



Undergraduate Research Symposium May 17, 2019 Mary Gates Hall

Online Proceedings

BRIDGING IDENTITIES: PERFORMING ARTS RESEARCH INTERVENTIONS

Session Moderator: Juliet McMains, Dance

MGH 389

12:30 PM to 2:00 PM

* Note: Titles in order of presentation.

Finding Freedom in Jazz: Bebop as the Bridge Between Rhythm Tap and Beat Poetry

Rachel Lauryn Zuraek, Freshman, English

Mentor: Juliet McMains, Dance

Beat poetry and rhythm tap are two interests I have had for several years. Through my separated exposure to and analysis of both, I noticed a similarity in their manifestations of improvisation and rhythmic complexities. Initially, I assumed these resemblances were due to the heavy influence of jazz music both beat poetry and rhythm tap dance underwent in their formulations. However, when examining the jazz music more closely, it became clear that the characteristics of the specific form of jazz beat poetry emulated (bebop jazz) purposefully opposed the characteristics of the form of jazz rhythm tap was danced to (big band swing). This research henceforth sought to find how the rhythmic complexity and improvisation in rhythm tap and beat poetry could manifest themselves so similarly despite their rootedness in fundamentally contradicting forms of jazz music. Through analyzing the historical shift from swing jazz to bebop jazz, it was found that the contrasts between the genre were actually essential, as they allowed for a different relationship with jazz music to develop per art form: rhythm tap integrated itself into swing music, while beat poetry emulated bebop. Because of this, rhythm tap had the autonomy to add improvisation and rhythmic complexity atop mainstream swing music's lack of both, while beat poetry could echo the improvisation and rhythmic complexity of bebop without losing its individuality. This resulted in both having sonic similarities to bebop: the unintentional musical bridge between beat poetry and rhythm tap which resulted in the two mirroring one another.

Performance and Identity in the European Court of Human Rights

Hannah Sophie Probst, Senior, Drama, Law, Societies, & Justice

Mary Gates Scholar, UW Honors Program,

Undergraduate Research Conference Travel Awardee

Mentor: Rachel Cichowski, Department of Political Science

Mentor: Catherine Cole, School of Drama

Legal theorists have long maintained that courts operate beyond their primary function of dispute-resolution and have problematized their characterization as “objective” bodies, noting their significance as powerful social and political actors bestowed with constitutive powers of meaning-making. Virtually absent in this scholarship is an analytical angle examining this constitutive power using theory or methods from performance studies. This is surprising, as courtrooms are highly theatrical spaces. My research seeks to fill this gap in scholarship by marrying theories and methods from sociolegal studies and theatre- and performance studies to examine how courts contribute to the construction of cultural meanings pertaining to identity. This essay treats the European Court of Human Rights (Court), the judicial organ of the Council of Europe and one of the most active, powerful international human rights courts in the world. How does the Court construct notions of identity – especially around nationality, European community, gender identity, and religion? More specifically, my project asks: How are these courtroom constructions conceived and legitimized through narrative performance, and how is their sociopolitical influence shaped by the mechanics of performativity? To answer these questions, I conduct an original research project analyzing both written judgments and video recordings of oral hearings held in the Court’s Grand Chamber. I form my own criteria to analyze these hearings as performances, and create a scheme to evaluate written judgments for their performativity. I also analyze certain structural characteristics of the Court, and some legacies of its case law, as symbolic and embodied performances, examining how identity narratives are reproduced by the Court’s composition as an institution and

its behavior over time. In addition to demonstrating what can be gained by critically assessing courts holistically using performance theory and methodology, I hope to illuminate exciting intersections between sociolegal studies and theatre- and performance studies with this work.

Making Nothing Something: The Creation of a Solo Circus Act

Whisper St Christopher, Senior, Community, Environment, & Planning

Mentor: Megan Herzog, Urban Design & Planning, Community, Environment & Planning

There is a common thread among contemporary circus art disciplines that is unique in the performance world. It is a blend of theater, dance, and acrobatic skill that can produce amazingly complex and captivating works. When comparing the choreographic processes of these performance mediums with the creative practices of solo contemporary circus artists, do new choreographic themes exclusive to circus arts become visible? Or does the essence of contemporary circus lie in the combination of standard techniques adopted from theater, dance, and acrobatics? An analysis of well-known work provides viewable examples of contemporary circus choreography, while local artist interviews provided seasoned, close-to-home examples of solo circus act creation on a professional level. In summary of my findings, I discuss the implications of choreographic methods in contemporary circus from the viewpoint of a solo artist and choreographer.

On the Social Ecology of Environmental Dance: Fostering Community Dialogue and Environmental Action

Madison Rose Bristol, Senior, Dance, Environmental Science & Resource Management

UW Honors Program

Mentor: Rachael Lincoln, Dance

At present, there is a disconnect between people's awareness of environmental crises and their motivation to act on this knowledge. Novel ways of fostering a sense of connection with the environment are currently being explored to address this problem. Dance, among other artistic disciplines, has the potential to motivate pro-environmental actions because it appeals to people's emotional centers through empathy-inducing experiences, community building, and non-traditional communication. Using members of the Seattle dance community as a case study for environmental dance, this research explores whether and how environmental activism through dance is manifested in Seattle, if barriers exist to engaging in environmental dance, and if current forms of environmental dance effectively motivate action. To execute this exploration, I will conduct several one-on-one semi-structured interviews with members of the local dance

community; interviews will last between 0.5-2 hours. Interviewees will be selected to represent varying degrees of participation in environmental dance—from minimal to explicit environmental dance activities—and will include internationally recognized dance creatives to rising entrepreneurs. These discussions will inform a qualitative analysis of how dance has or has not been used as tool for promoting environmental action locally. Furthermore, they will provide the context for my own choreographic pursuits on environmental dance. Based on relevant research and my 10+ years of involvement in the Seattle dance community, I predict that environmental dance can be identified as choreographic productions, site-specific explorations, embodied knowledge, sustainable practices in the arts, and collaborations between scientists and dancers. The results will be communicated to a performing arts audience through creative demonstrations of key research findings and through excerpts of my choreography. I hope, by engaging with both the environmental science and dance communities, to promote a dialogue within and between these communities and to inspire further environmental dance endeavors beyond the scope of Seattle.

RATSKIN: Refracting and Reflecting Upon the Dispossession of Immigrant Families

Brian Dang, Senior, English, Drama

UW Honors Program

Mentor: Karen Hartman, Drama

Three generations of immigrant history have led up to my personhood. I've inherited the struggle of my mother and my grandmother before her, who have worked themselves to the bone to provide me security. This inheritance is the driving question in my research project RATSKIN, a theatrical play that is in development. How does one honor one's immigrant history but also break free from the ideologies that were made to trap immigrants within a cycle of destruction? RATSKIN is my intervention. Incorporating literary and theatrical traditions with historical, archival research, the play is an exploration in how to weave together personal experience, genre, cultural theory, and history into a narrative that can be shared to a community in a productive, discussion generating way. RATSKIN draws inspiration and theoretical groundwork from *Borderlands/La Frontera* by Gloria Anzaldúa; *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez; Neo-Marxist theories by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, Louis Althusser, Evelyn Nakano Glenn; Tacoma's immigrant history; and my own family's immigrant history. The plot and construction of the story itself is an attempt to physically manifest and represent racialization, assimilation, and the trappings of harmful ideology that is expanded upon in the theoretical foundations. With these lenses, RATSKIN is a presentation of immigrant history and how the theatrical and literary traditions can help reveal how families continue to be affected by immigration. How can this history be refracted

within a single family? What are these effects? How have they evolved through generations? How can we make sure these effects don't limit the growth of our families?