

While I have premiered several new works since 2008, as full evening works, *zero...sixty* at Roulette (Oct 2013) and *strictly a female female* at West End Theater (May 2011) would be considered my major “publications.”

As full evening performance works are developed over time, parts often appear in smaller versions before being collected into a cohesive performance. I would suggest to non-dance reviewers a “key” of sorts. If the premiere of a full-evening work is akin (not equal but similar) to the publication of a book, it should be understood that this process of research and development occurs within the mental investigation of the artist, the physical exploration of the studio, and the effectual reconnaissance of live performances.

Full evening choreographic works are supported through the multi-year process of developing and publishing shorter works. *present.tense (progressive)* at La Mama (May 2012) and *I'm not coming back* at Danspace Project (Oct 2011) would serve as notable publications along the way to *zero...sixty*. Though very different works, they each led to the processes and direction of the Roulette performance. In a more direct way, the full evening *strictly a female, female* was preceded by the premieres of pieces “b’ing a grrl” and “Some Enchanted Believin’” at the DanceNow/NYC Fall Festivals at Dance Theater Workshop.

I would offer that these short works, considered “premieres” when presented are like the published articles and essays that become chapters in a collected book. They go through the rigorous, anxious process of being presented in full-development before a live audience and as the areas of research increase, begin to reflect component arguments in support of work of larger scope.

For review I am submitting the full *strictly a female, female* and excerpts of *zero...sixty*, *present.tense (progressive)*, and *Live at Jacques* (a new work in progress).

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My current work explores various intersections of the perceived body and the present moment through the use of interactive technologies, improvisational practices, music, theater, socio-political commentary and dance. I employ classical vocabularies and vernacular forms, deposit pop-culture tropes inside experimental structures, and while interested in physical rigor, I remain deeply serious about Play - in activating a welcoming, if challenging, environment for the audience and artist to bounce around in. My work often shifts between clearly legible interventions of Asian American portrayals in mainstream media and audience-directed performance works that are built to deconstruct the formal concert stage arena and conventions.

In my most recent premiere *zero...sixty* (Oct2013/Roulette) and in the 2½ years prior to that, I worked with composer Adam Cuthbert in a collaborative relationship built on responsive, improvisational processes. We had previously collaborated with director Gian Marco Lo Forte/Pioneers Go East Collective on multimedia installation performance works “S-16 Luna Nera” at La Mama and “7am di mattina” at Incubator Arts Project and were eager to create performance works that were outside Lo Forte’s narrative direction. We spent 2012 working on a series of one-to-one, composer-to-dancer exchanges, developing sound landscapes and movement ideas in regular sessions in the studio. This process also included live performances at La Mama Moves, the Asia Society, and La Mama’s Galleria. In 2013, we expanded our investigation and scale by building an ensemble of players (dancers and musicians) and growing more interactivity with a live audience. The result was *zero...sixty*.

My interest in this area of work evolves directly from my 2008 MFA Thesis *Continuous Play* and rests directly on the nature of interactivity, on building a work wherein the employed systems of movement, music and visual composition are available both explicitly above and privately below the surface. Dance, as a performing art, is realized most often as a public product full of undisclosed instructions, a transparently open action underscored by a great playbook of hidden directives. Choreographically, one of my interests is in exploding some of the oblique elements of performance: To present clearly the methodologies of interaction And to offer collaborative creation and interactive technologies as a way of reflecting upon the digital, social, or peer-to-peer style network systems we live

in. In a sense, I want to exploit the methodologies so fully that they become the meaning – the effort of interaction IS the point. We must act together. We have to deal with one another. And perhaps, eventually, play together.

To borrow from Pop Artist/Sculptor Claes Oldenburg:

- I am for an art that diminishes the gap between observer and participant.
- I am for an art that blurs the borders and invites people inside the work.
- I am for “we’re all in this together.”
- I am for the personal.
- I am for the transpersonal.
- I am for unsettling.
- I am for change. I am for constant.
- I am for highly physical. I am for subtle variations. for BIG. for extreme. for fine and finite.
- I am for the unknown.

In pursuing these interests and constructing an environment that welcomes viewers to participate, I am aware of the delicate task at hand. There are plenty of immersive and non-proscenium works in the experimental and commercial performance realms. I am interested in the way in which these explorations can serve an expanded definition of what constitutes a dance performance for both a jaded, veteran dance goer and, increasingly important to me, to the novice, young audience member living in a time of diminishing interpersonal contact. I have included writings about the work of other artists that reflect some of my interests and supporting research in this area, notably those included in Danspace Project’s Body Madness Platform and the works of Yanira Castro and Dean Moss.

I understand and expect college students to be a ripe and ready population for play. I worked to make this area of research highly accessible to Hunter College students. When my focus shifted from a solo practice to group-based dynamics, I invited several recent alumni and highly achieving undergrads to join me in the studio for regular weekly sessions. I then opened up participation to newer dance majors who did not have strong, prior dance training. As I went from initial research into performance development, I refined the cast to a select group of artists. I included Hunter alumni Timothy Edwards and Gilbert Reyes. Both were actively dancing in professional companies and I had worked with them previously. I also included fellow Hunter faculty member, David Capps. But, I built the work so that the larger community of Hunter College would be ready to join in. When students from Hunter College attended Roulette, they saw familiar faces and were primed to play. This allowed other non-affiliated audience members with enough of a group to “safely” play along. I was able to present a work to an audience (dance press, presenters and peer artists aside) that was dominated by my consciously, intended audience population - one at ease with mobile-play, etc.

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In my previous full evening work, *strictly a female female* (2011), I continued with the area of my early choreographic focus, the site of the Asian body as a staging ground for complex cultural – racial and gendered - projections in American culture. While previous works such as *SKINning the surFACE* and *Both* had explored the bi-racial body (the first against the specific historic backdrop of US involvement in Vietnam) or the gendered body (*Righteous Babes*) or the transnational body (*Jet Stream* and *Enemy/Territory*), *female female* was most reminiscent of my 1997 *Lotus Blossom Itch*. This has been the most dominant thread of my body of work. I am compelled to serve the highly marginalized field of Asian American contemporary dance performance by providing new “texts” for discussion. The fact that two Asian American scholars had written about *Lotus Blossom Itch* and that it is taught in Asian American performance courses prompted me to provide another chapter in the growing discourse.

Like *LBI*, *female female* started with music, for *LBI* it was the post-WWII lounge-style Exotica movement. In *female female* I turned my attention to Rogers and Hammerstein musicals – *Flower Drum Song*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, and eventually, Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. I included my *LBI* collaborators Slant Performance Group once again, but this time growing their involvement into serving

as musical performers. Like *LBI, female female* took a satirical tone and as such, worked the delicate dance of stereotypical portrayal and humorous deconstruction. While foregrounding the typical images of fans, umbrellas, chopsticked hair, bowing girls I actively pumped each section with a mashup of 80s style rock numbers – turning the frilly “I enjoy being a girl” into a collection of b-girls or blending “Some Enchanted Evening” with Journey’s “Don’t Stop Believin’” both ballads of love found from afar. “The March of the Siamese Children” collided with Disney’s “We are Siamese,” “One Night in Bangkok” and Guns n’Roses “Sweet Child O’Mine” in a movement devolution from kowtow to kitten to dancing Shiva to sex worker gyrations to birthing squats and back. *un bel di* takes on Billy Idol’s *White Wedding*, with Hello Kitty taking down Barbie – again and again.

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I should note that there is a conscious deployment of “camp” in much of my work. I use camp to destabilize gender norms and traditional modern-dance concert audience & performer relationships. Especially when working with popular music, I have found that camp practices typical in cabaret style performances serve as a way to celebrate the appeal of sexualized bodies while inverting the power dynamic of viewer and object. A camp aesthetic can allow me to shift the focus on the object of desire from female to male performers. By introducing drag, I can highlight the ridiculous nature of stereotypical images, while also wrapping it in a seductively playful container.

*Live at Jacques* (a work privately commissioned to accompany Boston musician Rick Berlin’s 1996 album of the same name) that was recently shown at Gibney Dance Center’s Agnes Varis Lab. I have included two excerpts: 1 offers a sample of how I might bring both my interest in engaging and including my audience in the action of the performance together with a campy, deconstruction of the creative process and formal performance, the other is a simple, straightforward solo showing simple, straightforward choreography.

### **Future projects:**

While I have recently been involved in several “choreography by assignment” projects – the private commission, collaborations with the Hunter College Symphony and the Hunter College Theater Department, outside directors - and I am planning with Hunter College Jazz Studies director Ryan Keberle for a Fall 2014 student collaboration, I would like to see a shift in my work that would parallel that expected of a “senior scholar.”

In describing my future plans, I would like to set an argument for developing work with broader implications for general audiences. Tom Choi, Roulette’s marketing director, sent a follow email stating that, of the three Choreographer/Composer programs in the series, mine “*was the best-attended by far and brought the most energy back to the audience.*” Director Jeffrey Kazin also wrote a follow up letter describing the *strictly a female female* weekend as “*our most successful Soaking WET (both monetarily and critically...) in the series history.*” I include this information to suggest that I am able to develop work with intentional community engagements. Neither of these works brought in a substantial number of the typical NYC dance community, but were attended by a robust community of interested viewers. As I suggest in a written piece for Movement Research’s Spring 2013 Performance Journal, rather than “*pursuing the proverbial dance audience, what if we grew our own attending communities out of people who care for the same things? Those things could be “pure movement” and art for art’s sake. Or we could engage populations passionate about entirely different ideas.*”

I have begun laying the foundation for *The Tides Project*, a multi-year, multi-faceted collaborative endeavor. When the frenzy of producing new works has subsided, I would like to develop work with a longer timeline of creation, a bigger reach and increased educational opportunities in mind. *The Tides Project* would be a collaboration with composer Adam Cuthbert, Rhode Island-based visual artist David Gonville, with whom I have collaborated on *zero...sixty* and *Live at Jacques*, Providence’s

AS220/Digital City director, Taliesin “Tally” Gilkes-Bower, and NYC’s art and technology center, Culturehub.

*The Tides Project* could allow me to consider Rhode Island’s coastline as an inspiration for movement practices influenced by ebbs/flows, cyclical shifts, etc. It could serve as a springboard for addressing the nautical flow of Vietnamese boat people, the changing landscapes of community and coastline, impermanence and much more. My aim is to build a model of engagement that could be brought to coastal communities around the globe. I would like to develop dialogues with researchers across the arts, humanities and sciences to create educational materials that could bring movement, visual arts, mobile media and interactive technologies together with issues related to climate change and immigrant communities.

David Gonville, an artist with a Marine Affairs background, makes work about the ocean and its convergence with surf, weather, landforms and contemporary human interaction. Tally Bower is organizing Rhode Island’s growth as a global leader in digital media. Culturehub is the La Mama affiliated incubator of art and technology intersections, focused on serving local and global communities. With Culturehub director, Billy Clark, I established a course for students in the Arnhold Graduate Dance Education Program that explores digital practices and teaching dance. As former members of the Great Jones Repertory Company, Billy Clark and I have a history of shared artistic practice and he has offered a residency at Culturehub to begin establishing some of the interactive technologies I expect to employ when *The Tides Project* develops into installation, performance works.

With management assistance from RI’s Nami Studios, I will seek funding support from RI Economic Development Corporation Board, and will explore potential for support from New England Foundation for the Arts, Martha Vineyard’s The Yard, Creative Capital and sources to create a Northeast consortium for education, climate change, and livelihoods along the Atlantic coast using digital, visual, and performance art as a means for creating awareness. Nami Studios was a finalist for this year’s RI Foundation Innovation Awards and we plan to build on their current network to apply for next year’s award.

One of the next steps in this project will be to gather imagery and video from RI’s coastline and bringing some of that material into the Culturehub residency. I have just been offered a residency process and commission from Women in Motion. Along with two other female choreographers, I will be showing work-in-process in the fall of 2014 & winter 2015 and will premiere a new 15-20 minute work at The West End Theater in May 2015. I plan to use these landmarks to facilitate public engagements in the beginning of *The Tides Project*’s extended life.