

5 Questions

LUIS LARA MALVACÍAS and JEREMY NELSON

by daria fañ

WHAT DRIVES YOUR COLLABORATION?

Jeremy: I think that since we are partners in our lives we talk a lot - we of course discuss our ideas about dance and art together. We are both dancers and dance-makers and very admiring of each other's work and I think we understand what drives each other's work too. I think this is the primary motivation to work together. We have worked together in various configurations - Luis makes costumes and sets for my work, and often dances for me; I have danced often in his work; we work separately as well and give a lot of feedback to each other; we have made work together on companies in Lima, a student company in Salzburg, students at the University of Wisconsin. *Sooner Than You Think* was the first collaborative piece that we have shown in New York for a while.

Luis: A constant desire to explore and contribute to each other's artistic growth.

WHAT IS THE FOOD YOU PREFER TO SHARE?

Jeremy: Inventive and well-cooked. Preferably with a very fine and tasty wine accompaniment.

Luis: Aahh!! Surprise question: It varies, everything, nothing, well cooked, raw, it depends on the mood and situations, and as Jeremy says, "Preferably with a very fine and tasty wine accompaniment."

WHAT IS THE MOST INFLUENTIAL ELEMENT IN EACH OTHER'S WORK?

Jeremy: I think Luis's clarity of image-making and his interest in seeing movement in a larger context than just a series of steps has affected me a lot. He seems to be able to use very simple movement ideas to construct a powerful image, and this I think has been a very positive thing for me to learn from. I admit to still being interested in "abstract dance" whatever that might mean - I don't actually believe that human beings moving can ever be abstract - but I think that admitting the presence of visual (or any other) elements as possibilities and letting them affect the development of the dance has been a very positive factor for me. He also works incredibly hard, and is not prepared to let the prospect of a lot of work get in the way of his ideas. I admire this a lot and it has been really inspiring.

Luis: Respect, admiration for Jeremy's sensibility and hard work. All these and a very objective critical approach to each other's work.

IS YOUR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AN ATTRACTION TO EACH OTHER CULTURALLY AND OTHERWISE?

Jeremy: Definitely. Since I was born and raised in polite and reserved protestant New Zealand, the spontaneity and lack of inhibition of a South American culture, particularly Venezuela, was very attractive. I spent quite a bit of time in Venezuela at the beginning of our relationship so feel that I don't have a completely rose-tinted glasses attitude about the place. But it was incredible to be in a culture where dancing and music and rhythm were so present, and people were not afraid to be animated and even confrontational sometimes in their interactions. I also learned to speak Spanish which I think allowed another side of myself to come out, which I tend to keep under wraps speaking English. That felt like a relief. This has also given me the opportunity to work - teaching, performing, creating - in several South American countries as well as Mexico. This has been a great privilege in my career.

Luis: I really admire the strength that the Maori culture brings to NZ. I also like the honest politeness of the people from NZ; I believe it is the only place that I know - so far - where people's politeness is not faked.

IF YOU WOULD THINK OF A PLACE AS A BASE BESIDES NEW YORK - WHERE WOULD IT BE?

Jeremy: Somewhere in Europe. I love London (I lived there for eight years) - even though it is incredibly expensive - Berlin of course is a fantastic city, and as cheap as London is expensive.

Luis: Good question, I really never thought of having a base in NY, I just came here and it always has been just a transitory place for me. If I ever think of establishing a base or place to live, Berlin could be an option.

WHAT WAS THE COST OF THIS PRODUCTION AND HOW DID YOU FUND THIS WORK?

Jeremy: Well, we are used to funding our own work and this was also the case with *Sooner Than You Think* (although we received a small commission and a box office fee from the 92nd St. Y). One of the reasons we made it essentially two solos, was that we both had had larger shows in 2008 and after that needed to be traveling and working to try and make some money and pay off debts as a result of those shows. So we were apart a lot, usually in different parts of Europe, so that sort of became the subject of the piece. All the sets and pretty much every item of costuming for us and the eight performers who moved the set and acted as a chorus in the piece, were recycled from previous productions. Even so it still cost us money, a familiar story for anyone working in NY. However, I know that we are lucky just being paid some kind of production money for a project these days.

Luis: Like Jeremy says, we got the commission and the box office from the 92nd St. Y, but we mainly did it following the dynamics and rules established and expected to create work in NY: you do it, you create it, you fund it, you perform it, you design, etc.

LOOKING BACK 10 YEARS, HOW WOULD YOU QUALIFY THE EVOLUTION OF YOUR COLLABORATION?

Jeremy: Well, I don't think it is as organized as that. The more you are with someone the better you know them and hopefully the more you understand them. I think that we just want to support and facilitate each other's work, because we believe so much in it, in whatever way we possibly can. So that has taken, as I said before, various forms over the years. Sometimes we have chosen to work separately and sometimes together but I think we are still very much there as a supportive presence in each other's work regardless of the format. The projects making work together have been much more fun in recent years, (although there is of course sometimes stress), as we understand each other's strengths and how we can complement each other rather than resist each other in the working process.

Luis: I don't think that the way our work and collaboration has evolved can be qualified in strict terms, let alone in terms of years that have passed by; it is still evolving, modifying and changing. We learned from crises, and we look to what is considered failure in our work as an exciting place to keep digging and exploring. Our work and our collaboration evolves tightly together with different aspects of our personal life and artistic practice, and that is always moving, collapsing, returning, moving back, jumping forward.

IF YOU WOULD HAVE TO USE ONE WORD TO NAME YOUR WORK, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Jeremy: Ongoing.

Luis: Ceaseless.

DVD Review: *Downtown Dance*

by freddy mancilla

I was not really sure what to expect when I popped in director Kathryn Sullivan's documentary series titled *Downtown Dance*. (Volumes 1 and 2 are the ones I took a look at.) "Downtown dance" is a very loose term that does not really capture the eccentricities of the environment it intends to describe because it always seems to be morphing and evolving into something that widens what one would consider dance. Choosing to document the ever changing scene is the difficult task Sullivan has undertaken.

Presenting some excerpts and short pieces between interviews, Sullivan showcases six choreographers with introductions by dance critic Elizabeth Zimmer. Each answers the basic question of how they stumbled into dance and made their way downtown. It is especially interesting hearing each describe their dances, but in the end, the dances themselves are being showcased.

Watching the unique voices of the choreographers made me feel like I was at a dance cabaret. Ivy Baldwin's playful use of imperfect form, Trajal Harrell's haute look at the intersection of fashion and dance, Keely Garfield's exploration of disability with a duet of halted movements, and RoseAnne Spradlin's jittery partnering that alluded to an unstable ground made me want more. This is where Sullivan missteps; I wanted to see more of the dances.

Though a valid choice to hear the process of the choreographer, I wanted to see what it was they were describing rather than hearing about it. Sullivan fails to present the artists in a way as captivating as their art. There is an attempt at breaking up the monotony of the interviews with a few close-ups, but those come off as odd.

What Sullivan does well is collect a variety of artists that present works that are intriguing, quirky and at times hilarious. I was especially taken by David Parker's *Slapstuck*, a piece featuring him and dancer Jeffrey A. Kazin, dancing with and sticking to each other while wearing velcro suits designed by Melanie Rozema and Jeroen Teunissen.

For some reason, Sullivan gives extra time to choreographer Larry Keigwin. Instead of getting to see just one of his dances, I was treated to two: a tortured soul solo performed by Keigwin titled *Sunshine* with Bill Withers' song of the same name serving as the soundtrack and a kinky duet titled *Straight Duet* performed by Keigwin and the sensual, delicate Nicole Wolcott. The pairing of these two pieces shows just how varied even the inhabitants of the diverse scene are.

The DVD is available through Insight Media. www.insight-media.com or call 800-233-9910