

TRANSVERSALS

**A Concert to Celebrate
International Day of Dance 2016**



**7:30pm Friday April 22, Saturday April 23
2:30pm Sunday April 24**

The Luckman Intimate Theatre

Free food and drinks served after each show!

Mingle with the artists at a post-performance reception!

Pre-show half an hour before showtime

5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032

Tickets: \$15/\$10 www.calstatela.edu/mtd

**TRANSVERSALS:
A CONCERT TO CELEBRATE THE
INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DANCE 2016**

Study Guide

by

Aric Martin & Jennifer McPherson



April 22, 23 & 24, 2016 at *The Luckman Intimate Theater*

Directed by Dr. Seónagh Odhiambo Horne, PhD

California State University, Los Angeles
5151 State University Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90032

INTRODUCTION

Trans as a prefix meaning across, beyond or through. We have many common associations with the prefix in words such as transcend, transform, translate and of course transgender. In geometry, a transversal is a line that passes through two lines in the same plane at two distinct points forming new angles and points of reference. In the same way, *Transversals* attempts to explore the artist as the conduit through which lines are crossed to form new points of context with regards to gender.

What is Gender?

“With early roots in Aristotelian comparative studies, the idea that moral character is rooted in the body has structured a wide variety of modern medical and scientific studies, and shapes the current condition under which popular fictions circulate about the bodies of all kinds of people who are deemed to be in some way behaviorally aberrant or socially disruptive” (Urla and Terry 1).

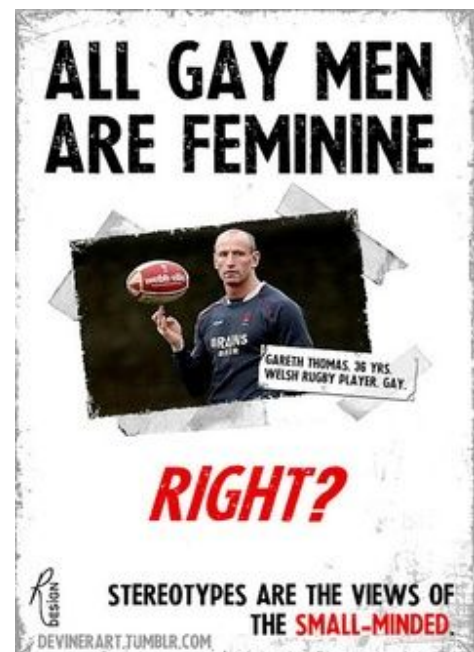
The developing field of gender studies looks at the ways in which femininity and masculinity shape an individual’s thought process. In 1990, with the publishing of her now famous book *Gender Trouble*, theorist Judith Butler coins the phrase ‘gender performativity.’ Butler argues that gender is a formulation created from a series of repetitious and stylized acts. Butler rejects the notion of gender representation as a natural biological fact in favor of a “distinction between sex, as biological facticity, and gender, as the cultural interpretation or signification of that facticity” (Beauvoir). She proposes that gender is something that is learned, performed and then passed down from generation to generation. This is the basis of the nurture vs. nature argument that is at the heart of gender studies.

Masculinity vs. Femininity

Masculinity is a set of attributes generally associated with men. Both men and women can exhibit these characters. The Oxford Dictionary defines masculinity as the “possession of the qualities traditionally associated with men.” A milieu of words is evoked by this word masculinity are: strength, power, muscled, aggression just to name a few.

Interestingly, The Oxford Dictionary defines “feminine as “having qualities or appearance traditionally associated with women, especially delicacy and prettiness.” While the term “masculine” traditionally connotes such aforementioned adjectives associated with action such as “strength” and “aggression,” “feminine” is actually defined by a specific set of physical descriptions. Femininity *looks* like something in particular, something perceived, while masculinity *is* something in particular. Etymologically, femininity and masculinity are seemingly doomed to live in a space that is inherently mutually exclusive. Within this social construct, how can one look like one thing and be entirely something else without the construct collapsing on itself?

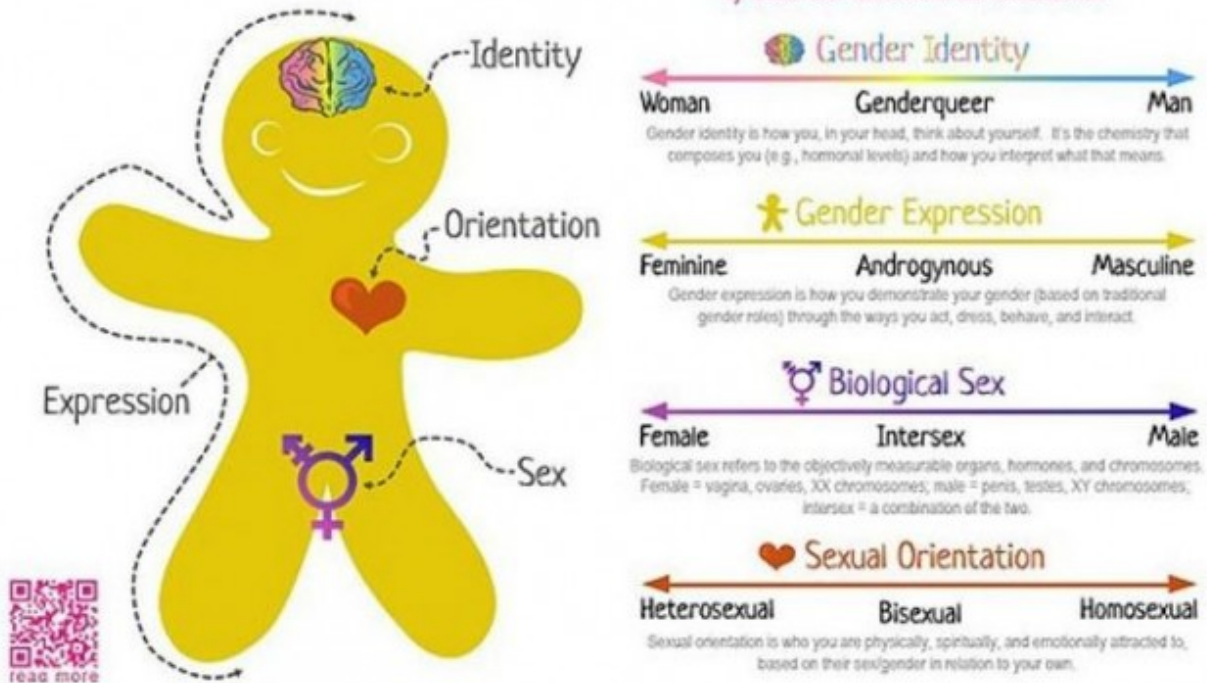
Gender identity, then, must be, “a constant journey which must start and end in the middle because a rhizome [or, this continuously growing, horizontal underground structure] has no beginning and no end: it is always in the middle, between things... It has no beginning and no end because ‘making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation – all imply a false conception of a voyage and movement” (Linstead and Pullen 1307).



The Gender Spectrum

The Genderbread Person

by www.ItsPronouncedMetrosexual.com



A spectrum of 12 human figures, numbered 1 to 12, representing a range of gender identities. Figure 1 is a pink Barbie doll. Figure 12 is a soldier in a military uniform, labeled G.I. Joe. The figures in between are various colors and shapes, representing a continuum of gender identities.

Where on a spectrum might your gender identity be?

DANCE DRAMATURGY

What is the role of the dramaturg in a dance concert?

“In dance, the dramaturg’s duty corresponds for the most part to an ‘art of watching’” (Montaignac 10). The dance dramaturg’s role can, and does, differ from piece to piece, which can be tricky to navigate in the context of conceptualizing a unified theme between different pieces of a themed dance concert. For this particular project, our job did begin in a peculiar place of simply observing each piece through the rehearsal process, watching movement, taking notes, and asking questions of choreographers and dancers. Slowly, however, we understood dance dramaturg Katya Montaignac’s sentiment that “the silent observation of the dramaturg provokes an awareness on behalf of the choreographer and dancers that often influences the level of their ‘articulation’” (Montaignac 14). Over time, meanings brought into the rehearsal space by dancers and choreographers, often as descriptions of their experiences or ideas expressed in movement, evolved into a more full creation, and unifying themes manifested for the concert. As the rehearsal process progressed, no longer did we simply see movement being analyzed anatomically, but now we could see the dancer’s artistry. The meaning is portrayed in a facial expression, through the breath, and with the slowing down or speed of particular movements to capture expression, energy and character each choreographer and the show’s director desires.



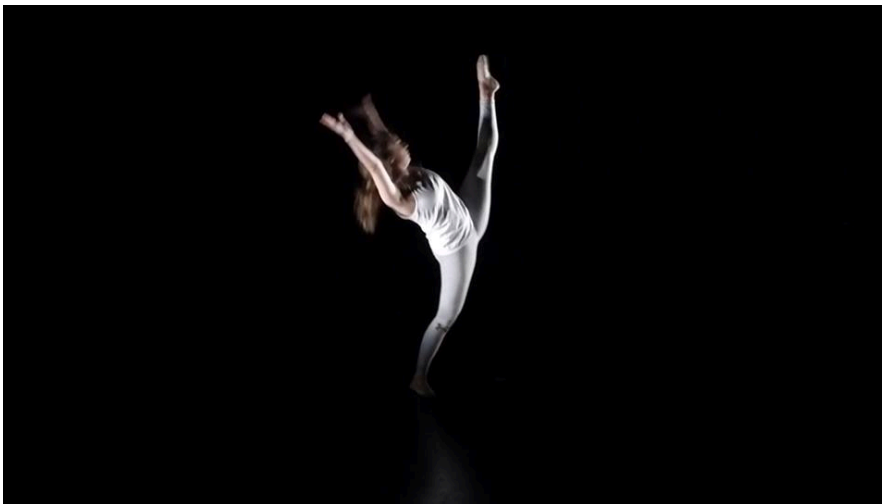
A DESCRIPTION OF THE DANCE PIECES

How do the choreographers describe their own works?

Mark Alan Hunt (grad student) “The City of Our Lady Queen of the Angels”

The show begins in Los Angeles, where the primary source of inspiration for Mark Hunt’s piece, is the “poetic evocative name of this city: *El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles*.” This name was also the touchstone for Tony Duquette’s 1981 art installation entitled *El Pueblo de Nuestra Senora la Reina de los Angeles*, the centerpiece of which was a fourteen foot tall Queen of the Angels icon. The Queen’s face was used as a projection screen, and her appearance morphed to encompass the many faces of Angelino culture.

The female Goddess icon at the center of the piece is surrounded by archangels. Her story informs the movement Mark creates and imagines. In seven stages, the dance becomes a ritual that creates and then dissolves a magical imaginary event of re-naming the place where we live as *The City of Our Lady Queen of the Angels*. As Mark describes, “I believe that all human ritual is religion in action, and this dance to spoken word personifies a female Los Angeles, and names this city as HER place.”



Seónagh Odhiambo Horne (faculty/director) “in my skin’s knowing”

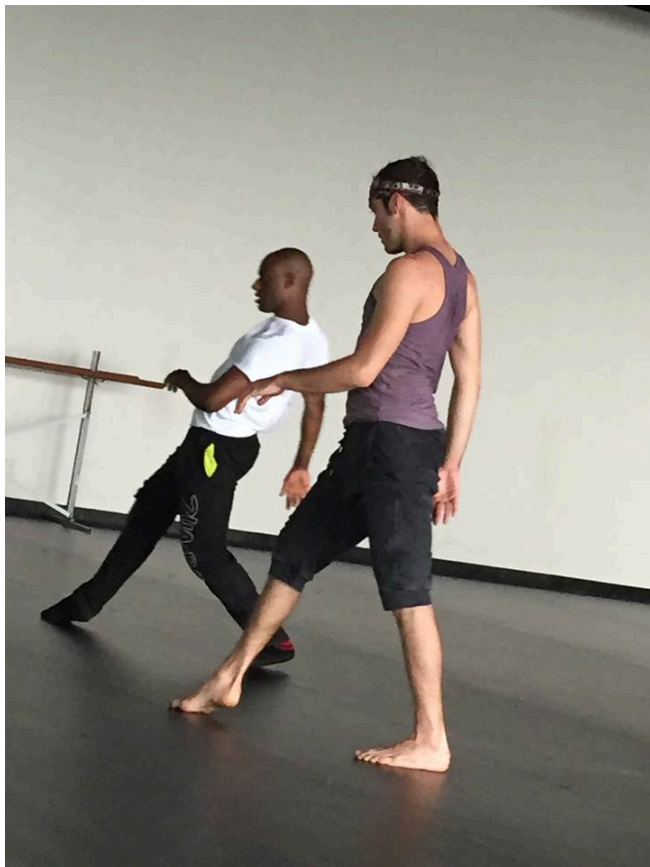
“in my skin’s knowing” speaks poetically to the subject of Transversals. The dance emerges as lines of power seen in the flow of dancers’ limbs. This flow is cut by a power within as three dancers offer their vulnerability. They develop the idea of power—lingering in it, wondering about its form. A man returns a powerful gaze that counteracts his “feminine” energies and meaning. A woman pronounces her beauty in her curved lines, while another throws herself powerfully against the floor. With each other and apart, these dancers claim themselves—wild, unbound, chaos, fury.

The choreographer worked collaboratively with composer Bennie Maupin and Rehearsal Director Kimberley Baliutavicius, and Kevin Fonseca. The trio formed around Kevin as a primary cast member, when Lourdes “Lulu” Mack and Jessica Sandoval stepped in. Together, the group layered in meanings to the piece with a rapid intensity after the first phase of dance/music making was complete.



Michael Tomlin III (guest artist) “The Audition”

“You have to put yourself into your own space.” Michael Tomlin III’s piece is derived from his personal exploration of the artist within a commercial construct. While the artist’s lifeline hinges upon the ability to create from an unhindered space, the profit-oriented gaze of modern art limits the unique, creative exploration to the point of crippling the individual. “The Audition” scrutinizes the process of creating commercial art through the judgment of appearances against a mass-produced “norm.” Michael’s piece traverses the lines of perception to illustrate that despite appearances, the victory of creation may be solely achieved through making the unique expression of the individual the only locus of the process. With regards to any audition, whether literal or figurative, “they are not the focal point. You are the focal point.”



Daniel Jacob Glenn (alumni) “Ananda”

From a deconstructive aspect, gender is transformational like all aspects of life. The predominance of dualistic constructs versus the modernization of gender is a major statement motivating Daniel’s piece, "Ananda". From a post-modern standpoint, the piece analyzes the way the mind affects the body, the way stereotypes affect society, and the way breaking these things down allow growth and transformation. The inspiration of yoga and breath is important to the development of this piece.



Lizette Galan (alumni) “Green Carnation”



In 1892, Oscar Wilde told a dozen of his followers to wear a green carnation on their lapels. When asked what it signified, he simply responded, "nothing whatever, but that is just what nobody will guess." However, he left a trail of breadcrumbs that led to the support and acknowledgment of gay pride. At the time Oscar Wilde was writing, love between two men or two women was widely understood as unnatural; it was deemed both dangerous and illegal. Since punishment for acts of love between two men or two women often resulted in death or violence, the carnation is a signal of courage. The flower, grown only in sparse locations, was seen as having an unnatural color, and is also rare and beautiful.

The “unnatural” beauty and circumstances of the green carnation are symbolic of Wilde’s flamboyant personality and unusual, extraordinary energy. The dance, Green Carnation, acknowledges the cleverness and bravery Oscar Wilde demonstrated until his last breath. Green Carnation is a tribute to the secret language that embodies the pioneering steps for equality, and the justice of spirit.

Munmi Son (grad student) “Airirang”

The Korean Fan Dance is designed as an evocatively melancholic Korean historical approach to utilize dance and movement as an expression of feminine emotion. Through physical movements designed around the motion of the Korean fan, we express the thoughts in feminine hearts. Korean fan dance expresses the pain and wounds of the women of our past. Therefore, it performs a more accurate representation of the feminine body, which consists of

spirit, soul, and mind. Through the expression and exploration of dance with the Korean fan, we can invoke emotional pain and move through the wounds toward a place of healing.



A Note about *Buchaechum*

The Chosun Dynasty (1392-1910 C.E.) institutionalized the marginalization of women by demanding that women follow the Confucian notion of womanly behavior (Deuchler 2003). “Proper” women were not permitted to express their concerns or feelings to outsiders. “Rather than being the agents of their own will, women were taught to be virtuous by being obedient to their fathers before marriage and loyal to their husbands and sons after marriage” (Lee, 189). Though there have been significant cultural movements since the turn of the twentieth century, the subordination of contemporary women is still perpetuated by rigid economic and social stratifications.

Buchaechum, or “Korean Fan Dance” is a movement of emotional and spiritual expression derived from Korean Shamanic dance. It assumes a holistic form that takes into consideration, not only the whole person, but the individual's interaction with his environment, both his inner and outer world.

Jae Lee “Interrumpere”

“Interrumpere” is a contemporary ballet that portrays an interrupted energy in human relationships. Our life is full of interruptions and complications, yet we make connections through these interruptions. While choreographing this piece, I often questioned myself: How can I illustrate an interrupted energy that can eventually build a connection at the end? Through abstract gestures and movements while encompassing an equal amount of physicality and athleticism from both male and female dancers, I present my choreographic intention that signifies a message; without being interrupted, we can never be connected.

Rosanna Tavarez “Hybrids”

Embodied personal stories are mapped onto four distinctly unique vocalists from the 19th and 20th century: The Last Castrati, Alessandro Moreschi, Nina Simone, David Bowie and Freddie Mercury. *Hybrids* investigates the richness of remix: old and new, male and female, personal and universal.



A Note About:

Alessandro Moreschi, The Last Castrato

Moreschi was a Castrato, or male who was castrated before puberty to keep his vocal range within a high register. When women were banned from singing in church by the Pauline dictum, the castrati became the voice of women. Moreschi was the only castrato to be recorded.



CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS EXPLORING GENDER



Inge Prins

Inge Prins is a South African photographer based out of Cape Town. In her collection *Office Politics*, she explores what the clothing we wear communicates. The project was in part a response to her African upbringing and the strong patriarchal model set up by her father. One of her striking discoveries was how the clothing seemed to point on the imperfections guiding toward the idea that female clothing is somehow more revealing of the figure or body.

Yanis Marshall

A choreographer from France, Marshall has pioneered the use of high heels in male dancing. He and fellow dancers Arnaud and Mehdi appeared on the TV Show Britain's Got Talent in 2014. Marshall is currently choreographing for the Cirque du Soleil show *Zumanity* in Las Vegas.



STUDY QUESTIONS

Topics for Discussion?

- ✚ What is your personal relationship to gender? What is your gender story?
 - ✚ Have you experienced any advantages or disadvantages based on your gender?
 - ✚ Do you have any personal gender biases?
 - ✚ How are clothes or objects particularly gendered? (i.e. do they possess an intrinsic or implied traditional gender identity? How does associating this object with a different sex change the gender identity of the object?
 - ✚ Are dance moves be gendered? Do particular dance moves have specific gender associations?
 - ✚ Where are you on the gender spectrum? Does this change sometimes? Explain.
 - ✚ How is gender different from sexuality?
-

Gender is less like this:



And more like this:



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