

THE DREAMFIGURES' BALL

A Creative Project in Process Oriented Dance Improvisation

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What happens when 5 dancers go through an awareness process to explore their current dreams, moods, body symptoms, childhood dreams, and their personal edges to the unknown? How does dance get created out of this dreaming process of the body? What dream is unfolding in you right now? How are you already dancing it?

The Dreamfigures' Ball is a creative project in fulfillment of the final project requirements for my completion of a Diploma and Master of Arts in Process Work from the Process Work Institute of Portland, Oregon. This project culminated in a performance piece with five dancers shown at Sugar Space in Salt Lake City, Utah, on Friday, April 10, 2009, along with an audience question and answer session which I hosted, and a process

demonstration which I facilitated. A DVD recording of the performance/presentation accompanies this contextual essay.

How the project came to be

Although I have no training and little background in dance, in 2007 I began learning and experimenting with a form of modern dance called contact improvisation, known as ‘contact improv’. Contact improv is a form involving usually two partners who establish a point of physical contact between their bodies, which moves and shifts as they proceed to improvise, directed by internal impulses, and by the external feedback or direction felt in the body of the partner, without breaking contact. I was enjoying and benefiting from this practice as a way of being more fully embodied, internal, and present in relationship. Also, professionally as a therapist, I became interested in contact improvisation as a metaphor for the therapist-client or healer-patient relationship: two people simultaneously listening, leading, following, staying in connection, improvising based on feeling what arises, and ultimately entering a flow together where the real leader or healer is the Tao, or the ‘third’ transpersonal connection and field between them.

Over the summer and fall of 2007, I conducted 12 audio-recorded interviews of dancers, artists and therapists to ask about their views on the connections between creative process and healing or personal growth. My new-found passion for contact improv made me curious how other therapists and artists viewed the role of play, improvisation and creativity in the healing and personal growth process. The results of these interviews inspired the notion of doing my own creative project, based in movement improvisation, that

would use awareness exercises from the Process Work paradigm as the vehicle for creating art while fostering participant healing and growth.

A year later, in March of 2008, I collaborated on a series of experimental dances along these lines with colleague and modern dancer, Emily Fifer. We first video recorded two contact improv dances that we did together. The next two times we met we preceded the contact improv dance with a Process Work exercise that unfolded a dreamfigure out of a secondary experience. We then entered the contact improv dance as those dreamfigures dancing together, not as our typical 'selves'. When the dance felt particularly stuck, or went as far as it could go, we returned to the Process Work exercise to deepen the secondary experience beyond the dreamfigures, to the essence level of the experience. We returned to the contact dance, sourcing from this essence quality. The personal and aesthetic results were exciting! The quality of movement, synergy between partners, and personality behind the movement was radically different than the first two unembellished contact dances.

The resulting direction was to do a bigger project using these overlapping domains of dance and therapy, creativity and transformation. The initial dilemma was on which side to emphasize: a therapeutic workshop using movement and creative process for personal change; or a choreography and performance project using process oriented investigations into personal material as the vehicle for creative process? *The Dreamfigures' Ball* is the result of the latter focus, which I chose first for purposes of my own growth. It sounded challenging and fun to choreograph or create a dance piece, since I had never done it before. A future phase of the initial vision of this project will repackage the process as a therapeutic or personal growth workshop.

The Dreamfigures' Ball included five dancers in a two-month rehearsal process that was an elaboration on those first explorations with Fifer. The dancers were asked to keep a dream log of nighttime dreams, and a personal journal of their experience in the rehearsal process. Process work exercises were used in each rehearsal to unfold secondary material for the dancers based on various starting points, including basic walking, familiar 'signature' movement, current or chronic moods, night dreams, childhood dreams, and contact improv in pairs. Two planned areas that we never got to were addictions and body symptoms.

Out of each exercise, we would unfold the process in the movement channel and would dance together in the roles of the dreamfigures that emerged from the exercises¹. We worked with edges that came up, and followed the dreaming process deeper to the less dualistic essence, or source, of the movement. For example, this deepening was often achieved by making the movement slower and smaller, tracking with more awareness the subtle tendencies and irrational associations that might pop up, distilling the movement quality to a simple hand gesture. We practiced letting go of usual effort, and 'being moved' or 'being danced' by those essence qualities into a spontaneous dance, and eventually into an improvisation score that could be recreated in the performance night. The final public performance was a coherent sequence of these scores, or thematic guidelines, of improvised movement. Some parts included small sections of choreographed movement created and set by the dancers themselves. My role was not as a typical choreographer, but as a facilitator of the whole process.

¹ See appendix for three of the recreated scores used live in the actual performance. Credit and much gratitude is due to Army Mindell and the many gifted teachers on faculty at the Process Work Institute, who developed original versions of these exercises which I adapted to the project. In particular, Amy Mindell's research and writing on work in the movement channel laid the groundwork for this project, including the walking exercise adapted here. Also, the "contact edge score" (appendix) is thanks to the ideas of Kate Jobe, who guided me in many aspects of the project.

Care was taken to provide a safe therapeutic container for this process since the personal psychology and history of the dancers was the material being explored. However, boundaries were also clarified on the first day of rehearsal to make it clear that the primary focus was the creative process, and development of something to be shown in performance. The dancers were held in a safe context to explore, but were also in charge of managing how emotionally vulnerable or exposed they chose to be in the process.

Movement-based work in the field of Process Work, and this project's contribution

The field of Process Work is the paradigm and training in which I developed this creative project. A concise definition of Process Work can be found on the website of the Process Work Institute:

“Process Work is an innovative approach to individual and collective change that brings psychology, group dynamics, spirituality, and creative expression together in a single paradigm. An offshoot of Jungian psychology, Process Work was developed by Jungian analyst Arnold Mindell in the 1970s when Mindell began to research illness as a meaningful expression of the unconscious mind. He discovered that the unconscious manifests not only in nighttime dreams but also in physical symptoms, relationship difficulties, addictions, and social tensions. Drawing from his background as a physicist, as well as from Taoist principles, shamanism, Zen Buddhism and communication science, Mindell formulated the idea of the 'dreaming process,' a coherent and meaningful flow of experiences that underlies all life events.”

<http://www.processwork.org/about.htm>

The living, dreaming process that Mindell describes in his work reveals itself in our experiences through various channels of awareness. Our western culture tends to value visual and auditory modes or channels of perception over the more embodied awareness channels of proprioception (body sensations) and movement. Culturally, we also tend to undervalue the outer environment or transpersonal field as a legitimate source of information for internal processes. *The Dreamfigures' Ball* rehearsal and performance

process focused on unfolding experience in these culturally less known or less familiar realms of movement, body feeling and interconnected field.

The concept of the dreamfigure is used by Mindell to refer to a figure or element of a nighttime dream, and also a figure or element of our waking dreaming process. As formulated by Process Work teachers, Julie Diamond and Caroline Spark, “a dreaming process is experienced initially as ‘other.’ It is found in statements that describe that which is ‘not me,’ such as other people, figures, events, or symptoms. These are also referred to as ‘third parties,’ or ‘dreamfigures.’” (Diamond & Lee 2004, 48) “A dreamfigure is a personification of dreaming tendencies, which coalesce momentarily into a role or character. It is fluid, transitory, and capable of transformation. The term ‘dreamfigure’ is often used interchangeably with ‘role,’ ‘part,’ and ‘ghost.’ As a process unfolds, dreaming signals may develop into a dreamfigure or into an interaction between two or more dreamfigures.” (Pg 86, 87). This is precisely what unfolded in our rehearsals. As the dreamfigures would emerge and interact, we kept the process in movement and let them dance through us as channels. For example, during one rehearsal based on childhood dreams, we found ourselves in the middle of a dance between a ‘caveman’, an ‘alien’, and the ‘source of all things’. On another night, we found ourselves playing out a potentially abusive scene between an ‘aggressor’ and a ‘passive, weaker’ role, with the missing dreamfigure of a ‘protector’ jumping in the dance in spontaneous and unexpected ways! The so-called choreography was being orchestrated by these previously unconscious or unknown dreamfigures within us, and the greater field of meaningful connection between them.

The Dreamfigures’ Ball falls within a rich context of predecessors in movement-work, creativity and performance in the Process Work field. Working in the movement

channel of awareness has been one of the fundamental elements of Process Work practice since its inception. And improvisation, in the sense of facilitating with a creative, playful style – following what comes up – has been a central teaching of the Process Work approach, and well modeled by Arny and Amy Mindell and fellow teachers. Amy Mindell authored the first written material directly on a Process Work approach to working in movement. She has helped innovate the use of Process Work in the creative arts, including music, theater, dance, puppetry and animation. Kate Jobe has also become known as a specialist and premier resource in the area of movement and performance within the Process Work field. Her work and teaching draws on decades of incorporating her background as a dancer, Laban Movement Analyst, and performer.

In addition to Mindell and Jobe, other Process Workers have done some stunning and profound work with unfolding process in movement, including dance improvisation for self-expression, both public and personal. Notable performances and explorations have been developed and presented by Carol Zahner, Dawn Menken, Kasha Kavanaugh, Jenn Cohen and Annie Blair (please forgive any unintentional omissions). Zahner used the practice of Authentic Movement (a dance form explained below) to explore her own psychology, and to develop the choreography and improvisation scores that comprised an autobiographical performance piece on sex, shame and personal spirituality. Menken performed a solo movement and monologue show about her personal learnings and reflections on her initiation into motherhood. Kavanaugh's work explores creative process and self-development through both process oriented movement and painting. Cohen's project, entitled "The Circus Project", has launched an impressive life's work empowering homeless and at-risk youth by integrating Process Work, theater and circus arts into an educational

and social action methodology. Blair's work involves a self-study on the eating pattern of binging and starving, which culminated in a captivating multidimensional performance combining movement, visual arts, creative writings, and spoken word.

The Dreamfigures' Ball contributes to this lineage of movement and performance in Process Work by applying it directly to choreography using trained dancers, as opposed to monologues and solos of deep self-expression, or working with previously untrained youth. While Process Workers have made many developments in use of movement and the creative arts, this project is unique in exploring how Process Work techniques in personal growth and awareness, applied to self-identified dancers and performers, can create art that is both transformative to the performers and meaningful to an audience. This application of Process Work to art creation, as advanced here by this project, can easily be recreated in the realm of choreography, and also translated to media other than movement or dance.

Improvisation and process oriented developments in the field of Modern Dance

In the field of modern dance in general, there are also important precedents and a context for where *The Dreamfigures' Ball* fits. While much of modern dance maintains the formalistic emphasis on technique and set choreography passed down from its origins in ballet, there is also a spirit of innovation, improvisation and love of nature threading from the life and work of Isadora Duncan, considered by many to be the mother of modern dance. Duncan, born in 1877, “rejected traditional ballet steps to stress [improvisation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Improvisation), emotion, and the human form” (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isadora_Duncan). She had a fundamentally nature-based, transpersonal view of the role of dance in the human experience: “The dance should simply be... the natural gravitation of this will of the individual, which in the end is

no more nor less than a human translation of the gravitation of the universe” (Cheney [Ed.] 1977, 55). While many after her used the new cultural space that she opened up to innovate ‘modern’ choreography and technique, she herself was the first in America to at times shed all choreography, and perform based on pure passion and improvisation.

In the last two generations, there has been a new wave of improvisers who explored the use of chance, play and self-awareness in their choreography. From the 1950’s through the 1970’s, Merce Cunningham was a pioneer in the use of indeterminacy and chance. His long association with the musician John Cage influenced his experimental style in disjoining the dance from both music and narrative, and as in nature, allowing multiple foci of activity to co-arise. He used the I-Ching as one of his decision-making tools in rehearsals to allow the Tao to choose orders of segments. He followed his dancers’ discoveries through improvisation in rehearsals, though the choreography was often set for performance.

In the 1960’s, some of Cunningham’s students went on to create The Judson Dance Theater in New York, which exploded the bounds of creativity in choreography. These artists are considered the founders of post-modern dance, and included Yvonne Rainer, Deborah Hay, Steve Paxton, Trisha Brown, Simone Forti, among others. Rainer evolved this visionary trend further in the 1970’s with her group the Grand Union, which included Paxton, Brown, and others. The Judson group and Grand Union were committed to taking improvisation as far as it could go. Even the place and time of performances were left to chance and spontaneity. Improvisation was no longer only a tool in rehearsal, but a vehicle for the performance itself. ‘Choreography’ was decentralized to an egalitarian collective creative process shared by the dancers. *The Dreamfigures’ Ball* follows this model regarding decentralized, improvisational process before and during performance.

Steve Paxton went on to originate the contact improvisation form out of his experiments after the Grand Union. As a form, contact improv shifts the focus of the dance from expression out toward an audience or witness, to an inner-pointed attention on proprioception and kinesthesia in relationship. The emphasis is on ‘letting’ or ‘allowing’ the dance to happen, which is a fundamentally taoistic or process-oriented approach shared also by *The Dreamfigures’ Ball*.

Paxton also described a transpersonal dimension, or ‘third’ element in the background of the dance, although he did not frame it in quite those terms. In his words, “this all has to do with... the sensing of intent, which should be maximal. The more the forms are understood, the more cooperation becomes the subject – an ‘it’ defined by the balancing of the inertias, momentums, psychologies, spirits of the partners” (Novack 1990, 182). A central feature of the creative process behind *The Dreamfigures’ Ball* is also the sensing and following of the field atmosphere, and the transpersonal ‘It’ in the background. This is the true choreographer of the dance, and one could posit, of all movement and life. Most of our rehearsal exercises included an element of going to the essence of the movement, and ‘being moved’ by ‘It’. Similarly, the Japanese modern dance form of Butoh broke ground in this area, and has developed rigorous methods to attempt this very goal of ‘being moved’.

The Dreamfigures’ Ball, in its use of contact improvisation, is clearly influenced by the work of Steve Paxton. However, Paxton’s definition of contact improv emphasizes the physics of two connected bodies moving together: gravity, momentum, and inertia. The main point where this project diverges from Paxton is in the emphasis on emotional, psychological, and interpersonal dreaming layers connecting two people dancing.

Another lineage in modern dance that paves the path for *The Dreamfigures' Ball* is the field of dance therapy. Founders of dance therapy, including Marion Chase, Trudi Schoop, and Mary Starks Whitehouse, all recognized the powerful unity of mind and body, and the mental, emotional and spiritual healing that can be accessed so directly by following the body in movement and dance. Whitehouse drew on the Jungian concept of active imagination and developed the movement form called Authentic Movement. This form uses improvisation for its therapeutic aspects, instructing the mover to close eyes and connect with deep internal impulses and feelings as she moves, staying in the present moment. A witness is supporting the mover by watching with full attention but without judgment, paying equal attention to her own inner movements of feeling, imagery and association. The role of the witness is essential to the healing or transformation process, as it allows the mover to be seen, validated, and even more connected to their own deep internal levels. This experience over time allows for any chronic self-criticism to heal into an internalized self-witnessing stance that is open, curious, and loving.

The Dreamfigures' Ball has elements following very much in the Authentic Movement tradition, especially in the sense of believing in the inherently healing or illuminating effect of inner-directed improvisation. Also, the role of witness was part of every rehearsal, as I or certain dancers sat aside and watched the improvisation exercises unfold, in addition to a video camera that was always present recording what we did. Having a neutral or appreciative outer watcher, as in Authentic Movement practice, helped the ones dancing to see and appreciate their own impulses and choices. Old and painful patterns of self-criticism began to soften. Also, the relationship dynamic between witnessing each other, and improvising movement, seemed critical to the creative process.

The art and magic seemed to come to life by reflecting on itself, through it's parts of a mover and a witness. The roles were very fluid, and it took all five dancers and me to notice insights and connections that any one of us might have missed. The creative process seemed inseparably linked to a relationship and community effect.

During the performance, we had a chair on stage to represent the witness role that was such a key part of our process. On one level, the chair symbolized awareness itself – bigger than any one person – that both sees and creates movement and life in all of us. Various dancers at different times filled that chair. The audience, also, was in a witness role, but in this case constellated some fears and projections of judgment or evaluation in some of the dancers. During the question and answer session, they stated that it was vulnerable and unfamiliar, as performers, to be asked to perform with an internal focus, as opposed to an external performative mode of dancing 'for' the audience.

The work of Anna Halprin is also closely related to the creative process in *The Dreamfigures' Ball*. Halprin was one of the first to use improvisation in performance, not just in rehearsals, in order to include the audience in the process. "She saw improvisation as a means to both personal development and collaboration among dancers" (Novack 1990, 28). Just as we did in this project, "she also emphasized the direct, sensuous experience of movement, instructing students to experience 'kinesthetic awareness' and sense the 'body's changing dynamic configurations'" (Novack 1990, 30). Halprin went on to innovate a movement-based expressive arts approach to working with people therapeutically through the institute she founded called Tamalpa Institute in California. Although *The Dreamfigures' Ball* draws it's philosophy and methodology from Process Work and the

work of Arnold Mindell, Halprin beautifully articulates a very similar process oriented ethos in her work:

“I have a tremendous faith in the process of a human mechanism, and in creativity as an essential attribute of all human beings. This creativity is stimulated only when the sense organs are brought to life. This faith in the process is the only goal or purpose I need. What happens as a result creates and generates its own purpose... The process is the purpose; let it be”
(Brown 1979, 133).

Experiential discoveries through the rehearsal process and performance

There were several interesting discoveries and outcomes that emerged through the process of developing and showing *The Dreamfigures' Ball*, as well as some limitations and aspects that did not work as intended. The central success of the project was two fold. First, the audience feedback was highly positive. All of the people that spoke to the dancers and me, either after the show or during the question and answer segment, enjoyed the performance and also were inspired or intrigued by the discussion of the awareness-based creative process behind the project. In terms of evaluating the aesthetic and entertainment value of the art, audience comments praised the apparent cohesion of the performers as a group, the captivating congruence in movement quality and improvisational choices, and the engaging dynamics around power and rank in some of the sections of the piece. Since a central goal of the project was to make valid and interesting art, the audience feedback indicated a success.

The second central goal that was successfully met was the hope that the process oriented journey of creating the piece would be in some way healing or transformational to the five performer/participants. The results far exceeded my expectations. All five of the dancers reported significant gains in self-awareness, self-acceptance, group bonding and

personal growth. Working primarily in the movement channel indeed proved to be a direct path into deep issues and processes with some transformational effects.

In the words of one of the participants, “[I have been in therapy in the past, but now] I was at a stage of my life where I didn’t want to deal with my crap psychologically. I found that the dancing, the approach, the whole process, makes it very soft and respectful. You go where you’re ready to go. Nothing is pulled out of you.... I found it a lot easier to go to those edges, and look beyond them.” (Personal communication, *Dreamfigures’ Ball, Question & Answer*) Another dancer expressed that through the rehearsals she had a big personal breakthrough in being able to pick up her power in various areas of her life, especially in her relationship with her spouse, something she had been attempting to do for years. “The fact of finding that inner strength and voice, and connecting that with the movement really opened something up for me. It was really good... it was really powerful to be like, yeah, I *am* going to push back... and being able to be ok with [my] aggression and the anger.... And it’s really good that it came out, in a safe setting. I feel way more connected with myself and others. It was huge.”

Claiming both power and connection in relationships was a common theme in the personal growth of most of the participants, and seemed to be a central aspect of a group myth that emerged. Another dancer shared, “as woman, in moments of aggression we usually disconnect from our vulnerability, but [this time] to keep it, that was really key for me... And actually I found a lot more assertiveness... and to respect myself a lot more on that level. [Those parts of ourselves over the edge], we give them a lot of power by fearing them, when actually when you look at them, they lose their power.” This participant had one of her biggest personal shifts in claiming safe boundaries and power in relationships not

by her own work, but by witnessing the participant mentioned above unfold her aggression, and discover her power relative to others. The witnessing of a new pattern modeled by another was the transformational event. This was a healing aspect of the group dynamics that I did not expect to be so effective.

All five dancers agreed that the immediate safety, bonding and trust that formed in the group was one of the most important and valued aspects of the whole process. In a discussion two weeks after the performance, one dancer, in tears, shared how healing and important it was for her that the group was always so instantly supportive of the aspects of herself where she had fear or shame. She stated it was the first time she began to challenge a pernicious self-criticism, and begin to believe in her capabilities and strengths in a deeper way. Many nods of agreement and a big group hug came from the other dancers who said they could relate to this process.

One specific discovery that emerged from the work came in a particular rehearsal one night. In the previous week we had completed a segment of developing a 'signature phrase', or a phrase of movement that is primary and comfortable to the dancer's identity. This week was the opposite, going deep into a secondary process for one of the dancers in particular. By unfolding a movement edge in a contact improv duet, one of the women got in touch with a huge amount of power and aggression. The unfolding constellated roles in an abuse scene for another dancer, and brought up gender rank issues. We processed it in movement until the first woman could use her power in a useful, protective way, escaping or stopping the domination. She took it further into a 'power dance' with large, impressive, fierce, unstoppable motions, and in the final dramatic slap on the ground and tracing of a heart on the earth, the movement gesture was identical to the first movements she had made

the week before to begin her 'primary movement' signature sequence. Her primary identity had been of a woman who was too deferential and had trouble asserting boundaries or needs. Here, in the altered state of crossing into deeply secondary power, the movement showed in a direct and plain way that all of our amazing disavowed richness and intensity is just the other side of a very thin coin from our usual, partial, comfortable identities. Or another way to frame it is that our favorite movement patterns feel familiar, and repeat themselves in our lives, because they are not completed and actually not known at all, and may hold the riches of our secondary aspects. Our 'signature' self in movement is our signature *because* our unknown parts are just there under the surface, wanting to be discovered and expressed!

One question raised in reviewing these outcomes is to wonder how much of the therapeutic value of the project was due to using dancers for whom the movement channel is relatively primary and easy to access? Culturally, a mainstream population of non-identified dancers may have huge edges to feeling comfortable in their bodies or moving at all. A next direction for this project is to do exactly that, setting these process-based movement exercises on a pedestrian group and working with edges and issues that come up.

Challenges and limitations

There were also some limitations and challenging aspects that did not work in the project. One was that my lack of previous experience in developing, promoting and staging a performance limited this show to a small, informal venue, and to an unrefined product, framed more as a work in process. Lighting was minimal, and sound score was patched together at the last minute.

A second limitation was the way we worked with edges. I found that I did not plan for the time needed to train the dancers in subtle edge work in the short duration of the project. As a result, many of the processes that came out of the exercises did not get unfolded fully, in my view. What we have been calling “essence level” or non-dual level of experience in rehearsals was still a nameable, dualistic something that was closer to a dreamland element. Although the outcome was often aesthetically compelling and workable for the show, I had the feeling that we were being incomplete and imprecise with our use of terms and execution of Process Work concepts. This was partly due to a belief system that I carried during the project that polarized the choice between artistically valid product versus going all the way over edges into the unknown. For the purposes of creating an interesting aesthetic, I made some choices to not deepen the process, but to go with what seemed to work.

This dilemma was challenged during the audience discussion after the performance section and process demonstration. In the demonstration, I facilitated an exercise on one of the dancers, which unfolded into a deep, internal, unrelated state of stillness. I could not see it at the time, but it was pointed out moments later that this was a beautiful, almost predictable secondary process to come out of a project intending to be about movement and the external expression of performance. Audience member and Process Worker, Randee Levine, commented to the dancers, “as an audience member, when I see you so congruent in whatever it is you’re doing, the stillness of that, I feel really entertained. In terms of this whole question of the continuum of performance versus personal growth, when you’re so congruent, so *believing* in your experience, it’s very captivating. So you don’t need to

actually ‘do’ anything to be entertaining, except that.” (Personal communication, *Dreamfigures’ Ball, Question & Answer*)

Future directions

As mentioned above, a next step after *The Dreamfigures’ Ball* is to repackage the exercises and creative process into a workshop with the focus not on performance, but on personal growth, for a non-dancer, mainstream population. Almost all of the exercises and experiments we used in the rehearsal process could be directly adapted to this goal. A final performance may or may not be an element of it.

My working assumption is that there may be many more edges to working in movement for non-dancers. Many questions are raised by this prospect. How will edges be different for non-dancers? How will the exercises or instructions need to be adapted to accommodate possible fears and inhibitions? How may I have to adjust the pacing, or sensitize my facilitation style? Will a non-dancer population have more awareness, or less, in movement experiences, than dancers for whom moving may be automatic? I look forward to the opportunity to begin to find answers to some of these wonderings.

Another outcome of this project is that I am inspired to do more playful, improvisational, movement work in my ongoing psychotherapy practice. A yoga studio near my office is available for me to begin seeing a few clients there, in a space more conducive to movement and creativity.

On a personal level, I experienced as much growth and insight as the dancer participants. Big internal changes began to unfold in my life during and since the two month course of the project. A small example is that after the first month, my postural habits

suddenly became intolerable to me. The way I walk, stand and sit, were now disturbing me, and causing my back to go into painful tension and spasm. I had to meet several times with a chiropractor and other healers, and change the chair I use in my office. It was as if my body was by osmosis picking up the physical awareness process that I was teaching to the dancers, and reorganizing itself. A personal result of the project, based on the changes I witnessed in myself and others, is that I am excited to deepen my own practice of self-discovery through simple movement play and awareness. Perhaps every day can be a Dreamfigures' Ball.

Conclusion

The Dreamfigures' Ball was not just a show or product, but was a creative discovery process that included an event that connected it to the public, world level. It grew out of, and straddled, three overlapping realms of influence: the Process Work awareness paradigm for facilitating change, the improvisation traditions of Modern Dance, and the field of dance and expressive arts therapy. It successfully entertained an audience, and fostered growth and change in the participants. The process behind this project will continue to unfold into workshops and other applications. Ultimately, for me, *The Dreamfigures' Ball* was pure fun – an opportunity to play and discover and dance with the secret, hidden forces and fields that move and shape our lives.

Appendix

The following exercises are improvisation scores that were executed by the dancers 'live' during the performance...

Dreamfigures' Ball – Showing Friday, April 10, 2009

Steps in unfolding the improv scores

WALK SCORE – steps to unfolding:

1. Walk how you normally walk
2. Start to notice different details and aspects of your walk... those intended and part of 'you', and those unintended or 'not-me'
3. Pick one juicy or interesting or mysterious or disturbing detail or aspect of your walk. Begin to explore/examine this weird movement quality.
4. Unfold it by doing it on purpose, exaggerating it, amplifying it. If it's in one little part, then globalize it to your whole body. If it is small or subtle, then make it big. Let it take over the whole way of walking. You don't need to keep walking once you really get in to 'it'. Add vocalization – what sound goes with this movement?
5. Find the '**dreamfigure**' by asking yourself "who walks, breathes, moves like this? What personality or figure is this, from my life, or the movies or a book, or a force or element in nature, etc.? See if you can name it. Keep dance improving as that emerged dreamfigure. Keep including sound and vocalization.
6. At some point, begin to take it further toward the '**essence**' by slowing it down, but keeping all the flavor and intensity of the particular quality of the dreamfigure movement. You may ask yourself, what was this dreamfigure or quality or thing as the seed before it emerged in that form? Slow it down, make it smaller, reducing it like a sauce on the stove, more concentrated of the exact flavor... just a subtle un-namable inner feeling... until it is fully expressed in just a **hand gesture**.
7. Now drop the previous content, drop the dreamfigure or any story about it, and just stay connected to this essence feeling. Allow 'IT' to dance and move you. Give yourself as a channel for 'IT' to dance 'improv'.
8. Participate in being danced by exploring changes in *levels* and *speeds*.
9. At some point, when you still are really 'in' it, move toward dancing with a partner or the group. But USE other bodies to carry out the intent or energy

of the essence dance coming through you. Really follow the needs and direction of this essence quality.

10. NOTE: at any step, *when you feel stuck or unsure or at an edge* in the unfolding, break out into your **mini/essence signature phrase**, or repeat an element of your phrase a few times, then go back to the unfolding...

MOOD SCORE – steps to unfolding:

1. From stillness (either standing or lying down), scan your body, and discover the basic atmosphere or mood you are in. It may be a feeling sense that was in the background all day.
2. Start to notice details and particular qualities of this mood. Is it hot? Cold? Tight? Loose? Fuzzy? Sharp? Etc. Is it familiar and part of 'me, or disturbing and 'not-me'? Especially, what movement vibration or pattern or tendency is in the mood-quality? How is it already moving?
3. Continue to explore/examine this weird movement quality by letting it slowly begin to move you. It may start imperceptibly, or just in a limb or body part. Allow it to grow and take over until your whole body is involved.
4. **Follow 'unfolding steps' 4-10** from the "Walk Score".

CONTACT EDGE SCORE - for 2 couples:

1. Two pairs start dancing 'regular' contact improv duets in silence.
2. Notice edges – trips, falls, unintended rough or stuck spots... slowly start naming out loud the edges by saying "**There it is.**"
3. After 4 or 5 named edges, pick one – "**Is this it?**" "**This is it!**" make the negotiation transparent and audible – part of the piece
4. Recreate and study the one you picked – **name it** if possible.
5. Continue the dance, doing 'it' on purpose, exaggerating, amplifying the unintended event or dynamics at the edge you picked. Fully step in to the specific quality and intent that emerges. If a kind of narrative and roles are implied, go with it. The *couple* is the 'dreamfigure', not the individuals, so whatever theme or story is trying to emerge, lend yourself to it...

6. Keep unfolding, and verbally commentating. Negotiate ways to go with what emerges – you may have to slow down, or drop ‘contact’, in order to unfold the movement intent in a SAFE way.
7. Bring in your own reactions as you go! I.e: “this is scary” or “I’m gonna kill you”...
8. NOTE: *only one pair speaks at a time, switching back and forth*: as an improv, feel this out - only speak if other pair is silent
9. Concludes when it culminates and feels complete or ‘played out’. But if it feels ‘played out’ quickly, then consider you might be at an edge and find a way to keep going over the edge...
10. When it’s ‘really’ done, individuals do **Signature phrase mini/essence versions in-place**... Stephanie comes in off the chair

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