

Our Middle Ground

Anthony Languren and Rebecca Rey

Our Middle Ground is a choreographic work originally created and performed for the Bellarmine Forum, "Restoring Justice." We began asking ourselves, what do we already know and feel about reconciling differences? What have our families, teachers, readings, and experiences taught us about making peace after hurt and personal damage have occurred? We asked ourselves, how can we find common ground with a stranger or reconcile with a friend? We know that our bodies play a large role in how we act and how we think as human beings. We further know that using an attuned body to listen, breathe, and respond with empathy can be a way to find connection when words are not enough. As dancers we aspire to develop that kind of attuned body-mind. We employ gestures to "speak." We use energy, rhythm, focus, and space to express thoughts and emotions. In this way, the engaged, dancing body serves as a mode to communicate fracture and reconciliation. Choreographing collaboratively allowed us to dialogue with each other, both verbally and non-verbally. As the dance evolved, thinking became interactive with feeling. As informed intuition grew stronger, movement led the way. Upon completing the work, we analyzed our aesthetic choices, and made revisions to our work so that we could most effectively communicate with the audience. Having created and presented this work, we now better understand reconciliation from the inside out. From speaking with those who witnessed our work, we have learned that we stirred new insights in others as well.

Abstract Human

Jennifer Sotelo

Gestures created by the human form can be used as a medium to explore dehumanization in oppression. When people are imprisoned or deported, ultimately their rights are stripped. With the highest incarceration rate in the world, the United States ranks as one of the worst culprits of human oppression. Imprisoning a person literally restricts physical mobility leading to loss of bodily control. This imposed state also chips away at inherent human dignity. In my work with deported immigrants and incarcerated individuals, I realized that detainment impedes communicative and expressive freedom, as well as the ability to have relationships, thereby leaving individuals with nothing but physical bodies. Immigration and incarceration issues are often treated as *political* problems rather than a *human* crisis. When this happens we forget the faces of those who are suffering. I have used the metaphor of dehumanization to design a performance art installation, depicting people stripped of identity through the images of disassembled bodies: faceless and de-personalized. Investigated themes in my work include symmetry, representing a loss of human connection; dehumanization, represented literally through the design; light and projection, representing a sense of containment; and movement, showing physical restrictions on the struggle of the human journey. My interdisciplinary approach combines dance and design to present a visually engaging work that is also informative. It incorporates human forms and typographic elements to depict the experiences of victims of oppression from the standpoint that examines the issues happening before us.

“Mon Coeur s’ouvre à ta voix

Hallie Spoor

The process a singer goes through preparing even a single opera aria is multi-faceted. *Samson et Dalila* is a French romantic opera composed by Camille Saint-Saëns and first performed in 1877. The libretto is based on the Biblical tale of Samson and Delilah and was originally conceived by Saint-Saëns as an oratorio. “Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix” is Dalila’s great aria from Act II of the opera, wherein she seductively professes her love for Samson. The long legato phrasing and the subtleties of French diction are two of the primary challenges for the singer, the first surmounted in part by breath control and singing on the vowels, the second by familiarity with the International Phonetic Alphabet. The presentation of this aria will include a “behind the scenes” tour of the process and musical challenges involved in learning and performing this riveting piece of music.

Stages of AIDS: April 6th

Mara de la Rosa

How can a show live up to people’s expectations when it is based on a well-known individual in the department? Every year the LMU Theater Arts Department produces *Stages of AIDS*. Each year the performance takes on a different form: rock concert, documentary, or a series of vignettes based on an HIV/AIDS related topic. During the selection process for the 2013-2014 season, the staff and faculty conceived the idea of doing a biographical play based on LMU Theatre Arts Prop Master, Kenneth Schwartz. I was selected as the playwright. The making of *Stages of AIDS: April 6th*, challenged me artistically, intellectually, and interpersonally. In order to properly execute this kind of project, a writer must go through the following steps: interview, write, re-write, repeat. Next the script must be sent to a dramaturge for further revision. In my case, once the play was completed, I only had two months to cast, have actors memorize and rehearse, and make re-writes before the show opened. Through the excitement and challenge, I learned to stay focused on what’s most important: telling Kenneth’s story. In the end, what mattered was that the show stayed true to the actual events, which Kenneth not only appreciated but also enjoyed. AIDS doesn’t just happen to “other people,” it is a disease that affects “our family.” This show was a catalyst for transforming audience members from passive viewers, to active observers – people who were more likely to make change in themselves, the community, and beyond.