



# Urban Research Theater

song • movement • action

## Urban Research Theater Newsletter – November, 2008

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### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### 1) INVITATION TO SHOWINGS

There are a few places available for guests at our showings on the following date:

- Sunday, November 23 at 6pm

Guests can arrive early for an hour of silent physical work, or at 6pm for the showings only. There is no charge for attending, although we gratefully accept tax-deductible gifts to support our ongoing work. If you want to come, please contact <[ben@urbanresearchtheater.com](mailto:ben@urbanresearchtheater.com)>.

The Song Cycle is an active meditation made from theater techniques; an extended vehicle for practical research and self-discovery; and a performance structure that can be witnessed by others. Its basic formation is a sequence of repeated song fragments. Within the framework of these songs, the two partners search for contact on multiple levels: with themselves, with each other, and with the space.

Urban Research Theater is a long-term partnership dedicated to discovering and revealing human presence through techniques of song, movement, and action. After one year of consistent work, we understand ourselves to be at the beginning of a process leading towards the development of a fully elaborated and fully enacted Song Cycle.

For those who cannot attend this round, there will be further showings in 2009.

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## 2) MEMBERSHIP COMMUNITY

Urban Research Theater intends to support itself through community-based interactions rather than ticket sales. In order to do this, we need to build a supportive membership community.

If you support the work of Urban Research Theater; if you have participated in one of our workshops or events; if you believe in our philosophy of art and practice; if you enjoy receiving our monthly newsletter... Please consider becoming a member of our supporting community.

Supporting members donate at least \$5 per month (\$60 per year) to support our continuing work. Five dollars is not very much: the price of a cheap lunch or an expensive coffee. But for us it is a serious gesture of support. With a big enough community, small amounts can add up:

- If our community had 10 members, we would receive enough income to rent a space for one workshop or showings each month.
- If our community had 100 members, we would have enough money to cover all our current work expenses for the year and a few several week-long or even month-long events.
- If our community had 1000 members, we would be able to dedicate ourselves full-time to this work and create a semi-permanent space for it in the city.

Our goal right now is to build a community of 100 members. All donations to Urban Research Theater are fully tax deductible via the umbrella organization Fractured Atlas. You can also donate to us directly, if you do not require the tax deduction. Please follow one of the links on our website to become a supporting member of the Urban Research Theater community.

## NOTES FROM THE STUDIO

### 3) WHAT I SAW LAST NIGHT

On October 26th, we had our first informal showings of the Song Cycle project. Two guests joined us for an hour of silent work, with four others arriving to witness the presentation, which lasted approximately one hour. Afterwards, the two of us exchanged emails describing what we had each seen in each other's work. This exchange constitutes our own assessments of what we are each able to accomplish, at this point, in the presence of visitors. We include it here as a brief, intimate way to reveal where we are in the work and what values guide our evaluation of it.

FROM MICHELE TO BEN:

I saw that meaning & vulnerability are absolutely brothers-in-arms. You grew more vulnerable & relaxed as you came into contact with meaning. We need to make the same sort of relaxation & patient care visible while searching. I saw you sacrifice a possible hardening into skillful performance for the search for something more meaningful, though I think maybe at this point, after so much research, a simply skillful performance will naturally have layers of meaning. I thought I saw you fighting your lack of patience with yourself as you searched during Aya Nihi &, like I said, I saw you consciously choosing the search. During the physical line from the transformation scene through Kiki Wo, I know you had more to show, but it was already engaging the way it was & only needs more relaxation into what's already there. You could have

extended the moment of silently lying on your back. That's when I realized I wanted to see your structure as a whole, with a rhythm. I have a craving to outside eye your structure.

I wished that after your last song, you would have either started your cycle again or chosen a few more songs to explore. I had just started to make some contact with you.

FROM BEN TO MICHELE:

When we first entered the space, you seemed very nervous in the way that you were latched onto me. Your eyes were glued to me, and you followed me throughout the space and were not attentive to our balance in it. I turned away from you to try to help you break free. I thought it would have been good for you to connect and disconnect with me a few times before starting your cycle. However, as soon as you disconnected from me, you were immediately more open and present, so it was fine that you went right into your cycle then.

I saw you go through your line of songs in a careful, searching way. Each of the songs was sung properly and began to evoke it's kernel. You seemed nervous sometimes but at other times clearly went towards the song. In each song, there was a moment when the musicality was proper and extra physical energy was pooling, especially in the "small dance" with the arms. In those moments I wanted to guide you as I did in the studio before, simply saying: "Yes, the song is good now, let that extra energy go freely into the landscape and its actions." I didn't speak because I felt it would be unfair to the witnesses. I felt we should simply show them what exists right now, including how each of us was able to work alone in front of them. I felt that by intervening I would be taking something away from them.

It seems like a very important point now is for you to practice catching that moment: not going towards actions too early, when it breaks the song, but also not avoiding actions when the song is ready and the excess energy begins to pool.

As always, comments and feedback are welcome.

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