

## GATHERING FOR COMMUNION AROUND EMBODIED FELLOWSHIP AND RADICAL PERFORMANCE IN THE COVID-19 FUTURE WORLD



This will be a highly experiential, collaborative, and transformational UARTS Faculty Engineering/Arts Student Team (FEAST) will agitate for new considerations about ways that communities might thrive, survive and re-imagine creativity in precarious times. As we consider the ability that art making possesses to hold up a mirror to society, we will locate creative ways to question injustices and biases through "performance" events that enliven and challenge. This work will foreground ongoing, interactive and transformational public offerings that exist across digital platforms and real time, and might look like a play, a movement-based narrative, a sonic/sculptural landscape with the goal of fostering communication and interaction.

I want to examine how, and if, storytelling, design, and movement-based practices can be employed to bridge technological and artistic approaches in the alternative world defined by a coronavirus future. As the pandemic has, unwillingly, required that we consider an alternative future, what are the ways that embodied connections might survive. The challenges of continuing to create and thrive during a pandemic demands that we look towards a more sustainable, alternative future for the environment and vulnerable communities. This situation has unmasked and exacerbated societal, racial, and income inequality divides that damage communities and spaces. I would like to collaborate with a group of students who are agitated by, curious about, and feel compelled to imagine what our physical interactions will look like when the "new normal" becomes reality. How can embodied research guide us towards new definitions of the public sphere? When we consider how people will gather in the future, it will be necessary to consider the purpose and structure of these spaces. As a performing artist and practitioner of live performance, I want to create collaborative dialog and action with student designers (digital and analog) to imagine new public spheres where physical interaction is not equated with illness. I seek input from environmental and structural engineering students to consider ideas of proximity and the possibility of real time performance events. Pre-pandemic interpersonal exchanges were largely defined by commodification and profit. The writer Arundoti Roy, in her article "The Pandemic is a Portal, states that "...the virus seeks proliferation, not profit". What are the implications for the creative researcher?

I would like to convene a working group of students that looks at the history of the epidemics and art making. We might start by reading Frank Snowden's " Epidemics and Society, From the Black Death to the Present", studying the material and work of The Poor People's Campaign- A Call for National Revival (<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/>) and then launch forums for discussion, designing, moving, writing, and sharing material in works in process sharings. I feel like the flux and uncertainty of the coming two years will shape our process in ways that I can't fully predict. During the initial phase of this research, we determine if the safe gathering of people for communion around performance is possible, and if so, in how and where. I wish to foreground a generative, fluid and responsive environment that cultivates skills of observation.

## MEETING TIME AND LOCATION

Tuesdays, 6-9pm

## STUDENTS SOUGHT

### WRITING & TEXT EDITING (2)

- Student skills: writing and text editing
- Likely majors: DANCE, COMP, PAT, ENGLISH, CRWRTNG

### MUSIC & VIDEO EDITING (2)

- Student skills: music and video editing
- Likely majors: ARTDES, INTPERF, PAT, THTRMUS, EECS

### ENVIRONMENT & SOCIAL JUSTICE (2)

- Student skills: critical thinking, community connections, interest in social justice issues, environmental science
- Likely majors: EARTH, ENVIRON, POLSCI, WGS, AAS, SW, SOC

### DIGITAL PLATFORM DESIGN (2)

- Student skills: web and app design, interest in UI/UX, software development
- Likely majors: ARCH, CE, CS, SI, AMCULT

## FACULTY PROJECT LEAD



**Amy Chavasse**, choreographer, performer, educator, improviser, and Artistic Director of Chavasse Dance & Performance is currently a Professor at the University of Michigan. Her work has been presented throughout the U.S. including premieres of new work at Triskelion Presents in Brooklyn in June 2015 and 2017, earning the comment- "Amy Chavasse is a continual surprise, solo or ensemble. Her dances are simultaneously absurd, smart and disturbing, and she chooses her collaborators well." (Quinn Batson-OffOffOff). Her work has also been presented at Jacob's Pillow Inside/Out,

Links Hall, Chicago, The Dance Complex- Boston and other venues. Internationally, she has taught and her work has been presented in Uppsala, Sweden, Cuba, Lithuania, Vienna, Colombia, Vancouver BC, Buenos Aires, the American Dance Festival/ Henan (China) and The Beijing Dance Festival. She premiered *Low Winter Light*, a duet for Donnell Oakley and Jessica Jolly at The Beijing Dance Festival in 2013. She has taught at Duncan 3.0 in Rome, and at ResExtensa's Instituto Vittoria in Giovinazzo, Italy. She is in an ongoing collaboration for a project called *Calling the Goddess* with Shanghai based vocalist/ choreographer/ performer, Jay Peng Zhang that premiered in Uppsala, Sweden, followed by performances in Brooklyn NY, and Ann Arbor. She was the only American performing artist invited to participate and present new work at the 2019 Urban Spaces Festival, Shanghai in October. She spearheaded the Shanghai trip, inviting NYC based artists, Beth Graczyk and John Gutierrez to join her and dancers, Nicole Reehorst and Emily Soong for the 8-day festival. At UrbanSpaces, Chavasse presented a new duet, *Plunder Thunder*, that had premiered earlier in Detroit, taught at The Shanghai

International Dance Center, The Children's Palace and improvisation for actors at The Shanghai Tower. *Plunder Thunder* will be performed at The New Dance Festival in Daejeon, South Korea in June 2020. (now postponed to January 2021 due to the coronavirus pandemic.)

In Fall 2019, she directed and co-choreographed a new trio, *Manicula is a Revolver*, with NYC based dance artists, Beth Graczyk, Sarah Konner and Austin Selden, with performances scheduled for 2020. Touring throughout the US in 2015-16 with *Sola, Dances by and for Women*, she performed a solo *Conspiracy Going, Amy Needs A Lot of Empathy*, prompting Melanie Wiesen of the Tampa Art Breaker to write: "The most polarizing of the six pieces, Amy Chavasse's (University of Michigan) "Conspiracy Going," seemed to be a rejection of the easy, digestible portrayal of contemporary dance on television. A mix of spoken word and dance, Chavasse, with no musical accompaniment, performed the intensely personal piece with incredible athleticism and passion. Her verbal commentary on sadism and authority, matched by her powerful and aggressive physicality, was the most provocative piece of art I have seen in the past year." She presented improvisation workshops at the International Society of Improvised Music in Chateaux D'Oex, Switzerland in June 2015, and an alternative movement presentation at The University of Valetta, Malta as part of the Dance Studies Association conference in 2018. She has taught at and collaborated with members of Tanz Tangente in Berlin, was a guest teacher at pOnderosa Dance in Stolzenhagen, Germany, performed with ResExtensa Danza Teatro Danza in Bari, Italy, and Grupo Krapp in Buenos Aires and teaches regularly at The American Dance Festival's as part of their WFFS guest artist series. She assisted in a new study abroad program for the U-M Department of Dance in Seville, Spain, in conjunction with Marcat Dance (Spain), and taught at the Dance Program of the National University of Costa Rica in San José, and with the resident professional companies CCDUNA and DanzaU in July 2019.

In both her academic and professional lives, she continues to study, teach and practice improvisation, finding opportunities for her students to experience compositional or performance improvisation in venues in the Detroit / Ann Arbor area. For Chavasse, creative research is a potent place that functions within a rejection of norms that confront stasis, that re-imagines notions of popular culture, and re-examines assumptions through an anti-racist, queer, feminist lens. An ambitious new project, "Dancing Across Hemispheres— Creation and Performance Residency", will bring members of Grupo Krapp, a multidisciplinary performance company from Buenos Aires to U-M and Michigan in late summer/ early fall 2020. Members of Grupo Krapp will join with members of my collective, ChavasseDance, to collaborate on and create a new performance project for performances in Detroit. Touring the project to Buenos Aires and beyond will follow.

#### Artist statement

*The circumstances of each project, including the histories and physical fluency of the participants, shapes the fictive possibilities, asking that I find ways to push beyond recognizable or sanctioned limits. My experiences broaden as I age, as does my willingness to expose the urgency of my intentions. Consequently, my encounters with imagined ways of being in the world expand and surprise, heightening the tension between illusion, desire and subterfuge. Age gives the gift of loosening attachments to inhibitions and vanity.*

*I seek a personal and distinct language for each event, and count on my experience working with diverse groups of artists, from across the U.S, and more recently with international artists, to reflect the tenor and temperature of the space. I'm not particularly interested in creating works that owe their shape and vocabulary to familiar, recognizable or popular movement vernaculars. I vehemently want to address systems that trivialize or sanitize the potency of live performance. I struggle to make art in incendiary times. I make dances to wrestle with raging questions, to deal with the discursive clutter and noise that fill my thoughts. I seek collaborative projects that demand that I re-frame and update my pedagogical beliefs and practices that derive from historically privileged forms. In reminding myself that art-making can be driven by more than tactics of survival, I'm reclaiming my embrace of the unique ways that movement expresses desire, pleasure and can expose or imagine an alternative reality.*