF THE STONES.

Briefly. Most needed time to process everything that happened and didn't want to talk much.

Yes

I briefly spoke to a few of them but nothing more than a few minutes.

Yes, and they gave me lots of insight as to what they enjoyed or did not.

A little

Briefly, just to say thank you and good bye. I asked your husband what he thought and he said “Interesting....”

Only because before the show we had talked about that can be a common response and what does that mean anyway, so it was a joke really.

I did wonder what the experience was like for them to come and go from the main action and how they framed that for themselves.

Briefly. They all just had big smiles on their faces and a twinkle in their eyes. My audience member from the matinee show was particularly touched. He came in asking when the show would begin ... how long it would go on, etc. By the end, he was completely absorbed and kept saying how glad he was that he had decided to come.

Slightly.

One night I did. She just told me about the show and had some questions about who I was and the dancers and you.

17. Did you have favorite activities in the piece? Please specify.

FISH-FLOP, HAND DANCE, MEASURING, GIVING POEM,

The yarn was a lot of fun, talking about synesthesia with my audience member. Also, throwing the stones was fun.

I really liked the short phrase we do in the middle/ end. I enjoyed the fish flopping especially when I was near Betty and Laura because they were very careful with me. The apple room was my favorite place. I loved the smell, it was like an orchard. And I loved the feeling of walking through the knee-high leaves, it was somewhat calming. My favorite activity was the “fish-flopping.” I liked the sense of unity during that section and that the audience was finally able to see the Angels have a little spotlight. Also, I loved the idea of the rope; it was so beautiful to watch and I feel like it added another character to the story.

I specifically loved the leaves and the apples

I loved the fall room with the leaves and apples

I enjoyed it as a whole, just the act of moving from place to place, passing through, taking a tour with someone else, brief encounters....

I enjoyed the peripheral dance the most.

The apple room, the breakfast scene, and the blindfold area.

The breakfast scene. It gave me an opportunity to role play.

18. Did you have activities that you didn't enjoy doing? Please specify.

FLOOR PHRASE (BUT I GOT OUT OF DOING IT BY NOT CHANGING SO QUICKLY!)

None were unpleasant, I don't think.

I didn't enjoy the breakfast room. I always had anxiety that we were there too long or that someone would have another allergic reaction.

The elevator dance and the hand dance. They were both incredibly awkward for me as well as for my audience members.

I hated running into other people in the installations

i enjoyed doing the blind folding

No

I didn't particularly enjoy doing the "hand dance." I think it went on for a bit too long.

The dark room with the water and flashlight because it was difficult to get them engaged in it, and the video room for the same reason.

The white room.

19. Did you have to solve problems during the show? Please specify.

MOSTLY RELATED TO THE TRANSITS THROUGH THE INSTALLATIONS, KEEPING OUT OF SITE OF OTHERS. FIGURING OUT THE BEST WAY TO DO SOMETHING, WHAT NOT TO DO (HEAVY STONE PATH)

Waiting for installations to clear wasn't really problematic, we just stood at the entrance waiting. It was sometimes difficult to tie the scarf around my audience member's head.

She when my audience member was nauseous and did not want to participate. I then decided to help Laura who had two members.

There were a couple of run ins with other dancers, particularly in the instilltions. But nothing was bad enough that I couldn't handle. During one show there was no water in the white room, but it wasn't a big deal because we could leave without running into anyone else.

Installation timing was my only issue.

Yes i had to improvise if i ran into other angels

Just the timing of my last group tour, when to start them off for the end.

Once the flashlight was out in the reflection room (gosh darn reflection room!) so I had to try to make the reflections with the blue light in the corner. I didn't really have to do any amazingly quick thinking to solve any problems. I'm sure the angels with the child and expecting mother had some interesting problem solving stories!

No, for the most part everything went smoothly.

Yes Timing was the biggest issue.

20. Did you enjoy performing in the piece?

YES YES YES

Yeah dude!

Yes, very much

Definitely. It was a fun and unique experience.

I believe this piece was very innovative!!!!

yes

I did overall, very much so!

Very much!

Yes, I thought it was a great experience and something very different and new.

Yes!

**21. Do you have a favorite part of the dance in the middle (the 6 dancers)?
Please specify.**

KATIE'S SOLO, SARAH'S SOLO (WHAT I COULD GLIMPSE OF IT WHILE INTERFERING WITH PERSON'S PERIPHERAL VISION, BIG ARMS.

I loved watching Lillian dance. Also, Christine's solo at the very beginning was intense to watch.

The duet with the large skirt.

I loved the twin duet between Christine and Ashley. They looked beautiful dancing with each other and mirroring each other. Also, it was one of my favorite choreography sections because it was so balanced. I especially love the part when the rope is finally all gone and the two are just watching it fall.

My favorite part is right before they pick up the plastic underneath the rope. I loved this part because each time Ashley did the spin turn and fell on the floor, I thought it was hilarious and this is the part I looked forward to each and every night.

I liked when they danced with the rising rope

So many evocative images...I like the moment when the rope finishes, when they rip their costumes and rearrange themselves, the rotating solo in the center, Katie and the rope, and the ending section leading them to the rope. I really liked the live music and the musicians' involvement as well.

I really enjoyed a lot of the dancing. I have to say, though, that for some reason the very swift "grand finale" always made me smile. It was just so quirky traditional. The dancers seem to have the idea that this was the "finale task." They went about it in this very matter of fact way that was just kind of humorous to me. The percussionists were all over the place, the reality of all that had just taken place was settling in, while this band of adorable and very sincere looking truly angel-esque beings were performing what was obviously the BIG closing movement piece (that wasn't really that at all). I always found myself trying desperately to muffle my obnoxiously loud laugh.

I always enjoyed being able to watch the beginning of the piece and after the sleeves were rolled up.

In the end, after the big sleeves dance, Lillian and Sarah Anne started to run backwards. That part and the rest of the dance was my favorite.

22. Do you have a part that you couldn't relate at all to the dance in the middle? Please specify.

IT TOOK SEVERAL PERFORMANCES TO BEGING TO INTEGRATE WHAT THEY WERE DOING WITH WHAT WE WERE DOING,SO MUCH OF THEIR WORK WAS PUZZELING.

The face covering walk through the stones was difficult to relate to. The rest of the piece seemed to speak to concepts of self and individual identity and inner turbulence, so I could keep up quite well.

No I really thought the hole show connected and progressed really well, even the parts that were not the 6 dancers.

Not really.

Nope.

No

Not particularly. I feel there were some parts that presented themselves as something that they were not intending to ever become ... which left the viewer feeling unfulfilled. I think this mostly had to do with the intensity of their gazes. The movement hardly ever matched this kind of duel-like approach. There was an odd mix of the dancers being very curious/unsure about what was going to happen and a sense that they had done this a million times and would now do it for the millionth and one time.

No.

I really enjoyed the teenage girl audience member. I wasn't nervous and she was into all of it.

23. Any great performance story you want to tell me.

THERE WERE MOMENTS I TREASURE—BUT NOT “GREAT PERFORMANCE” STORIES

My little Leo jumped into the leaves and it was the cutest thing ever.

I met a lot of great dancers in the department who I've never talked to before (yay).

It was wonderful when one of my audience members threw leaves in my hair and another laid down in the leaves!!!

Not really any stories....

24. Any comment you want to write me.

I appreciate how you think. I think that most choreographers do not take as many risks as you do and so it was so refreshing to be in a piece which was so layered and also personal.

Thanks for having me in this piece, I had a really great experience ☺ Good luck in your future endeavors!

I THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME BE AN ANGEL IN THIS PIECE. IT WAS HUGE IN EVERY SENSE OF THE WORD,BUT I ALSO LOVED THE WONDERFUL ATTENTION TO EACH TINY DETAIL.

THANK YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

I loved this piece and love working with your ideas. If I'm in the area and you are creating more pieces, don't hesitate to contact me!!!

Thank you and congratulations...

I was so thrilled to have been a part of this. Everybody enjoyed themselves thoroughly. I think the audience members enjoyed the challenge the choreography and entire concert suggested they were capable of handling. I really would like to write more ... I have to run though! I will perhaps send another.

I wish I were able to experience the singing room. I heard many comments that it was very soothing.

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