

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: SEARCH FOR MY FAMILIAR

 Rubén Graciani, Master of Fine Arts, 2005

Thesis directed by: Professor Meriam Rosen
 Department of Dance

To gain a greater understanding of my aesthetic and voice, I am challenging myself to see Rubén in a different light, from a different perspective. The goal is to discover a different story to tell and to tell that story in a new way, my way.

One way to describe myself is by illuminating the voices and spirits of those closest to my heart. Their stories and our interactions make up who I am. If you know those close to me, you know me. I choose to be known.

My departure point for each of the pieces of choreography in my concert is that each dance has been inspired by a significant emotional experience or interaction. I am not telling specific stories of those interactions; instead, I am insinuating that by seeing the arc of emotions, you are seeing the arc of my life. This thesis concert is my autobiography.

SEARCH FOR MY FAMILIAR

by

Ruben Graciani

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
2005

Advisory Committee:

Professor, Dance, Meriam L. Rosen, Chair

Professor/Interim Chair, Dance, Charles S. Rutherford

Professor, Dance, Anne W. Warren

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Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center &
University of Maryland Department of Dance
present

Search for my Familiar

part of the **Making Dances / Taking Chances Series**

Rubén Graciani, Artistic Director



Rubén Graciani by William Waybourn

Thursday & Friday, November 11 & 12, 2004 at 8PM
Dance Theatre
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center
University of Maryland

program

...in the face of unrelenting optimism

Choreography by: Rubén Graciani

Music: Concerto in F Minor by Johan Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Costumes by: Liz Prince

Performed by: Alexis Cohn*, Danielle Fisco, Rubén Graciani, Kristen Kushiyama,*
Megan Thompson and Molly Welch*

I.

II. Largo

III. Presto

Clotheslined

Choreography by: Rubén Graciani

Sound Design by: Rubén Graciani

Audio Editing and Mastering by: Roni Lancaster and Brian Allerd

Performed by: Molly Welch*

Untitled # 9

Choreography by: Rubén Graciani

Music: Pastorcito Santo by Joaquin Rodrigo (1901-1999)

Performed by: Rubén Graciani

—intermission—

Long Ride Home

Choreography by: Rubén Graciani

Music: Violin Sonata in A Major by César Franck (1822-1890)

Costumes by: Rubén Graciani

Performed by: Alexander Gish and Rubén Graciani

para Iván y Abobo Graciani

A Deafening Joy

Choreography by: Rubén Graciani

Music: Violin Concerto in A Minor by Antonín Dvořák (1841-1904)

Costumes by: Rubén Graciani after a design by Isquerdo Design

Performed by: Alexis Cohn,* Rubén Graciani, Amy Gear,* Kristen Kushiyama,* Brent Lawrence,
Megan Thompson, and Molly Welch;* understudy — Judy Kurjan

For Cecelia, the Turtle Princess, and all my other mothers

I. Adagio Ma Non Troppo

II. Allegro Giocoso, Ma Non Troppo

*Creative and Performing Arts Scholar

about the artists

Artistic Direction by: Rubén Graciani
Lighting Design and Technical Direction by: Paul D. Jackson
Technical Crew: Students of Dance 210 Production Class

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Rubén Graciani began his artistic career as a merit scholarship student at the North Carolina School of the Arts where he majored in Modern Dance. After receiving his high school degree, Mr. Graciani was awarded a scholarship to attend the Juilliard School in New York City. In addition, Mr. Graciani studied with several major New York dance companies including, the Martha Graham Company, Merce Cunningham, and the Paul Taylor Dance Company.

Mr. Graciani completed his studies at the State University of New York – Purchase College, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance. While attending Purchase, Mr. Graciani was invited to perform in three International Festivals of Dance staged in Taiwan and China. Further, Mr. Graciani performed soloist and leading roles in works by Jose Limon, Charles Weidman, Paul Taylor, Kevin Wynn, and Mark Morris among others. In addition, Mr. Graciani was invited to join the Kevin Wynn Collection; a New York based Modern Dance Company. Mr. Graciani also premiered several personal works at the Purchase Theater Lab including, *Letters from Home* – 1992, *Manifesto* – 1993, and *I'm not in any physical pain...The Brush Dance* – 1994.

After graduation, Mr. Graciani was invited to join the Mark Morris Dance Group. Mr. Graciani's five-year affiliation with the company resulted in national and international tours performing with one of the world's preeminent modern dance companies. Tours with Mark Morris included performances with the Royal Opera Company, Covent Garden, seasons at the State Theater, Lincoln Center, and the Kennedy Center Opera House. Mr. Graciani has been a member of bopi's black sheep / dances by Kraig Patterson since its inception. He also has taught master classes at Texas Women's University, Singapore American School, the American Embassy School – New Delhi, India, Salisbury State University, and the Ballet Theatre of Dover.

Mr. Graciani is a M.F.A. candidate at the University of Maryland – College Park where he has presented four works of choreography for the Maryland Dance Ensemble. Recently, Mr. Graciani performed in, *Mythic Montana*, with the Joe Goode Performance Group at the Clarice Smith Center for the Performing Arts. In the spring of 2004 Ruben presented an evening of choreography at the Jack Guidone Theater in Washington, D.C. with University of Maryland alumni Connie L. Fink and Jennifer Dorsey.

about the artists

Paul D. Jackson has been the Technical Director/Lighting Designer for the Department of Dance at the University of Maryland since 1980. He has served as Lighting Designer/Production Stage Manager for Maryland Dance Theater, IMPROVISATIONS UNLIMITED, and many Baltimore/Washington area dance companies. He has designed lights for dance companies in residence at James Madison University since 1993. Paul has also acted as Technical Director for Dance Place and as Production Manager/Lighting Designer for the Kennedy Center's Washington Dance! Front and Center Programs, and the National American College Dance Festival. Paul received a BFA in Dance from the University of Utah, and an MA in Dance Production from the Ohio State University, and spent five years pioneering modern dance in the Dakotas with his wife Moira. He has remained active as a performer, appearing in works by Washington area choreographers.

Alexis Cohn is a senior Creative and Performing Arts Scholar in the Department of Dance at the University of Maryland. Alexis has worked and performed with Visiting Artists, Keely Garfield, Dan Wagoner, Douglas Nielsen, Maurice Fraga, Kelly Mayfield, Risa Jaroslow, Joe Goode and Brian Brooks as well as with faculty and peers. Her own choreography, *Moving Past Comfort* and *Transitioning* were presented in the Maryland Dance Ensemble 2004 performances and in October 2004 her solo *Demons* was performed in *Anima: Music That Moves*. Alexis was an undergraduate teaching assistant in fall 2004 for Improvisation.

Danielle Fisco is a senior undergraduate with a double major in dance and psychology at the University of Maryland. She has been selected to work with Visiting Artist Risa Jaroslow, and Jayme Host; performing their work at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage. She has also worked with guest artist Kelly Mayfield. Danielle's choreography *Crackle and Fizz* was presented on the spring 2004 Maryland Dance Ensemble Program. She performed in the MFA Graduate Dance Program of Daniel Phoenix Singh and in September 2004 performed in Singh's *Dakshina: Songs of My Life*, presented by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. Danielle was the 2004 recipient of the Cora and John H. Davis Scholarship.

Alexander Gish received an MFA from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. In New York, Gish performed with Mark Dendy Dance and Theater, Creach/Co., Mark Haim, Sara Hook, Fionna Marcotty, Gabriel Masson, Ben Munisteri, and David Parker. Currently a full-time Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Dance at the University of Maryland, he continues to perform in New York with Brian Brooks Moving Company and Keigwin/Co. Gish has taught as a guest artist at numerous festivals and universities across the country, among them, The American Dance Festival, Washington University in St. Louis, Montclair State University, New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, and the University of Colorado, Boulder. His own choreography has been seen throughout New York at venues including St. Mark's Church, The Joyce Soho, WAX, Symphony Space, Galapagos Art and Performing Space, and Joe's Pub.

Amy Grear is a senior dance major and a Creative and Performing Arts Scholar in the Department of Dance at the University of Maryland. Amy also has a minor in British and American Literature. She has been selected

about the artists

and has performed in works by visiting and guest artists Dan Wagoner, Joe Goode, Brian Brooks, Maurice Fraga, Alexander Gish, and dance faculty Nejla Yarkin. She has performed on programs of Maryland Dance Ensemble, Choreographers' Showcase, and the Millennium Stage of the Kennedy Center. She also performed in fellow student Jennifer Hart's duet *Grunt, Grunt* at American College Dance Festival's Gala Concert last spring. She teaches at SBeDance Studio.

Kristen Kushiya is a senior dance and communication major at the University of Maryland where she is a Creative and Performing Arts Scholar in the Department of Dance. While at Maryland, Kristen has performed in works by visiting artists, Keely Garfield, Dan Wagoner, Douglas Nielsen, Maurice Fraga and Risa Jaroslow, with Department of Dance faculty, Meriam Rosen and Nejla Yarkin and in the MFA Graduate program of Zoltan Nagy. She has performed at the American College Dance Festival and at North Carolina State, George Mason University, and on the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage. Kristen Kushiya was one of four students selected by the College of Arts and Humanities to be a 2004–2005 Philip Merrill Presidential Scholar.

Brent Lawrence has performed in works created by, Joe Goode Performance Group, Douglas Nielsen, in MFA graduate concerts by Daniel Phoenix Singh, Connie Fink and Steffany Haaz and in the works of fellow students Ronya Lee Anderson and Danielle Fisco. He has performed at the Choreographers' Showcase, Maryland Dance Ensemble, The Kennedy Center Millennium Stage and has twice participated in the American College Dance Festival as well as performing in several venues in DC, Pennsylvania, Hawaii, Oregon, and Mexico City, Mexico. He is a 2004 University of Maryland Dance graduate where he was a Creative and Performing Arts Scholar.

Megan Thompson is originally from a suburb of Chicago. She studied at the Gus Giordano Dance Center, the Lou Conte Dance Studio, and The Laban Centre in London and at the University of Wisconsin at Madison where she received a B.S. in Dance and English. Megan has been a member of the nora new dance company and the Li Chiao-Ping Dance Company. Megan is currently pursuing an MFA in Dance at the University of Maryland where she is a graduate teaching assistant. While at Maryland she has danced with visiting artists Joe Goode, Alexander Gish, Risa Jaroslow and Brian Brooks. She has also performed in the graduate concert of Zoltan Nagy, on programs of Maryland Dance Ensemble, at the Millennium Stage of the Kennedy Center, and at the Jack Guidone Theatre. In October 2004, she choreographed and performed her own solo, *Seasonal Balance*, in *Anima: Music That Moves*.

Molly Sue Welch is currently a senior Creative and Performing Arts Scholar in the Department of Dance at the University of Maryland. She has performed in work of guest artists Doug Varone, Keely Garfield, Dan Wagoner, Douglas Nielsen, Risa Jaroslow, Maurice Fraga, and Alexander Gish as well as faculty, Alvin Mayes and Nejla Yarkin and graduate concerts by Jennifer Martinez, Connie Fink, Daniel Phoenix Singh, and Zoltan Nagy. She has performed at the Kennedy Center's Millennium Stage, the Guidone Theatre and in Daniel Singh's *Songs of My Life* presented by the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center. Molly choreographed and performed her own solo *After the Dream* in *Anima: Music That Moves*. Molly also performed in the Theatre Department's production of *Sophisticated Ladies*.

acknowledgements

*First and foremost, I wish to thank my beautiful dancers.
Their dedication, friendship, hard work, and artistry were intrinsic to the creation of this work.*

*Special thanks to Meriam Rosen for all her support and guidance.
She continues to ask the right questions, and provide wonderful insight into the process of dance making.*

*Thanks to Dan Banks, Paul Jackson, Ryan Megredy, Phyllis Crowther, Marie Visosky, the UM Dance Department,
and the CSPAC staff for all of their help with this production.*

*Finally, to all the friends and family members who have encouraged me to keep dreaming, keep trying, and keep doing.
Your energy and enthusiasm are priceless.*

...and to all a good night!