

# **INTERSECTION IV: RE/GENERATIONS • APRIL 7-9, 2006**

## **REPORTS / Workshops**

### **Friday**

#### **Rituals of Vigilance: A Dance-Theater Workshop**

**Dora Arreola, Mujeres en Ritual Danza-Teatro**

Dora began this workshop by discussing its context in the Mexican- American border region and its implications for an artistic work. She spoke from the Mexican perspective about the experience of living close to the fence that divides the two countries. “The fence is not a remote idea, an imaginary line or a metaphor. The fence is a concrete piece of metal that is practically in our back yard and an important part of our everyday life. It defines who we are, what exists in our body, and how I move, coming from there. The border shapes our artistic work.” She explained that she designed this workshop in response to the high level of vigilance at the border, especially the recent increase of vigilance by the U.S. government.

We explored with movement and improvisation the experience of being watched, as well as concepts such as “borders,” “security,” and “the other.” We also did group improvisations using constant changes of direction and changing who was leading the movements. This exercise challenged the participants to assume the responsibility for making movement with clarity and precision. We learned a structure called “the vigilant,” in which we explored the state of vigilance that demands high levels of connection with the others and with the space.

To finish, we had a dialogue to talk about our experiences in the workshop and the importance of being in a state of alert (awareness) and connection with others. We also talked about our responsibility as artists for responding to our particular historical moment.

### **Saturday**

#### **Urban Voice: Unorthodox Chant**

**Akim Funk Buddha and Myla.**

Documented by Irene Shaikly.

First of all, Akim Funk Buddha is AMAZING!! His workshop included vocalized ceremonious-like sounds interfused with elements of Hip Hop culture. He described his work as “urban unorthodox chanting” because it integrated throat singing, beatboxing and

movement. He emphasized how much of his work had been inspired by Japanese, Brazilian and Balinese sounds. In addition, movement had a lot to do with how he expressed and presented his “urban unorthodox chants.” I understood him as saying that vocal chanting and beatboxing can be more powerful if certain movements kept those sounds steady and strong.

After he introduced himself and Myla (his teacher assistant) introduced herself, Akim began to teach the whole group basic “drum set” sounds in which we all took turns and went around the circle repeating the specific instructed sounds (bass drum, high hat, snare drum, ride cymbal). Then he combined all these “drum set” sound tools into a sequence in which we all repeated in a looped pattern. This was our introduction to beatboxing. He then began to infuse a throat singing pattern and again, let us take turns practicing this sound. It was interesting because he showed the group how important it was to use the diaphragm in order to maintain circular breathing. I nodded my head with this statement because in the Buddhist teaching much of what has been a major cause of daily stress in our lives is due to the fact that people breathe from their chests. In this instance, I was able to find the connection between the use of diaphragm and circular breathing.

The final exercise in the workshop was a split into two groups where each group used a separate room to create a beatbox and throat singing ensemble with movement to visually express what they were saying in conjunction with their audio vocal rhythms. The two groups were asked to join forces in one room. Each group took turns in their ensemble performance. In the end, Akim purposely asked us to create a dialogue between each ensemble through performance. We then reflected on how the exercise went for us. Some participants expressed how free they felt to moan or create vocal rhythmic patterns they never expected to come out their own mouths. Others expressed how important it was for them to move in the space and be connected with their own bodily and vocal expressions. Akim Funk Buddha was an extraordinary teacher and of course, a fierce vocal master.

### **Tracing Our Bodies’ Power**

**Ananya Chatterjea**, Ananya Dance Theatre

Documented by Lakota Sandoe.

We began with warm-ups, stretching and shaking/moving in any way we saw fit while introducing ourselves and our relationships to our bodies, to dance and to movement in general. Then we did some specific stretches. Ananya asked us to go into poses where we felt comfortable and then poses that made us feel powerful. We looked at each others’ poses and saw that many “comfortable poses” are mostly horizontal and introverted. There were a few exceptions. We discussed the difference in the poses, comparing and contrasting the elements of the poses. We discussed our different definitions of security and power, which involved balance and a certain amount of muscular strength. Next we moved into a series of exercises that involved footwork, moving across the floor, the spiral in the body and hip extensions. The movements were subtle but challenging and we approached each one with care and a considerable amount of time.

We talked about the “femaleness” of the movements and the feminine principle in both the male and the female. “How many cultures accept a more “feminine” masculinity?”

We discussed the histories our bodies hold, personal and beyond, and the kind of representation a dancer portrays innately because of “body type.” This led into a discussion of race and other limited demographics. Bodies obviously carry a biological history evident in our differences as well as cultural connotations. There was a discussion about the validity of these attributes, the possibility to challenge connotations, the necessity for acceptance of these biological and social realities.

We did an exercise with a line dividing the room. We were asked, “If you identify as —, step across the line.” Some examples were “person of color,” “working class,” “disabled,” “adopted,” “female,” among others. The group generally felt the questions were not provocative enough; too easy, but interesting nonetheless. We discussed feeling the gaze, being surprised by how people identify with certain things. “How much does our ‘identity’ jibe with what others see and recognize in us?” Again, should we challenge or regard these assumptions with acceptance? Probably both on some level. People shared their experiences. A young African woman refuses the idea of race, a Jewish woman identifies with the Japanese culture she was raised in for years, a young woman from India struggles with her mixed roots, struggles to accept all parts of herself. A young mixed race woman tries to accept and know her black roots in an adoptive white American family.

We ended our session with an exercise where we tangled ourselves in our selves, our limbs. It took about five minutes and it was very interesting. It ended up looking as if we were all fighting with ourselves. The longer we worked at it, constantly moving from one entangled pose to the next, the struggle became more and more intense. Some people fell over a few times ... a profound metaphor in movement. The longer we struggle with ourselves, the more “caught up” we get, the more aggressively we work and the more lost we feel banging into ourselves and the world around us.

## **Saturday & Sunday**

### **The Art of Weaving Faiths**

**Noboko Miyamoto and Kamau Ayubbi**, Great Leap.

In these early-morning sessions, attendees were introduced to the “art of weaving faiths” interfaith practice and the concept of spiritual activism.

## **Sunday**

### **The Breakdown**

**Kwikstep**, Full Circle Productions

Documented by Irene Shaikly & Amie Dowling

An informative workshop full of history and clarity about the cultural Hip Hop element of breaking, popping and locking through video presentations of the “moves vs. movement” in the 60s, 70s, and now.

Kwikstep emphasized that these dance forms were not strictly about the acrobatic and strenuous dance moves that made popping/locking and breaking a huge mass media phenomenon. This was an organized community movement derived from the method for rival gangs of the ghetto to mediate and settle territorial disputes through dance. In a cipher-based showcase, dance teams, such as the infamous Rock Steady Crew, competed against other dance teams by showing off their best dance moves. Not to forget, these dance moves were borrowed from the musical and dance influences of funk in the '60s and '70s, like funk legend James Brown's “quick feet” moves. In summary, the distinction between the moves and the Hip Hop dance movement was that the intricacy and aggressive dance moves were essential in the battle arena but the movement was significant in using these dance routines as a positive diversion from the threats of urban life.

Kwikstep also taught a few basic popping and locking moves in the other room despite the huge group of participants and skill levels. Due to the lack of space in the room for all participants, Kwik split everyone up into groups as each group took turns learning basic moves and sharing the space. One thing he emphasized was how important it was to learn the basic technique but bring your own style into the mix. He explained how different poppers/lockers had their own signature moves that no one else had, which made them notorious in the wider public.

All in all, Kwikstep did a fantastic job, creating an environment of deep knowledge for the root of b-boyism/girlism, and created an environment of respect, curiosity, and fun.