

LIFE OF PERFORMERS

IN THREE PARTS

Interviews

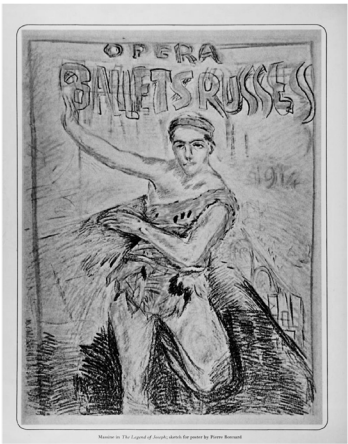
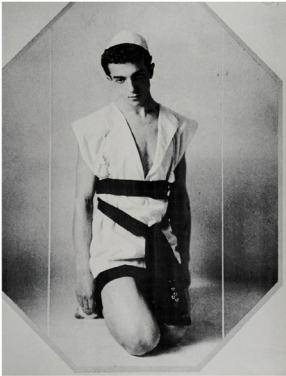
with
**ISABEL LEWIS,
NIALL JONES
PRICE**

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Interviews
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conducted by Matthew Lutz-Kinoy

Bolero Bordello in Berlin, is about time- time in Berlin, the time of Ballets Russes, and artists I love and connect with, past and present at once. I haven't been in this city for years, and reconnecting feels more like stepping into some else's life. The exhibition pivots on the Ballets Russes, thinking about those artists thrown together into collaboration through exile—Diaghilev, Nijinsky, Nijinska, Marie Laurencin, and Leon Bakst, whose vivid textile patterns are like time itself repeating. I'm drawn to that ending of the Ballets Russes in Monaco, where there's this decadent flourish, like in Le Train Bleu or Laurencin's Les Biches, which is these women just enjoying their bourgeois day. And what I was drawn to is what happens after—Ravel's Bolero, choreographed by Nijinska, that hypnotic rhythm of time unfolding, which inspired the title. That genius score and choreography, a lighting strikes in the decadent wake of Diaghilev's bordellic run. For me, this layers over my own moments in Berlin, a hedonistic accent of the early millennium, performing my first works at Basso, where we inhabited a soft sticky space with art and a version of public. That idea of social constellation and performance feels Ballets Russes, and now, I'm in a space of memory and physical potentials with these conversations I had with Isabel Lewis, Niall Jones, and PRICE. Isabel talks about stepping out of that frame where no backdrop exists anymore, and that's exactly how the vellum paintings work—everything performs, scale, light, even the air, the body is one of many materials. Niall's sense of shifting space, where inside and outside blur, inspired that transparency in the velum paintings, where text might appear and redact. And PRICE brings this joy, this light—roses falling from the ceiling like silhouettes, illuminating the space with gratitude and desire. Elizabeth Freeman talks about chrononormativity as the way time disciplines us for productivity, and this show resists that—it's all about opening time, expanding, showing that we live within layers, we are living in diaspora, and placed in new interdependent currents. We find joy in connectivity and collaboration, what is beauty if not expressions of this complexity, creating in the face of violence across time. No War.

M



PRICE

MATTHEW LUTZ-KINOY: The first question that I want to ask you is, do you remember your first encounter with performance and performance art?

PRICE: Yes, I do. There’s a really early one. This was in my hometown where I was living most of my youth — it was Biel in Switzerland — and there was this huge autonomous youth center called Chessu-Coupole. A friend of a friend asked us to make a gig, but it was just lip-syncing a song and kind of acting, kind of in the style of theatrical comedy, and I think I was called Cassandra. I was actually a total drag. That was my first ever encounter with performance. At the time, I had no interest whatsoever in working in it. I was studying technical architectural drawing back then. I think I was 17. The song “Gloria,” this Italian song. She wanted us to make this insane scene where I think I was ironing something — it was all really hysterical — and at the end I was kind of fucked by a guy on top of the iron table. It was kind of like “what?!” Plus I was very young, I had kind of a femme face. They went extreme with my costume and makeup, I was really like a chick, I think I had a bordeaux red wig. I looked like a babe. Some of my friends didn’t recognize me. They were like, “When is Matthias coming on stage? Why is it not happening?” because I didn’t tell them that I was going to be dressed as a woman. And yeah, apparently I was a catch. I was a girl. That’s it.

MLK: Were you directing yourself or did someone take all those decisions for you?

P: I was just an actor, a performer for someone’s vision. They thought I could do it and I said okay. I didn’t really come to this field by myself.

If you want a bit more formal answer, one already in the context of the arts or the performing arts — theater, dance, etc. — it was later, when I was 21. I was performing for Alexandra Bachzetsis in this piece called Dancing and I remember there was a cast of 14 people. She wanted non-dancers and she knew a lot of people in the Rietveld Academy. She knew Julia Born. So she did an audition at the Rietveld during a break time. And I was like, “This sounds fun, I don’t know if I should do it but it looks like a fun project.” All kinds of different people from different departments came together and they were told she will stage a choreography for all of us and that it will be performed and shown. Here’s what happened: I didn’t go to the audition because I just couldn’t. There were too many graphic design assignments, we had class, and I was a little sad. But then, during a 15-minute break, I saw them in this space, having the audition in front of me, and I got very curious. I took a coffee and a brownie in the canteen and I went to the auditorium where they were doing whatever they were doing. Alexandra was there with another person, a friend of hers, sitting and watching the young students doing some movement or dancing. Then a girl that I knew said, “Come in, come in.” And I was like, “No, I didn’t audition.” She insisted, “Just come in.” “Yeah, okay, let me get in,” and so Alexandra saw me and was like (in a deadpan voice), “Who are you?” “Well, I would have loved to audition, but I just couldn’t. There was just no time to audition with my department.” She was like, “Okay, so you’re interested to maybe participate?” “Yeah, I think I’m interested.” Then, she said to me (continuing the deadpan voice): “Okay, eat the brownie and drink the coffee, very slowly, slow motion.” And I was like, “Okay, what?” I didn’t know who she was. I had no idea, I just knew Julia Born knew her, they were good friends, whatever. So I did what she said and she was like, “Huh, okay.” Then — it was winter, so I had a winter cap — she said, “Could you take off your cap?” And she was like, “Uhuh, yeah, good hair. Okay. You can go.”

MLK: (Laughing) Difficult casting.

P: (Laughing) And then they took me! I was selected as one of the 14. I was like, girl, this literally took one minute. I don’t know, I guess it’s my face or something. She was like, “Okay, I think it’s a fit.” I think she really chose different characters. Looking back at the 14 people, they were all very fun people. What happened then is we got authorized to leave our department for, I think, a whole month. We ended up in this dance school somewhere, rehearsing, and then in Amsterdam Dance and at Liste, Basel. Then we showed this piece five years later at a Herzog & de Meuron private party. It was like a reunion. Herzog & de Meuron wanted Alexandra to do a piece in their private party with, like, 2,000 people from all of their entourage, flying over from all the countries and departments at the Volkshaus in Basel. And Alexandra agreed.

MLK: Incredible.

P: Yeah. And they had so much cash, they literally flew everyone over. Because at the end we all lived in different places after studying, you know. And then, oh my God, we had, I think, one and a half days to relearn the piece. It was fascinating how easy it was to remember it. And it was, of course, super funny and amazing to be in this bizarre event doing this sexy performance. So that’s it, that’s my beginning. After that, I was like, “Maybe I like performing arts.” Since then, Alexandra became my godmother of performance, always there to give me advice through out my journey.

MLK: How did you come to singing then, to using your voice in your work?

P: Well, music was always very present in my family, but not academically — no one studied or went to any music school. Music was a social and cultural thing; it was very present in my life. My father

and my mom both played guitar, very differently. My mom a more folkloric Argentinian or Brazilian bossa nova, and my father more like Bryan Adams and Dire Straits or something. So for me it started early. I always loved to sing. First I was singing songs phonetically from pop stars, and then I went to a youth choir. This is what we could afford. It was easy and not so expensive, and it was very fun. What’s great with the choir is that you educate yourself by listening. You collaborate with different voices, so you really have to listen. Then I had a bit of a band with two or three friends. Something random — we were just covering songs. I think at the end we had one concert in some friend’s basement.

My own music started with the graduation of my master in performing arts, almost 10 years ago, in 2016. I was like, okay, I’m going to graduate with a record and I’m going to find a way to formally stage music. My thoughts were that I liked to do music but I was always a little bit bored with concert formats. Unless you have a major budget and you make banger, bombastic stuff, then it is fun, but otherwise — and I know it from many musicians — it’s not that fun. So I had to find my way, and since I was in the Performing Arts, Theater department doing the master program, I had many inputs and just a different angle on how things can be staged, on what is dramaturgy and time-based art, what are the apparatus of theater, etc. So suddenly I wanted to go back to music, which I loved. We ended up making a pop record called Greatest Hits with 8 or 10 songs which were just famous lyrics that I chopped. This is when it started and, further on, it developed with more records and stuff. People seemed to enjoy the music and my voice, so I thought it maybe was a good thing to do. It brought me joy and people were interested and listening.

I was learning a lot because I’m not educated in music. I have a good ear; I can listen to something and repeat it, but I don’t read notes, so at the very end, my music is very much in collaboration with professional musicians. I learn a lot from involving them in my work, and I’m always very clear from the beginning about what I can and cannot do with music.

MLK: Is it when you made your first album that you decided to call yourself Price, to create this persona?

P: Yeah, this was the beginning of Price.

MLK: So I’m curious, who is the character Price now? How has it changed?

P: It’s a good question because I think at the very beginning, for me, Price was an alter ego. Basically, it went like this: I had to perform for my graduation work in the masters of Performing Arts, and I didn’t know if I wanted to do it myself or to choreograph other people. I actually didn’t even know if I wanted to have a career going on stage. So I did the music first, thinking I’ll see later what the form will become, and when I went on stage, it was just more simple to extend what I could be or do there by just changing my name and wearing it like a brand. PRICE. At the beginning, it was written in all caps and it was a name that failed to provide information. It’s really not in your favor to call yourself PRICE, because if you Google the name, you end up with “BEST PRICE,” “PRICE SALE,” “BLACK FRIDAY PRICE.” You cannot find me, and I enjoyed that, because I wanted to recreate the general idea of the pop figure, the American, Western pop figure, both with the name and with how the music was done. From there I just kept it like this. I enjoyed my staged self which was not my public self — only because I’m also public as Matthias Ringgenberg. My stage self became this other name that opened up possibilities because I was feeling somehow insecure to behave, to do or say this under my own passport name. I thought, God, people think this is me? No, Price is a version of me that is just more exaggerated or extended. It celebrates, or I suppose it lives out, a little bit of another fantasy which I’m maybe not doing as Matthias.

MLK: So what are the sides that are being celebrated?

P: First, it’s a very visual celebration. I use fashion, I dress in a more extra, playful way, I use this kind of makeup that makes me look a bit like a theatrical caricature from telenovelas, or like a TV moderator with really too orange makeup. Another big reference, obviously, is Ryan Trecartin — the exaggerated human person, just a little bit off.

MLK: Did I ever tell you about Benjamin Smith the realtor? There’s a person selling real estate in Boston who’s dressed up kind of like a Ryan Trecartin character.

P: No, you didn’t tell me, that sounds crazy. But yes, this is it — we all grew up with reality TV, you know, and obviously reality TV loves to cast the worst of the worst, the craziest of the craziest, and sometimes there’s a very thin line between being a stage theater figure with costumes or a real person.

With Price, I figured out early that I was questioning the way fashion works in performing arts. It always seemed out of date; the performance people were not so sharp with fashion, they didn’t research it so well. They take this piece from three years ago without knowing why, and it’s just awkward. And on my part, I preferred to focus my decisions towards costumes; I didn’t want to perform in fashion. I want it to be clear that it looks theatrical. I don’t want to make a comment on fashion. I don’t want to have these fashionable performances. Other people might be very good at this, but some fair mega. I worked with the fashion designer Barragán and I said clearly, “This should look like theater costumes, do not make fashion.” This is part of the fun of thinking this way and not making something sellable, commercial, or currently trendy, but just focusing on characters. There was a sociology book that I really liked — *Diven, Hacker, Spekulanten: Sozialfiguren der Gegenwart*, by Stephan Moebius and Markus Schroer — focused on discerning different social figures and explaining what they are in society and how they behave. At the beginning, I remember I was working from a personal top-five social figure that I was trying to be when I perform, working with these attributes in mind, behaving like this or dressing like that. I was kind of mixing them up to build something hybrid. Now, Price is just a version of me. I don’t even think it’s an alter ego. A lot of people call me Price in Switzerland. Some have a hard time with it but otherwise, everywhere else, they’re like, yeah, Price — no one questions it.

MLK: One of the things I’ve been curious about in these conversations I’m having with you, Niall, and Isabel is the idea of the stage, especially for you and Isabel who perform and engage with sculpture and design and who also perform in museums or galleries. I was wondering if the persona, if these kinds of characters, also function as stages? Is the persona a stage and does it

give you a sense of self-protection?

I thought, if one is able to create this kind of character that allows them to behave in a heightened state, in many different kinds of situations, then one doesn’t depend on the sort of armatures or infrastructures of the spaces themselves, because then you create your own platform.

P: I very much agree; the persona becomes a little bit like your scenography. When I started, I had no idea where this was gonna go. I was going to the club, to the gallery/museum, and to theater/dance at the same moment. All of these types of institutions wanted to have that kind of work. And I thought that somehow I did something correct there because I wanted to mix pop and I wanted to stage it differently and I wanted to have a character. These institutions all welcomed this.

When I graduated, I remember putting the performance in a space that was neither a theater space nor a white cube. It was literally just a classroom. I wanted it to be a space that doesn’t reference any of the institutional spaces, the cliché of any institutional spaces. Therefore it became up to them to see if this was something for their institution. And it worked.

When I work, I choose a look, I make a character. I literally have a suitcase with different garments. It’s my repertoire and I just use what I feel like in the moment. I take a bit of this and a bit of that and I make it work. I can style and make very different looks with this repertoire. I have five different wigs. I also never wash anything, so it becomes more and more nasty, full of makeup. Sometimes I have friends or people taking part in my performance. They’re performing with me. Some involve three people, some others involve a musician, and there’s always this suitcase to work from. We get to make five looks out of what’s in there, so everyone looks kind of like a version of Price, or let’s say it stays in my visual world which is literally costume-y stuff.

And yes, I think it is a protection. I think it’s what pop stars do. They’re full of wigs. Every pop girl plays with a wig or extensions. We make fantasy — it’s an amazing tool. As you said, you can allow yourself to say things. You can allow yourself to perform, to dance, to explore that without second-thinking. Even more so because after the performance, I’m back to another self. I often observe performing people, and before and after their performance, they stay the same; they’re always performing, there’s no cut to it. They have to be on all the time, as for me, it’s just like, lights on, we’re here, totally theatrical, and ciao, we close, I shower. It feels cleaner to me. Mentally hygienic. I can just cut it.

MLK: So now that you’ve had a few years of experience in terms of presenting your work in different types of venues, with their own set of rules, languages, and modes of display, can you say what type of stage you’re currently most drawn to in your work? What would be your dream stage?

P: I have to say that lately I enjoyed site-specific works a lot more, both as a performer and spectator. And it goes for many disciplines. There’s been a bit of a trend in music for a while, like performing in a chapel or in a crazy ruin, etc. A new type of music festival emerged where they go for very specific, very different spaces. Sometimes it’s acoustically challenging — which maybe is the purpose — but it’s cool. If I have the time to engage with architecture and to propose something specific for it, then it’s really the best for me. Last year I was performing in Belgium at the Grimbergen Airfield, in a very famous building, round, with small airplanes parked here and there. They asked us to come in the morning to set up so that at 4 the guests would arrive and we’d literally give a performance in this airport garage.

If I have a set of work that I tour for the 20th time, it’s just super fun when the spaces are nothing like the trinity of club, gallery, museum, or theater/dance space. Another type of weird place actually informs your work. Sometimes you even understand more what the work is about or what its essence is because you can’t hide anymore, you can’t hold yourself. It’s easy, especially within the traditions of theater, to make it big with lights and all, but sometimes the work doesn’t need that at all. When you end up in a site-specific space, you have to pretty much improvise, to go differently and rethink the work. I really learn a lot, and it’s more fun when people invite me in bizarre spaces.

The last two or three years I pushed more towards the visual arts, the gallery and the museum institutions. I think this is the place where my work is best understood. I’m putting the theater/dance a little bit aside for now. When I was showing work in a theater or dance context and there were conversations or talks afterward, there were often misunderstandings because for me the work is more than just a body in front of what they called scenography. It’s actually an installation and it has the same importance as the dancing body. But no, they only want to speak about dramaturgy and the body, about a person moving correctly. Everything else is really just a backdrop for them. There’s this music but no one wants to know who composed it. And when I’m showing the same work in a museum context, then everything is being looked at and I feel much more comfortable having a conversation. So yeah, I enjoy galleries and museums at the moment.

MLK: I had another question, but first, I really wanted to congratulate you on those two songs that you just released. They’re really beautiful, and the music video is also really well done. I’m curious, is that part of an album?

P: Actually this music already came out a while ago, but we were doing this music video to continue the momentum of that record from 2023, A Little Too Late. We did this video for fun because a platform from Marseille was asking me to do a live concert. I quickly figured out that it didn’t fit me, but I saw the opportunity to use the nature stage, the theatrical public space, and I tried that out with video. We had a small team and two or three days to make it, that’s it. To me this proves again that if there’s such a thing as a stage self, or if Price, with the costumes, becomes a stage by itself, it proves that it doesn’t matter where I’m performing because I just hold the performance with my voice, my look, my character, and its behavior. All this becomes a signature. Basically, this is what every pop star does.

MLK: So this character is established. You’re formulating what its behavior is, what the parameters are, who this singer is and who that actor is. But to me, as somebody who also works in performance and who has never engaged with developing a character, I never really questioned those things, I never deconstructed that. When I am performing, maybe my behavior is different — I can feel it, I feel different, I feel like a character, like a person who is performing. I feel concentrated, engaged, but when I’m

looking at your performances, I see Price as you. To me, this character is not that far away from Matthias. And I see this paradigm as part of being an artist, as this heightened state of experience, this heightened state of relationship, of relationality, of relating to others and to space. This is something that we also do in sculpture, in painting, in installation. This type of relationship to space or to an audience is not something exclusive to live performance.

P: A lot has changed between my graduation, the birth of Price, and now. I got more and more informed with the recent works about what is really working, what should change, and generally about this whole alter ego thing. At the very end — and that’s what I tell now — Price is just a version of me. Matthias came closer to Price, and Price came closer to Matthias, in a way. I gave myself another name to explore myself and my own identity on this exposed stage by producing works in front of an audience — and more than that, works that actually need an audience to be accomplished. All of this stuff helped me to understand who I am. Price made me understand more who Matthias is. It was a playful way to allow myself to do certain things because I’m shy. But yes, with time they came closer to each other and now they kind of are... You see it correctly. I think it became more honest; I don’t know exactly what to say, but they’re there and they help each other.



Niall Jones

MATTHEW LUTZ-KINOY: I would love to hear about your experience in performance from the beginning. What was your first encounter with dancing?

NIALL JONES: My first encounter with dancing will probably have to be watching music videos and hanging out with my family. Watching people dancing on television and wondering, “There’s a question of transmission here. Can we try that on ourselves? Can we put that on our own bodies? What does it look and feel like to try to do a dance from someplace else?” I was watching music videos, you know, so it was girls shaking their ass or something, and I was asking myself, “What is it? What happens when I do that? And how do people respond to it?” I wanted to deal with the parameters, the consequences, and the perceptions of what it is like to do a move.

MLK: Did your family put you in dance class?

NJ: No, I put myself in it, but there was never a moment where my family tried to steer me away from anything. My sister was also a dancer in high school, and I would go to her dance shows. I was very curious about it. And then, when I went into college, I took a dance class and was disoriented and enamored by it, and I started to dive into it rapidly. That was me finding it on my own terms and not necessarily being guided to it by a direct source or person.

MLK: How did you enter the voguing scene?

NJ: That was in college. That was a kind of parallel dance study. I was following a formal curriculum in dance training in the university—modern, ballet, all of the sort of required classes—and then I was going clubbing and seeing how people meet dance a different way at night. There are two clubs that I would go to a lot. One was called God, and one was called Club Colors. One was primarily a white gay club, and the other was a Black and trans club. They were both around the campus of VCU, so I would ambulate between both of these clubs on different nights. The way people met dancing in both these spaces was really different, but also very different from the kind of dancing that was happening in the university. So that’s where I met the activity and the intensity of voguing—it was at Club Colors. I wasn’t so much doing it, but I was very much studying it, a lot, and would notice that it had a very different intensity in relation to the body and space and time and music. I was transfixed.

MLK: You were witnessing many kinds of structures of dance outside of that academic structure, but it sounds like it was still informed by school. How do you see that?

NJ: The practice of other ways of dancing happens in all kinds of spaces that aren’t a university space. It happens in people’s bedrooms, on the pier, in nightclubs, in the parking lot. So the whole relationship to school gets outstretched and doesn’t become the property or the possession of one particular location or institution, but is actually quite dispersed, distributed. The club just differently informed a conception of school that I didn’t have before. It became another school, and it informed a notion of how to think about the locatedness of places we go to to learn how to dance, or to find and experience dance. I love school. A lot of my dance practice and training happened there. I value that, and I needed it at a certain time in my life as much as I needed the other spaces where I was meeting dance in a concurrent way. I needed to be in all of these spaces in an almost simultaneous way to learn some things about my body and the social, and the many ways one can be a student and engage in both dance practice, dance exhibitionism, dance voyeurism—spaces of multiple modes of exchange and transmission—and not necessarily overly prioritize one way of doing it, but to be in them, to learn how to vehiculate between multiple ways of seeking and exploring and approaching the idea of dancing. So I think what I’m getting to, or

what I’ve been learning, is that it is less a kind of breaking down than an ability to move through multiple spheres and multiple worlds at once, to be present in them at different times and with different registers of presence, and to be able to find ways in and out of them.

MLK: So do you also mean that those kinds of spaces deserve and maintain some kind of autonomy? That it’s you who navigates, but that all these different spaces have their own autonomy?

NJ: Well, things move, right? If you go someplace enough, you start to receive information from that place. What happens then when you go to another place? These spaces are not hermetically sealed off from each other. So it’s like I’m the bee. I’m the pollinator, right? I can only invariably move that information from one place to another. And it’s not always a conscious exchange and movement. These spaces become interdependent in some ways. They aren’t free from pollution or from the insurgent information that we unconsciously bring into spaces with us. So if I keep going to the club, these notions of what it is to be there then start to infiltrate this other space that didn’t have that information prior. And that’s happening on so many different levels, so these spaces are getting crowded with not just one way of thinking that seems like their sole property or format of how to be in this space. I don’t think about spaces and situations as being so free and autonomous and impenetrable; I actually think about them as being quite porous. We find ways to shape our situations, our social relations, with all kinds of immaterial techniques of being and moving that come from someplace else but end up in the places where we’re trying to conduct ourselves and our relations. So in some way, going out clubbing allowed me to organize myself differently and to orient myself to spaces that maybe had more rigidity. I think it just gave me more possibilities for how to organize a self and a body in relation to these other kinds of tighter structures.

MLK: I like thinking about that in terms of your *JohnsonJaxxxonJefferson* piece, and its use of sound as another space that allows for a duration that you could create. I don’t know how to unpack that piece too much, but the first thing that comes to mind is this net, this kind of movement happening right from the beginning of that work when you’re outdoors. How did that happen? How was that organized outside of the venue? Everybody was waiting outside to go in. But were they just waiting? There was ticketing in the front, right?

NJ: Yeah, there was ticketing under the portico at the entrance of the church.

MLK: But everyone was waiting to enter inside, right?

NJ: They were waiting for the doors to open, yes.

MLK: Okay. But then everyone entered through a kind of side entrance.

NJ: The church has two entrances: there’s the main entrance to the sanctuary, and the side entrance, which is on 10th Street. And then there’s the other side entrance that is off of 11th Street, which is the entrance to the Parish Hall and the New York Theatre Ballet because, you know, St. Mark’s is a big complex that houses multiple organizations. And so, that side entrance is the way to St. Mark’s offices, New York Theatre Workshop, Poetry Project, and the Parish Hall. I wanted to enter the church not through its mouth, but sort of through its... I wanted to come through the back door.

MLK: And there was this person singing on the street with a microphone?

NJ: Yeah.

MLK: Who is that? I mean, is it you or is it a kind of character you play?

NJ: Who was it to you? How did you interpret it?

MLK: This character kind of reappears at some points inside, singing, but it’s transforming a lot. So I saw it as a distinct person outside who kind of transforms into other characters inside. I thought it was a person performing on the street for the masses, an art brut performer, who is on the street singing to no one and everyone. But then, as they lead everybody into this space inside of this building, they become this shamanic kind of character. And in a way, it opens up this interesting door for playing with the language of the indoor space. Like you say, if this is a language of possible characters that exist in an outdoor location, when you go inside you understand that these are things that exist within the realm of this other type of environment, this indoor environment—an experimental dance and performance space.

NJ: How do you draw the line between...

MLK: Inside and outside, exactly? Well, that’s what I’m interested to understand from you.

NJ: Wow. I mean, I have to admit, I stay away from “character.” It doesn’t feel like the most applicable term for how I think about my work with ideas of morphing figures, or disfigurations of selves. This has come up before. People ask me, Who are these characters? And my mind is not there. What I’m thinking about, maybe in different moments of the work, is how it is asking me, or whomever, to convey an idea. What are its conceptual, physical, spatial, and social parameters? And how is it trying to move? Who is it trying to move? Where does it go? I’m thinking about how to conduct space and time in some ways that both ask people to orient and comport themselves to the situation differently, but I’m also thinking about how it asks the performer to comport to the task at hand. What I was really trying to do was to work through notions and variables of being in relationship to church. I have grown up in church; I have a particular kind of relationship to church as a location—kind of very much like school. Church as a site for multiple operations and organizations of collective, community, self, spirit, of a certain kind of disciplining of the self and the body in relationship to other

changing and fixed notions of appropriateness and sacrality. And so, I find myself just like at school. I’m constantly in school, and I constantly find myself in relationship to locations and notions of the church. You were just talking about Judson earlier. If you’re a dance maker, a downtown dance artist, you’re probably showing work in a church. We just keep ending up in church. So I was really working with that to think about how to move into, through, and back out of church. One way of doing it was to think about it in relation to the voice. So that’s how a kind of moving of the voice, both through the body and into space, became a continual concept that flows through a lot of that project. I was thinking about the voice as a way to organize and sort of disorganize the body and kind of propel a body throughout the system of the piece. That’s how I would, maybe, talk about that, more so than through the specificities of character. This brings me back to more general questions on dance and spaces. Where and how does dance need to happen? I’m constantly thinking about how a work operates on dramaturgical levels, about where the audience is, and about what demands a work can put on an audience. What can it ask of people? I’m very much interested in how you choreograph a crowd. How do you arrange and disarrange notions of the audience so that people have a chance to not just simply sit and watch a thing unfold, but actually to have to both move with it, move around it, move toward it, be moved by it? It’s the idea of multiple choreographies happening simultaneously. You don’t just get in the room—you have to be led to the room. This became a core component of this project: What is it to be moved into a space and for a space to be gradually open, to be made available to move through? With the side-entrance idea, you have to walk in a singular way to get into the church. The way it slows time alters expectations and perceptions of the space itself—having to tunnel into the church as opposed to the big doors being open, having to go through the dark to get into a partially lit room. I was just really curious about the journey, the travel, the work to get in.

MLK: You have mentioned before that you work in a state of building one project which leads to the next, one idea coming after the last. I’m thinking about the duration of your works and the arbitrariness of the finite object. If there is an understanding that we create an event—which could be a painting as much as your performance at the church—and that these formats have an arbitrary time limitation, I am wondering: are you interested in an event being archived, to be able to participate in a longer timeline or a different timeline than the event itself? What is the significance of these durations? Is it something productive for you to think about this type of formatting?

NJ: I don’t know about formatting. I move between different formats a lot. It helps me to learn. I think part of being an artist, or even a person, is learning how to respond to variables and constraints, and every sort of space or proposal has different kinds of settings that you have to both work in accordance with, but also find ways to cross the lines. I was just watching *Angels in America* the other day with a group of friends, and Roy Cohn has this great line that he says to the Mormon guy who’s his protégé of sorts. He’s like, “There are so many laws, there are so many rules. Find one you can break and learn how to transgress it a little bit. Find a way to live.” All of these methods and procedures, softwares, and situations, become zones for learning how to both work within the lines and to rupture lines. And a lot of it is kind of fantasy—just learning how to build something out of nowhere. And so I like knowing and not knowing. I like trying to find a different way through. I think about this in terms of contingencies because one thing informs the other thing, asks the other notions or the other rules or the other parameters to adjust. I’m constantly thinking about all of the operations I undertake. Sort of like a DJ, I’m mixing a bunch of elements together and trying to consider or speculate or fabulate how all these elements operate in time and sequence as an assembly of possibilities. But they often get worked on separately and then, over time, start to merge or to come into some kind of alignment that isn’t always a steady one or a stable one.

MLK: In the theatrical space, in the cinema, or in live performance, there’s the possibility to bring so many interests together. You can bring all of these different practices into one room, even if they are socially isolated practices. Much as you said, your body is the pollinator, you are the bee, and the theatrical or performance space becomes this space where all those elements can come together, where it also exists outside of you. So I meant to ask, do you consider yourself as part of a group of artists or in a movement?

NJ: As part of a movement, I guess not, because that would require a general consolidation and a kind of naming that I think can always only ever be imprecise. I’m not interested in the naming of a movement, but I am interested in all of the ways people are trying to move ideas, and what terms or terminologies seem fitting for them—which also become the terms and terminologies that we simultaneously need to resist, to not be caught or captured; they are sort of historical nets. But I’m very interested in all the people that I’ve been working with, as much as I am interested in being a part of groups that aren’t living in this moment. I’m always looking at peers in different directions, but I’m also thinking, Am I in a group with Jean Genet? Am I in a group with Willi Ninja? Am I in a group with all kinds of figures and formations of people who have contributed to a direct and indirect landscape or ways of doing and undoing the world—the worlds we move through—from which I’m constantly learning and that I keep revisiting? So yeah, I’m in some kind of group. I just don’t think the group has clear boundaries. But I’m working. I feel like I’m everyone’s student, and I’m constantly absorbing information and submerging myself in the many fields of thought, movement, motion, desire. I think the group is a much more displaced, dislocated kind of community. I think I’m in a kind of moving swarm of thinkers and doers. Maybe I’m part of that swarm, or maybe I’m moving through different kinds of swarms that are migrating across time. I don’t know if I’m part of a clear movement, but I’m definitely moving—definitely moving.



