

September 7, 2021

Benjamin Millepied
Artistic Director
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Dear Mr. Benjamin Millepied,

My name is LG Williams, and I am a visual artist based in Los Angeles. I am seeking your interest and participation in a brief collaborative venture or artwork, inspired in part by the recent Covid 19 Pandemic.

The collaborative art project that I would like us to undertake together is simply videotaping one or more of LA Dance Project's principal danseuse(s) or danseur(s) *at rest* for about 4 minutes each.

The inspiration underlying this project can be quickly summarized as an attempt at representing a special sense and awareness in time. As such, this video collection of *performing artists at rest* might provide mimesis—a way of remembering precise moments and time, whether they be missed or met or gone.

For many years now, way before the global pandemic shutdown, I have been drawn to ideas surrounding closure (Closed, 2013); foreclosure (Cracked But OK, 2011); failure (Wrong Way Go Back, 2015); collapse (The Cliff, 2013), absence (For The Birds, 2013); remediation (Blind Justice, 2014); passing (July 11 2014, 2014); pointlessness (It Will Never Happen, 2012); and meaninglessness (Amounts To Nothing, 2004).

But as the Covid 19 virus raged across the nation in early 2020, my attention turned to the disastrous effects that the disease had upon our cultural communities, primarily upon performative art, artists, and arts audiences. In particular, the epidemic's impact on professional performing artists has weighed heavily on my imagination—precisely, those whose primary aesthetic careers are already brief because of their artistic medium's natural physical limitations and lifespan.

Timing is critical in the arts and for artists. For example, the average life span of a ballet career is already short because dancers lose stamina as they age into their mid to late 30s (see reference below). Now with Covid 19, professional dancers, many of whom have prepared extensively for more than 15,000 hours, have been dealt another significant professional career obstacle: The COVID-19 pandemic has put many dance professionals—many at the peak of their careers—and activities on hold, suspension, or full-stop, including temporarily closing many dance troops.

Naturally, this collaborative-experimental art project is grounded upon the work of many others in the artistic community—one artist specifically in your discipline—namely, Paul Taylor’s “Duet” from 1957. “Duet”, as you are aware, was a 4-minute experimental dance piece in which Taylor stands next to a reclining woman in street clothes, and neither one moves. Taylor’s artistic friendships inspired this iconic dance/anti-dance piece—iconoclastic artists such as John Cage (4’33”, 1952) and Robert Rauschenberg (Erase DeKooning Drawing, 1953–1953). Shortly afterward, Warhol’s “Sleep” (1964) and Beckett’s “Breath” (1972) springs to mind extending this artistic thread.

Once the short-term project is complete, the short video(s) can be uploaded and shared on any social media platform or archived on a dedicated website—along with a modest publicity campaign and email blast. Additionally, perhaps you might know of or suggest other significant dancers or dance companies that could contribute to the project, too?

I hope that you will join me in this artistic collaboration. I believe this joint experiment will highlight and represent this salient sudden suspension and loss of valuable creative contributions—and psychological distress—that have unexpectedly occurred during the first, second, and third horrific waves of The Covid 19 pandemic. I will be assisted in this collaborative project by my close friend and distinguished performance theorist Bryan Reynolds, Claire Trevor Professor and Chancellor’s Professor at the University of California-Irvine.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts,

LG Williams
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cc: Alice Mathis, alice@ladanceproject.org

ref: Hamilton, L.H., & Hamilton, W.G.,1994. Occupational stress in classical ballet: The impact in different cultures. *Medical Problems of Performing Artists*. 9-2, 35-38.