

Other Inland Empires

by

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Abstract

Shimmering between here/there, self/other, now/then, *Other Inland Empires* is a stage performance which traces the Jewish roots of surf culture from Europe to California and back again. Inspired equally by historical coincidence, autoethnographic field work, and exploration of site, the piece was developed through 14 months of writing and devising. With palm trees, fabric, and a roving green screen, four actors, an in-audience musician, and a director-performer transform a bare stage into a shifting landscape, while the audience watches from the comfort of beach chairs. Drawing from strategies of postdramatic theater, performative autoethnography, and audience relations to installation and site-based performance, this work aimed to create an oscillating space in which story and image double and re-double upon themselves, the fictional interrupts the real, and the personal grazes the political.

Keywords: Gidget; postdramatic theatre; autoethnography; Judaism; surfing

For Sidonia Singer

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Photo 1. Research on the beach (Vancouver, BC)

Other Inland Empires

Overview

Other Inland Empires is a stage performance, a fictionalized autoethnography, an investigation into site, an experiment with interruption, and an attempt to shimmer between materials, locations, times, and identities. It is a play that plays with, signaling to and away from. The piece was devised and created in collaboration with the performers (Amanda Sum, Nicola Rough, Montserrat Videla, Dominique Hat), sound designer Matthew Ariaratnam, scenic designer Robert Leveroos, lighting designer Gillian Hanemayer, dramaturg Caroline Liffmann, technical director Jocelyn Kim, video designer Marianne Thodas, and early workshop participants Annie Therrien Boulos and Eddy Van Wyk.

Artistic Background

Since 2005 my primary practice has been a performer-creator of devised theatre. For over a decade I co-created performances with Portland, Oregon-based Hand2Mouth, building shows with the ensemble and in collaboration with artists in Poland, Mexico City, and across the US. These works ranged from explorations of post 9/11 nationalism via pop music and karaoke (*Repeat After Me*, 2006), to a re-imagination of Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* (*Time, A Fair Hustler*, 2015). The personal was central to this work in content (e.g. mining and staging family histories), method (following individual interests while working towards a collective whole), and form (e.g. use of actor's names in place of character names).

During my time at Simon Fraser University, I shifted from making performance within venues to considering ways in which sites were already performing, how they compel visitors to perform, and the multi-sensory interactions they inspire. These place-based explorations involved setting my body in relation to the Vancouver landscape (*Fitting*, 2015), creating environments which evoked performance from attendees (*For one and for all; A Consumer's Kaddish*, 2015), installing plaques created by elementary students in the Strathcona neighbourhood (*Future Markers; Future Markers Community Walk*, 2016), and co-creating a multi-modal soundwalk (*Embodied Emplacement*, with

Matthew Ariaratnam, 2017), among others. Concurrent to developing my own projects, I worked as a dramaturg on several outdoor performance events including a community dance in Mountain View Cemetery (*Solstice Dance*, 2016) and a soundwalk (*A Walk for 9.9.17*, 2017), a practice which demanded I consider site as a key collaborator.

This time outside of the theatre impressed upon me a need to more fully consider locations which may be taken for granted, to interrogate—or at least integrate—an expanded understanding of the venue's physical realities into the fictional of performance. Acknowledging the site of the theatre seemed to further interruptions of the real. The theatre is not an 'empty space', but a site of capture filled with people, a "performing body" which functions as "site", "sight", and "cite"—it is a place of seeing and being that also "inscribes, marks, takes back to a source" (Machon 200). *Other Inland Empires* used the citations of place as material, evoking and working with theatre's potential oscillation in an attempt to shimmer between reality and fiction.

Encountering & Making

I first read Peter Lunenfeld's "Gidget on the Couch" in 2008, and though inspired and surprised to learn that Jewish immigrants, refugees, and their children had been central figures in the development and popularization of Southern California surf culture, I was uncertain how to proceed with this knowledge as material. Nearly a decade later, armed with the expectation of failure, a sense that land and location would provide information if not answers, and a hunch that my Southern California-ness (despite decades of living in the Pacific NW) would make surfing in the former Austro-Hungarian Empire possible, I took a month-long research trip to Central Europe.

From July-August 2016 I made audio recordings, took photographs, wrote fields notes, and did my best to take part in beach culture in and around Berlin, Bratislava, Prešov (my grandmother Sidonia Lauer's hometown), and Lake Balaton. Upon arrival in Europe, several things were immediately present: the refugee crisis, ongoing anti-Semitism, and the presence of California surf culture via fast fashion (t-shirts, board shorts, palm tree decals). Two research sites became especially important: Tropical Islands Resort, an airship hangar converted to an indoor tropical vacation paradise on the site of a Nazi airfield 60 km south of Berlin, provided the visual and affective inspiration for the play; Zlaté Piesky, a popular Bratislava beach lake and home to the

WakeLake wakeboarding centre, provided me the accident and subsequent hospitalization for the narrative and truth-is-stranger-than-fiction thrust of the work.

For the next year, I wrote text for the performance, listened for the klezmer in surf music with my sound designer, collaboratively developed scenic ideas, held a two-week devising workshop, presented a 20-minute version of the piece in Seattle, and read and re-read *Gidget* on the beach. In late August 2017, my team of performers, designers, and dramaturg, began a six-week rehearsal process which culminated in three performances, October 5-7, in Studio T.

Context

Other Inland Empires sits simultaneously *within* the world of postdramatic contemporary performance, and in a series of *betweens*: autobiography and fiction, written and devised, autoethnography and history, theatre and installation. Like artists such as Tim Etchells, Kristen Kosmas, and Darren O'Donnell, I also worked within and between overlapping roles of writer, director, and performer: the freedom of one often butting up against the responsibilities of the other.

As much of my research over the past year has been an explicit search for this becoming-between state I have termed 'shimmer', it stands to reason that the work itself would both land in and leap from disciplinary constraints, the content becoming, blurring, mirroring the form (though perhaps this is simply another way of acknowledging form as content). My embrace of shimmer is thus also an embrace of uncertainty: when we see that things we once thought were fixed are in fact in flux, the stability of everything and anything is called into question. In this way, exploring theatre through the search for shimmer required ongoing conversations with expectation and entanglement. As a director, writer and performer, how can I destabilize ideas/feelings/sensations for the audience without being certain of what is already fixed?

Part of this answer came by working explicitly with "irruption of the real", one of eleven postdramatic "theatrical signs" identified by Han-Thies Lehmann. Recognizing the theatre—as venue and situation—as a site (and cite and sight) of fiction, creates a space to fold the "entirely real" into the "signifying real" (102), and put "the real on equal footing with the fictive" (103). Lehmann goes on to write:

The aesthetic cannot be understood through a determination of content...but solely – as the theatre of the real shows – by 'treading the borderline', by permanently switching, not between form and content, but between 'real' continuity (connection with reality) and 'staged' construct. It is in this sense that postdramatic theatre means: theatre of the real. It is concerned with developing a perception that undergoes – at its own risk – the 'come and go' between the perception of structure and of the sensorial real. (103)

This 'treading the borderline' and 'come and go' are part of shimmer which exists not merely as a movement between two points—the spectrum between a fixed binary—but as a continual dance of moving and interacting points of perception, sensation, meaning, and presence. Hints of shimmer can be found across disciplines—literary theorist Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht calls the "production of presence...an effect in constant movement" (17); dramaturg Katherine Profeta writes of "words as a field for movement" (35); affect theorists Gregory J. Seigworth & Melissa Gregg describe affect as arising "in the midst of *in-between-ness*: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (1); while Derrida's 'a' in 'differance', as explicated by cultural theorist Stuart Hall, "sets the word in motion to new meanings without erasing the *trace* of its other meanings. ...[It] challenges the fixed binaries which stabilise meaning and representation and show how meaning is never finished or completed, but keeps on moving" (229). I followed these paths and more as I worked to build shimmer into the play's text, scenic design, and casting (of actors and spaces).

Of her rehearsal process with choreographer Ralph Lemon, Profeta writes: "we had no magic formula for discerning in advance when that reverberation might occur. We had only the art of trying, and noticing, and naming what seemed to resonate" (38). And so it went in *Other Inland Empires*: I worked with materials—text, bodies, voices, sounds, props, lights, the prospect of an audience—and then waited, watching, noticing, feeling the tremor, the resonance, the rising phenomena, the prospect of shimmer. Like Soyini Madison, "I [kept] my hands on the performance and my eyes on the theory" (108), yet I am grateful that my eyesight is poor and I could leave my glasses just outside the studio door. Sometimes theory would follow intuition, refining a latent feeling that the experiment, if not the result, was on the right track. Other times theory would inspire decisions or experiments in the rehearsal hall, pushing me to question my assumptions and ways of working.

The Play

Other Inland Empires is a 60 minute play performed by four actors, a live musician, and myself: the director and subject. The piece unfolds in triplicate: formally introducing the space, the narrator Julie Hammond, and the narrator's grandmother Sidonia Singer. Weaving these pieces together are songs (one original and four covers), the 1957 novel *Gidget*, constantly moving props and scenery, historical facts, and a chorus of performers. The title of the piece refers to the triple position of the theatre as simultaneous stand-in for California's Inland Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and the neither/both position of the at once real/fictional location (see equations in Appendix A). The 'other' of *Other Inland Empires* is essential: it reaches towards Hall's articulations of "otherness as an inner compulsion...always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" (226) while setting up an expectation of the unfamiliar as something which stands apart from.

Site & Space

Above all else, this work centres on place: as physical location and as metaphor for belonging. The piece begins with two minutes of sand, collected from rehearsal at Vancouver's Third Beach, poured from a tiny cooler onto the lid of larger one. During my research trip to Europe I collected bags of sand from every beach I could. At the time I wasn't sure why or to what end, but it seemed important to capture the difference between the unnaturally uniform white grains of Tropical Islands Resort and the orange-brown sand of Lido Strand Vonyarcvashegy. Later I imagined crafting hourglasses from the sand of these many beaches, a physical manifestation of 'beach time' and an experiment to see if time counted down by different beaches' grains would feel different. While this project remains incomplete, the opening pour was intended as a sort of hourglass, a pace setting for the unfolding performance—a spaciousness which created space—an introduction of the physical land into the venue, and moment, albeit brief, to showcase the land "as an active and dynamic force, a storyteller itself" (Yi 5).

In the first week of August rehearsals, following a trip to the beach, I asked each of the actors to craft a land acknowledgement using sand they had collected. Their pieces, ranging from installation to performance, were beautiful and deeply emotional.

The text I spoke in the production, written by Amanda Sum¹, took the collective 'we' of audience and on-stage actors from the Universe to Woodward's Studio T, naming the site of performance and illuminating that which audiences are expected to ignore. Rather than ask for the theatre to be rendered invisible or disappear under the magic of 'suspension of disbelief', I wanted to reveal the site for what it is (a theatre), recognize its sites (unceded territories, Downtown East Side, Gastown, Canada), and invite sight to it. I hoped that shift from expansive view to the specific might also reveal the ways in which, in the words of Laguna Pueblo author Leslie Marmon Silko, "viewers are as much a part of the landscape as the boulders they stand on" (qtd. in Yi 5). The audience and their seating area was thus designed to be part of the stage space, landscape with inhabitant. This connection between viewing and being mirrors Jacques Rancière's call for theatre which invites audiences to "stop being spectators and become performers of a collective activity" (4). To be a 'performer' in this sense does not mean standing on stage and speaking, rather it makes space to recognize the simultaneous already-present activity of the land and audience, Gumbrecht's 'presence effects' and 'meaning effects'.

In addition to marking time, the pouring of the real sand onto the cooler lid created a beach, a miniature expanse of sand that is at once real and representation. As this tiny beach is pulled to one side of the stage, the green screen—a surface which I hoped would serve as a present-absence and projection surface for the imagination—rolls towards centre. The performers then attempt to build a perfect beach from canvas, blue fabric, and a rotating mix of palms: first a living tree, then a silk representation, and finally one of inflatable plastic. As the image aligns, field recordings of the beach play over the sound system, an inflatable plastic seagull 'flies in' on a fishing rod, and a fan distributes the mist from a spray bottle first over the scene and then over the audience. This is representation, it does not try to be anything else, yet the water from the bottle is wet, the sounds of the beach were collected ocean side, and the feeling (I hope) is real.

As the play progresses we move in and out of specificity—from the Slovakian ambulance to the bottom of a lake—occasionally occupying multiple locations while simultaneously remaining in one space, albeit a space which is already being-becoming

¹ It seems fitting that the only text I speak in the play was written by Amanda Sum, the actor who played the character of Julie Hammond.

several things at once. The theatre and the stage are holders of possibility: where we physically are in the moment (Studio T), where we have 'been' in the journey of the play, where we might 'go'. As the theatre landscape contains both individual object (a tree, a towel) and assemblage (a beach), each with their own sites/sights/cites, so too does time here function on multiple levels. Ticking forward at 60 seconds-per-minute is the functional time of the play, one hour. And yet, the opening pour of sand, the relative slowness of that moment (two minutes is a long time in 'theatre time'), is an attempt to create a new paradigm of spaciousness through which the play can be experienced.

In the final moments of the play, the stage is filled with shrouded props, the green screen's projection surface is turned away from the audience, and the performers face the upstage wall while singing The Beach Boy's "In My Room." For the first time, the actors and audience share a gaze, while the song lyrics bring us from disparate locations back to the theatre.

There's a world where I can go and tell my secrets to

In my room, in my room

In this world I lock out all my worries and my fears

In my room, in my room

Now it's dark and I'm alone

But I won't be afraid

In my room, in my room

The music fades, and in the play's final moment everyone—audience, actors, musician, and technician—watch together while an artificial sunset plays out on the plastic beach banner. The last light fades, the assembled collective sits in the dark of the shared room, alone and together. And yet, as the audience exits the theatre they are given a program which, in addition to the requisite cast list and thank yous, contains a tiny green screen model of the theatre and paper doll style versions of the play's props. This representation of representation, actual paper standing in for props and sites which stand in for other nouns (people, places, things), was a final attempt to extend the performance from one room to another, to stretch time and space together. One performance of the show is over, but the potential for another self-directed one remains.

Audience

Just as theatre can take the site of performance for granted, the sight of the audience is often considered only in terms of *what* is being experienced, and not *how*. While the subject matter of *Other Inland Empires* could have been exploited for overt audience interactivity, I opted to explore how changes to normative audience conventions might create the conditions for alternate experiences of the performance.

In December 2016 I created a beach installation, *Small Temporary*, for The Spaces of Art, a graduate colloquium held at SFU's World Art Centre. Built from a canvas drop cloth, two living palm trees, two patio chairs, two film lights, a small heater, and speakers playing beach sounds and surf music, this was an early experiment of inserting 'beach time' into the chrono-normative, an opening for what Elizabeth Freeman calls "temporal drag". A small section of the World Arts Centre was in drag, dressed as a beach, gently queering the academy. I was struck by the gravity of the beach—not only were people drawn towards the installation, though sometimes more in gaze than in body, when they engaged with the site, gravity pulled on them: otherwise erect professors slumped in their seats, extended their legs, and threw their heads back in a manner that did not seem to fit their surrounds. The confines of the canvas, the imposition of the beach representation, created the conditions for behaviour that was at once in and out of context.

This experiment, and my shimmer experience at Tropical Islands Resort in Germany (the feeling of real beach fun on an fake beach with the hovering presence of a former Nazi airbase), inspired the primary set piece for the production: raked audience seating built and dressed to resemble representation of the beach. Each row of risers was six feet deep, twice the standard deck size, and standard upright chairs were replaced by hand-built wood and canvas beach chairs which encouraged (or perhaps demanded) atypical theatre audience postures². The riser decks were covered in muslin, while the back railing of the riser was covered in green screen fabric. Two plants, one palm and one philodendron varietal, sat on either side of the upper riser.

² I cannot help but think of the connection between the reclined posture the beach chair demands and the reclined eating position of the Passover Seder. Here, like the impact of time on space, time and body position seem bound.

Lighting designer Gillian Hanemayer created a sunny but not too bright look for the audience risers, and the dual confusion and excitement of the entering attendees was palpable as ushers gave audience members the opportunity to remove their shoes. I wanted this pre-show time to be spacious, connected to sitting without expectation as one does on the beach, being in the already-existing, rather than in anticipation of the performance to come. As such, I held program distribution until the play had ended and I tried to soften the hard start of the performance. And yet, the apparatus of the theatre loomed: the advertised 8:00 start time, the house manager counting seats, my own nervous pacing. It was clear that the gathering existed for something beyond the acting of gathering.

In "The Emancipated Spectator" Rancière writes:

There is no privileged medium, just as there is no privileged starting point. Everywhere there are starting points and turning points from which we learn new things, if we first dismiss the presupposition of distance, second the distribution of the roles, and third the borders between territories. We don't need to turn spectators into actors. We do need to acknowledge that every spectator is already an actor in his own story and that every actor is in turn the spectator of the same kind of story. (8)

While my experiment in interrupting the (literal) position of the audience cannot be conclusive in any way, it was an attempt to soften the 'borders between territories' of on- and off-stage, to reduce the assumed distance—one can say difference—between audience and actor, acted on and acted for, and to re-distribute agency from the director to the viewer. Sitting in a bank of beach chairs, the audience performs simultaneously, as a collective and as individuals, as 'theatre audience' and 'people on a beach'. And while the play's final moment of collective upstage gaze was another reach towards Rancière's call to acknowledge spectator as actor and actor as spectator, I cannot know if or how the attempt to disrupt of expectations impacted the audience's experience of the play.

Text / Story / Selves

Stuart Hall implores us to not think of "identity as an already accomplished fact", but "as a 'production' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (222). When I first discovered that Gidget was a Jew, it altered my sense of self, my relationship with Judaism and California pop

culture. Suddenly, listening to Dick Dale cassettes in the backseat of the car made sense on multiple levels: we didn't listen to surf music only because we lived in California, we listened to connect with the Jewish diaspora, to acknowledge that the wandering had landed in the ocean. I struggled throughout the writing of the play text with the extent of information I wanted to include—historical facts, personal events, dates, names—and the desire to create something which could be followed. I wanted to create shimmer, not confusion. In making *Other Inland Empires* I wrestled not only with text and actors, lights and sound, but also with questions of representation, conflicts between autoethnography and drama, the demands of theatre production and the desire to keep identity in 'production'.

While my own identity was central to the play, the heart of production was in the text and voice of my grandmother Sidonia Singer. Her stories of sneaking around as the Rabbi's daughter, hiding in Hungary, living through Dachau, and eventually moving to the United States upon liberation, grounded the piece in something other than the potentially fluffy world of Gidget-era beach culture. I could not help but see hints of Gidget and of myself in my grandmother. The gravity of Sidonia's survival also rubbed up against her age: in the 1940s she, like my actors today, was in her early 20s, interested in boys and uncertain how to proceed in the world without the support of her family. In this realization time both collapses and contracts. While Sidonia's text is real and her voice plays on physical cassette tapes in real time, it is also an amalgamation of times and places. Though the audio appears to be an interview conducted by Julie in the course of gathering research for the play, it is actually an interview conducted in 2008 by my cousin Abraham Singer and edited by myself and my sound designer. Despite this leaping of time and person, her words and voice land firmly in the place of the real. Moreover, her recounted story has been digested through time, and while truthful and very much real, it is itself a production. The recorded interview captures one version of self-articulation, while my edits and centralizing of her story within the layers of other stories, allow her words to be a steady beam around which other elements shimmer.

In June 2017, alongside actors Amanda Sum and Nicola Rough, and musician/sound designer Matthew Ariaratnam, I performed a 20-minute version of *Other Inland Empires* entitled *Môj Gidget* at On the Boards' NW New Works Festival (Seattle, WA). The performance was driven by my text; the movement of objects and scenery played a supporting role, while the labour of Sum and Rough hummed in the

background. In August, while preparing to resume rehearsals, I realized that performing in the piece was failing me on several levels—I was unable to see the space and what was arising, an essential vantage point in devising, and the proximity of my self-as-actor to the autobiographical created a passive regression: rather than reaching forward in creation, my performance, and the performance, turned backwards towards recounting and recreation.

While there is always a rub between actor and character, this is doubly so when the on-stage character is also the off-stage person. "[I]n the act of representing the self, there is always more than one self to contend with.... There is the self who was and the self who is. There is the self who is performed, and the performing self" (Heddon 27). I attempted to further complicate this loop of representation, and actively place identity into a state of play by having the actor Amanda Sum play me. Hall's use of the word 'production' brings forth the self-conscious ways identity is formed, the potential for explicit theatricality, and the slipperiness of constructing something that is also read, and re-constructed, through the eyes of another. In this way, the production of identity exits on at least three levels: one created (explicitly or not), one read, and one forged by the interaction of construction and reading. Likewise, Judith Butler writes:

When the 'I' seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration: indeed when the 'I' seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist (qtd. in Spry 276).

In *Birds of America* novelist Lorrie Moore speaks to this dual 'I' as a "narrator" and a "traveller".

The trip and the story of the trip are always two different things. The narrator is the one who has stayed home, but then, afterward, presses her mouth on the traveller's mouth, in order to make the mouth work, to make the mouth say, say, say. One cannot go to a place and speak of it; one cannot both see and say, not really. One can go, and upon returning make a lot of hand motions and indications with the arms. The mouth itself, working at the speed of light, at the eye's instructions, is necessarily stuck still; so fast, so much to report; it hangs open and dumb as a gutted bell. All that unsayable life! That's where the narrator comes in. The narrator comes in with her kisses and mimicry and tidying up. The narrator comes and makes a slow, fake song of the mouth's eager devastation. (qtd. in Jackson 40)

This quotation, an edit of which became part of the performance text, served as a way to frame my decision to cast an actor to play the role of Julie Hammond. The actor would not play Julie the traveller, but she would play Julie the narrator: the one who has not been but who can speak, who can produce in-process identity from within representation. It seemed essential that I select an actor who looked quite different from me, an attempt to widen the presumed gap between Julie, a 36 year-old Jewish American, granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, and Amanda, a 20 year-old Canadian of Chinese heritage. For while we at first glance do not look alike, we are both settlers living in Vancouver and part of the "diaspora experience" defined "by a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through...difference" (Hall 235).

Of the four actors on-stage, only one names herself, and she does so doubly: Amanda, the actor, introduces herself as the narrator, Julie Hammond, who is being played by Amanda Sum. The other three actors serve as a sort of chorus, shifting between further fractured (though unnamed) aspects of Julie Hammond, versions of Gidget, encountered characters (Dr. Grosch, tooth, earring), and performers as text-deliverers and object movers. Amanda/Julie's self-conscious moment of introduction, inspired by Michael Redhill's play *Goodness*, presented an entry through which the audience could read the text of the play as shimmering through true and not. By extracting myself as verbal narrator and embodying the role of traveller, I hoped to shift my physical presence towards an 'irruption of the real' such that my body's 'presence effects' could engage in dialogue with Amanda's performance representation of me. This happened explicitly when I re-entered the stage mid-show and removed my real fake tooth: the representation of accident and hospital was suddenly made real by my body, yet the tooth in question at that moment was not Julie's, but Sid's, and not only Sid's tooth, but a stand-in for all the teeth collected by Nazis.

At the same time, the cites and sights of Amanda's body were specifically engaged in visible conversation with the text she spoke as the narrator Julie in two moments: when mentioning how "in summer, my blond hair would turn green from chlorine" and that she expected to be "surrounded by people who looked like me" in Slovakia. These moments pull the audience away from suspension of disbelief and towards recognition of the layered storying. Anthropologist Michael Jackson writes of Hannah Arendt's "insights into the universal human impulse to translate our disparate

and often overwhelming personal experiences into forms that can be voiced and reworked in the company of others" (1). I wanted to share my stories, but I struggled to stay within Patty Sotirin's call for "radical specificity" and to work with "a lived narrative that doesn't come with an automatic sense of what its significance might be" (8). Not only is identity in a state of production, the meaning of the lived experience is also in a state of production, and the significance of the represented life lived need not be clearly marked. I hoped that the dis/placement of my self onto another body could function as a resistance to the recognizable dramatic arc, and allow the play to exist less as a drama and more as an archive to be translated together: from Julie to Amanda to the audience and on.

Reflecting Conclusions

"Stories. Listen. Listen. Stories go around in circles, they don't go in straight lines, so it helps if you listen in circles. Because there are stories inside stories, stories between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. And part of the finding is the getting lost. And when you get lost, you really start to look around, and listen." – Traveling Jewish Theatre (qtd. in Myerhoff 17)

At the end of the process and at the end of the performance, I can only know so much. Yet within the scope of my research, uncertainty is the unfixed goal. In search of shimmer, an effect which destabilizes, I placed text and bodies and lights and objects in a space; I named and re-named the site; I attempted to insert beach time into theatre time so that spaciousness would allow the on-stage landscape to be heard; I built an audience space that toyed with expectations in the hope that small shifts would cause disruptions from which new views could emerge.

I wanted to dissolve the hard line between audience and performer, on-stage and off, but I think these roles stayed more fixed than not. Despite activating the audience area as a dually performing space (beach site and audience seating), and transforming the on-stage space with objects—the audience site was stuck. The in-audience bandstand felt less like of a blurring of on- and off-stage and more like an insertion, working perhaps as an inverse irruption where the fiction of the stage enters the reality of the audience. While I can begin to know what was gained by casting Amanda to play myself, I cannot know what was lost in this decision: what further resonance or shimmer

might have emerged from my own body in the role of me? How might this reality have provided a different fictional foundation?

Creating performance is a way of working with, working through, becoming. In this process of accumulation and sorting, writing and directing, I felt myself traveling and getting lost in the circles of stories: me, Grandma Sid, Gidget, California, Slovakia, guitar, palm trees, representation, Vancouver, Studio T. When I sat with the audience I caught a hint of what listening in circles might be, how beach time might appear on-stage and drift into the audience, how the opposite might also be possible. A month after closing, I am looking and listening not to the event, but to its resonance, to the still moving pieces set in motion. Though I worked within theatre's site of capture, I tried to resist resolving the play into something fixed, allowing not only the identities explored to stay in a state of production, but to allow the piece itself to remain in production. I tried to set up the conditions of shimmer for the audience, and yet as it arises at the level of the individual, I cannot know what, if anything, shimmered for each attendee. The question of how to evoke that which cannot be fixed while acknowledging the variety and forms of entanglement, remains.

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Project Documentation

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Photo 2 Audience seating.



Photo 3. Julie Hammond pouring sand to create a teeny beach.

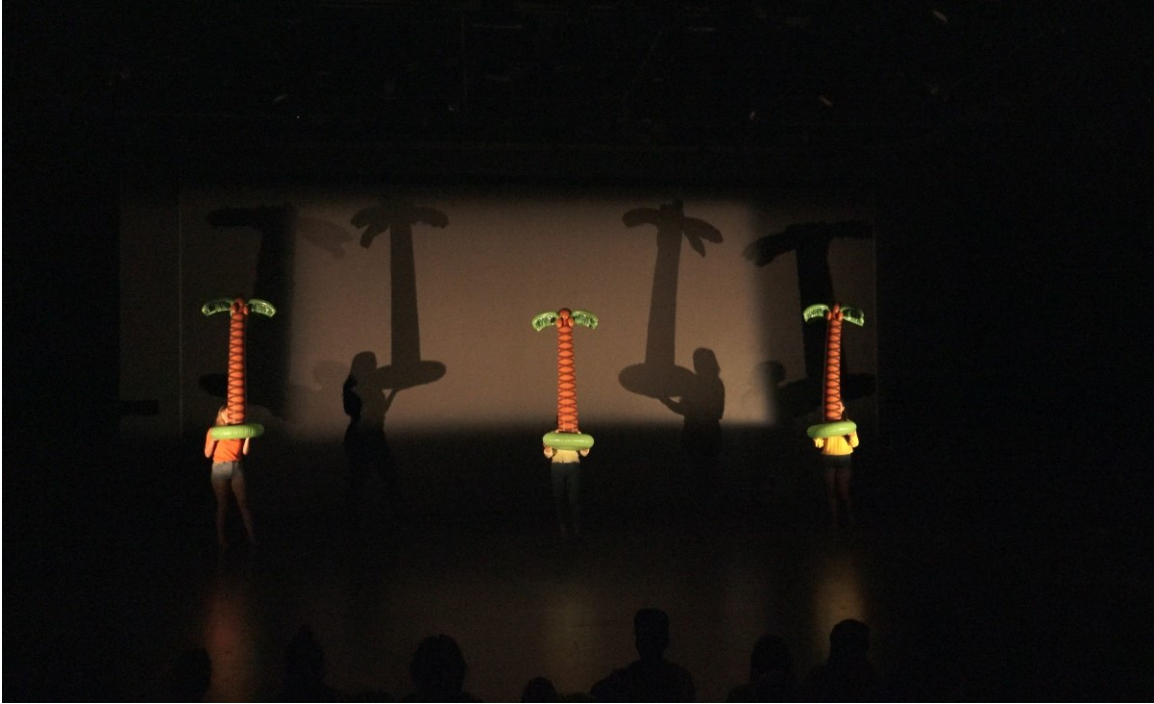


Photo 4 Misirlou palm walk (screen shot from video documentation).



Photo 5 Nicola Rough reading *Gidget* on the mini beach.



Photo 6 Amanda Sum as Julie, the narrator.



Photo 7 Amanda Sum as Julie, recording the beach.



Photo 8 Montserrat Videla eating ice cream and skateboarding.



Photo 9 Montserrat Videla watching Hungarian refugees on the cooler TV.



Photo 10 Matthew Ariaratnam and Amanda Sum perform "Surfer Girl".



Photo 11 Nicola Rough fan dancing during "Surfer Girl".



Photo 12 Monserrat Videla and Nicola Rough as the Tooth & Earring.



Photo 13 Amanda Sum as Julie receiving injections of "Russian novocaine".



Photo 14 Nicola Rough reading and Dominique Hat surfing.



Photo 15 Listening to Grandma Sid.

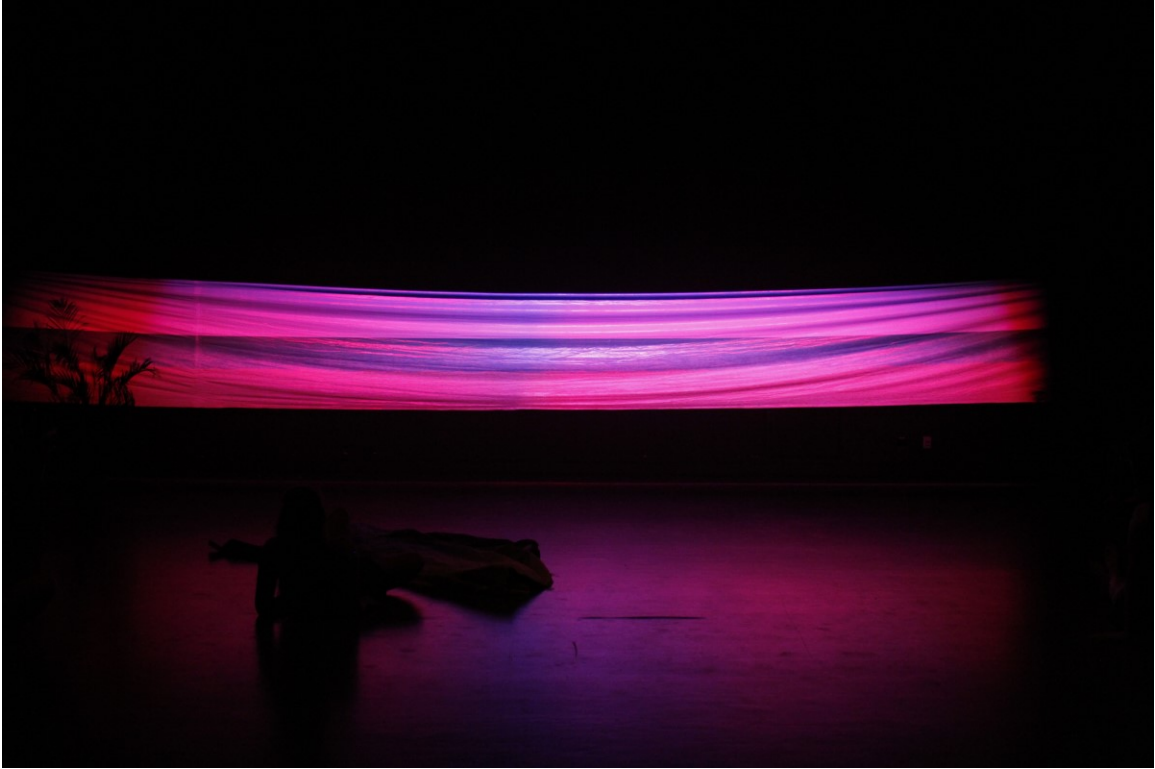


Photo 16 Final sunset of the show.



Photo 17 April 2017 experiments with mics and lights on palms. L to R, Annie Therrien Boulos, Jordan Zanni, Dominique Hat, Amanda Sum, Montserrat Videla, Nicola Rough (photo: Julie Hammond).



Photo 18 April 2017 workshop rehearsal.

Production Script

NOTES:

- JULIE really means AMANDA SUM; JULIE H. means JULIE HAMMOND
 - BLUE text is from 1957 *Gidget* book
 - GREEN text is from Lorrie Moore's, *Birds of America*
-

1. PRE-SHOW:

Audience enters. Risers are set with beach chairs and floor pillows. Green screen on wheels, matching audience beach chair, and two coolers are set on stage just off centre.

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

JULIE H carries coolers to skateboard set DSL, opens lid to mini cooler and pours out sand to make a teeny beach.

JULIE H: We are here in the Universe, on Planet Earth, which is composed of 29% land.

We are on the continent of North America, in the country of Canada, in the province of British Columbia.

We are in Vancouver, on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations.

We are at the edge of Gastown and the Downtown Eastside, in the Woodward's Building, on the second floor. We are in Studio T.

We are here together.

Lights on teeny tiny beach, MATTHEW starts to play guitar as the tiny beach rolls across the stage.

3. SONG (Make it Real) / CREATE MAGIC BEACH

MATTHEW:

Can we make it real? (A Bm A Bm)
Sunlight on the stage
Smell of sea salt in the air
Sand beneath our feet, sand beneath our
seats (F#m E E/F# E/G# A)
And the sound of the beach

*AMANDA rolls green screen to CS,
sand/water come out of cooler,
canvas chair moves to sand, tape
deck, palm swap, seagull (DOM)
and fan spritz (MONTSY). NICOLA
sits in canvas chair.*

Can we make it real? (A Bm)
Turn here into there
A now into a then
A start into the end

Can we make it real? (D)
You'll turn into me (A)
Saying words I never could (D)
Doing the things I never did (D E)
We'll build the outside in (E7 D#7 D)

(Oh) can we make it real? (Bm D)
(I think so)
Can we make it real?
Will you make it real?
Will it be real?

4. GIDGET BOOK

NICOLA: *Reading from Gidget book in audience style canvas chair.* I'm writing this down because I once heard that when you're getting older you're liable to forget things and I'd sure be the most miserable woman in the world if I ever forgot what happened this summer. It's probably a lousy story and can't hold a candle to those French novels from Sexville but it has one advantage: it's a true story on my word of honor.

On the other hand a true story might not be a good story. That's what my English comp teacher says. But then, he is dishing out a lot of bilge water if you ask me. These guys, they tell you things like: "To begin your description of a place take a pencil and a notebook, sit down at your window (or on the crest of a hill, or the bank of a river) and jot down bits of description."

I tried it. I was sort of desperate to write this story so I drove out the main drag all by myself and I took that pencil and notebook along and was all set to begin at the beginning. I mean with the description of the place. It was a bitchen day too. The sun was out and all that, even though it was near the end of November. But then, we are living in Southern California and if you wouldn't look at the calendar you'd hardly know the difference—honest!

5. VISION

DOM: (*On mic DSL*) Before we go further, take a moment, and close your eyes.

NICOLA closes eyes. Over this text, Magic Beach is cleared away.

Southern California. What do you see? A place on a map? Palm tree lined streets? Blue sky? Waves? White sand beaches?

Maybe you feel the California sun on your shoulders, smell the sea salt air, feel a breeze move across your skin. Maybe you smell oranges and dusty trailers and coconut tanning lotion, or see farm workers or gridlocked traffic, or feel the heat rising off melting asphalt.

You can open your eyes if you want.

5.5 PALM WALK

NIC, AMANDA, MONTSY move inflatable palms DS while singing Misirlou. Palms meet mid stage, balance—NIC and MONTSY move to sides. AMANDA dances with her palm while MATTHEW plays Misirlou on guitar.

6. NARRATOR

AMANDA peeks out from behind her palm tree while others sneak walk away.

JULIE: I can feel your eyes on me.

I am Julie, the narrator. And just to clarify, tonight I am being played by Amanda Sum. Amanda is an excellent performer, likeable and easy to watch. It's true, she's younger than I am, but she has a beautiful voice. And though she won't be doing it tonight, she can tap dance. Maybe some of you have seen her do it. If not, ask her after the show. I am sure she'll oblige.

The trip. The story. How can it be described? How can any of it be described? The trip and the story of the trip are always two different things. The narrator is the one who has stayed home, but then, afterward, presses her mouth on the traveller's mouth, in order to make the mouth work, or to make the mouth say. Because you can't go to a place and speak of it; you can't both see and say, not really. You can go, and upon returning make a lot of hand motions and indications with the arms. But the mouth, working at the speed of light, at the eye's instructions, is stuck still; the mouth, it hangs open and dumb as a gutted bell.

And that's where the narrator comes in. I come in with kisses and mimicry. I come and sing a slow fake song of the mouth's devastation.

In any case, like Gidget said, this is "a true story on my word of honor." And yeah "a true story might not be a good story," but its mine.

7. SNEAKING → MAGIC

SID'S TEXT ABOUT SNEAKING AROUND plays over mains.

During this, DOM rolls out Magic Chair platform from DSL to USR corner; NIC sets chair for AMANDA USL and then pulls fluffy palm across the stage. MONTSY moves light to shine on Magic Chair platform.

SID VO:

Well you see, of course we were young kids. So don't forget. When the war broke out, with the Anschluss of Austria occurred between Germany and Austria I was only seventeen years old. You know, people talk about all kinds of emotions, but one thing that very few people address is the constant fear you live with. It is so devastating, to be afraid all the time. It's very very hard to cope with. And and, that was it. But in the meantime, we were young! We were children. We had boyfriends, but you couldn't go out and do what people do here. It all had to be secret. You went up and down the street, but g-d forbid someone would see you with a boy. You were afraid they would go and tell your father. (laugh) You

know everybody else could do but not the Lauer daughters, so that was tough. Tough.

I loved to dance, and so we had to do all these things without my parents knowing which always felt you know rather funny. Which you have kind of coming the back way and you had to be a white liar. But it worked out alright.

8. DOUBLE SECRET JEW

JULIE: I grew up being told that Barbie was an abomination, a hunk of plastic that was set to destroy my self esteem and body image and imagination. And then I learned that Barbie is a Jew. And not just that, but that Malibu Barbie is a / "double secret crypto Jew."

MONTSY: / "double secret crypto Jew."

Let me explain:

Barbie's name comes from Barbara Handler, daughter of the Jewish Handler family who invented the Barbie doll.

Malibu Barbie is based on Gidget, the title character from the best selling book that popularized surfing and California beach culture.

But the Gidget book is fiction, based on the real life of Kathy Kohner—a Jewish teenager, daughter of Austro-Hungarian refugees, living and surfing in Malibu California.

And, the whole Barbie doll idea was ripped off from a German toy company / making Bild Lili dolls...

JULIE: The point is this: Gidget is an Austro-Hungarian-American Jew, born and raised in Southern California, but no one can tell she's Jewish.

But then again, people have secrets.

AMANDA presses play on tape deck then crosses to her seat USL.

8.5 INTERVIEW INTROS

SID VO TAPE: My name is Sidonia Singer. Everybody calls me Sid, for short. I was born November 6, 1921.

JULIE: My name is Julia Hammond, but everyone calls me Julie. I was born October 3, 1981.

MONTSY: Kathy Kohner, the real Gidget, was born January 19, 1941. The first Gidget book was published in 1956.

SID VO TAPE: Well, I was born in Czechoslovakia, which is now Slovakia. It's a town, a small town in the Tatra Mountains, very very beautiful. My father was a Rabbi of the town. I had 10 siblings. We were 11 children. Uh, four of us survived the Holocaust. I came to the United States of America in 1946 after having been liberated in Dachau, from Dachau concentration camp. Your great aunts, my two sisters, and your great uncle Alex, my brother, we were the four who survived, unfortunately. They all passed away. And I am the only one remaining.

JULIE: Well, I was born in Loma Linda, California, the Inland Empire: 90 miles east of Malibu, 60 miles from Los Angeles. I am the youngest of two children. // When I was little, after a day at the beach I would sit in the trunk of the hatchback, and Mom or Dad would peel the tar off the bottoms of my feet. In summer my blonde hair would go green from chlorine.

SID VO TAPE: I spoke Hungarian to my mother because she was born in Hungary. I spoke Yiddish and German to my father. I was educated in Slovak. Spoke Slovak to my brothers and sisters and all my friends. And, I came to this country and had to learn how to speak English.

DOM: Gidget, got her nickname from the Malibu Go-Heads, a group of surf-bums that followed the big waves from Malibu to Makaha.

SID VO TAPE: When I was little I was kinda chubby--In Hungarian Dutsi means fatso—and so that was my name. And anyone who comes from my hometown to this day would not know who Sidonia Lauer was, but Dutsi Lauer, yes.

9. KATHY THE GIRL MIDGET

DOM: Moondoggie explained it like this:

MATTHEW: "A small girl. Sort of a midget. A girl midget. A gidget. Get it?"

DOM: She got it—and a lot more. The Go-Heads named her, taught her how to shoot the curls, to ride the big ones without spilling. They taught her their philosophy,

MATTHEW: "The time to start making dough"

DOM: they said

MATTHEW: "is when you're old and creaky—about thirty, say. When you're young, you got to take a holiday."

DOM cross through audience with surfboard.

10. SWIMMER

JULIE: Like Kathy, like Gidget, I was a small kid. And I gotta say, I was and I am just crazy about swimming.

DOM: Gidget was 15 when she started surfing.

JULIE: I didn't get on a board until I was 35. Old, and creaky.

DOM continuing on path crosses SL to AMANDA, both hold surfboard CS.

DOM: She was "retreating, trying to get away". It was 1956 and things weren't so crowded at Old Malibu.

JULIE: Me? I was searching.

DOM help AMANDA put board on her head.

To be honest, I wanted material to make a play. I wanted to tell a story that wasn't mine to tell. To connect the dots between me and Gidget and Grandma Sid. I wanted to see where my family had come from, but I was afraid of a being a tourist to someone else's trauma.

And so, I take a research holiday. I go to Slovakia to learn to surf.

AMANDA follow DOM's line to USR corner

11. GO TO EUROPE

NICOLA rolls out the BANNER →

AMANDA X SR to SL in FLIP FLOP WALK → Then NIC X SL to SR, then DOM & MONTSY X SR to SL

DOM swim SL to SR on skateboard →

AMANDA wanders space with recording MIC

MONTSY enters on skateboard eating an ice cream carrying tape deck.

NIC wheel in chair on cart. DOM cooler and inflatable palm DSR.

12. T-SHIRT REVOLUTIONS

NIC, DOM, MONSTY move in airport wandering lines SR & SL of green screen.

AMANDA wander through and around them before coming DS of green screen.

AMANDA takes MONTSY's ice cream and carries / eats it through the next scene.

JULIE: My expectations were low. Of course I knew that people swam and wore bathing suits in Central Europe, but surfing? really?

But I started seeing signs of surf culture in the airport, and by the time I reached Lake Balaton in Hungary I had lost count of the surf themed posters and t-shirts.

As each t-shirt is mentioned, NIC, DOM, or MONTSY will react if they are visible

"Best Surfer"

"Wave Rider"

"Cali Surf"

"Just Smile and Wave Surf Contest" *NIC, DOM & MONTSY all pause, look at own shirt, look up, smile, wave*

And then I start to notice the years—"The Best SURF WAVE since 1956"

MONTSY: The failed Hungarian revolution against Soviet forces. The revolt is leaderless and for the next 30 years, Hungarians are prohibited from its public discussion.

JULIE: "1989 California Dream"

MONTSY: A year of civil resistance. The Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution. Removal of Hungary's border fence with Austria. The end of Hungarian communism. The fall of the Berlin Wall.

JULIE: "Surfer 1993"

MONTSY: The (re)establishment of the independent Slovak Republic. Also known as the Velvet Divorce.

JULIE: It all locks into place: Freedom.

Surfing isn't a thing we do, it's an idea. An idea for sale on a t-shirt.

California is not a place, it's a concept. I was born inside a concept.

13. AMBULANCE

AMANDA sits on ambulance set-up (chair).

JULIE: I had managed to put my t-shirt on, but was still just wearing my bathing suit bottoms, and the backs of my legs stuck to the seat of the vinyl chair.

NIC puts cooler under AMANDA's legs

I didn't have my passport with me, but I had a photo of it on my phone which I used to fill out paperwork saying I would pay for the ride—€120 which, over a year later, I've yet to pay. They put what they called a tampon in my mouth and a needle in my arm, just in case.

NIC hands end of fan on skateboard to AMANDA and becomes medical attendant US of AMANDA.

It took a while to leave. And I didn't know what else to do, so I pulled out my camera and took photos: selfies of my wet hair and blood streaked face, the medical attendants, the inside of the Slovakian ambulance. When they turned on the siren, I started recording.

The woman attending me was confused about the audio recorder, but I decided to not let it bother me. After all, I was an artist. In the field, doing field research, embodied research, autoethnographic research. Which is to say, I was in a land-locked country learning to surf, and I got my tooth knocked out.

NIC clears cooler SL. AMANDA stands and crosses slowly SL with fan on skateboard down hallway light.

14. HOSPITAL

Zuzana, my host and translator, met me at the hospital.

ZUZANNA SQ: "oh my g-d, what happened...no no no"

JULIE: The lighting was bad. Everyone looked ill.

I didn't hear it, but Zuzana did and started laughing as she motioned for me. I followed her to a hallway packed with people who looked like they had been waiting for a long time. I was in too much shock to be self-conscious about my lack of pants or bloody face, but I could feel their eyes on me. Then, I heard it:

SQ: "Amerika. Amerika."

JULIE: We moved towards an open door, the long-waiting people looking at me: the bloody, pantless Amerika.

AMANDA continues walk SR to SL looking at audience, then turns corner and joins MATTHEW on risers in band area. NICOLA takes fan US for FAN DANCE, MONTSY clears skateboard.

15. SURFER GIRL SONG / FAN DANCE / CPR PALM / TV WATCHING MOVES

AMANDA sings Surfer Girl while MATTHEW plays guitar. NICOLA does fan dance. DOM carries deflated palm SR for CPR. MONTSY sets up TV cooler in front of green screen SL.

Little surfer little one
Made my heart come all undone
Do you love me, do you surfer girl
Surfer girl my little surfer girl

I have watched you on the shore
Standing by the ocean's roar
Do you love me do you surfer girl
Surfer girl surfer girl

We could ride the surf together
While our love would grow
In my Woody I would take you everywhere I go

So I say from me to you
I will make your dreams come true
Do you love me do you surfer girl
Surfer girl my little surfer girl
Well
Girl surfer girl my little surfer girl
Well
Girl surfer girl my little surfer girl
Well
Girl surfer girl my little surfer girl

16. X RAY LOUNGE

They sent me downstairs for x-rays. It was lovely there, like an airport lounge from the 1970s with no people.

The x-ray tech was sweet faced, and he smiled as he led me into a small room, gently handed me a heavy lead vest, and told me to remove any metal from my head.

I hadn't realized I'd lost an earring until then. It was a small, silver stud. Nothing fancy, but I liked it all the same and I was sad that it, along with my tooth, was missing forever.

17. TOOTH & EARRING

NIC and MONTSY come out as TOOTH (M) and EARRING (N) and do bottom of lake choreo.

I like to imagine that they are sitting together on the bottom the lake. My tooth and my earring. Resting in Zlaté Piesky—Golden Sands. Wakeboarders skim the surface overhead. The sun shines and then sets and shines again, and they just rest, together, waiting for something, or waiting for nothing.

18. DR GROSCH PT. 1

DOM push in canvas chair.

It was confirmed that yes, I needed to see a dentist. I thought this was obvious, given the fact that one of my teeth was missing, and another was bent horizontal and sideways.

Dr. Grosch, the dentist, was waiting. He was short, deeply tanned, wide in face and torso, wearing a sort of white scrub. The pants were regular but the top was short sleeved and unbuttoned well past the point of professionalism. He had a gold chain that alternately rested on and snuggled into his thick, grey chest hair. And in a moment of what I can only call absolute lack of bedside manner, when I opened my mouth to show him the damage he inhaled sharply and said—

MONTSY (DR GROSCH): Mein gott.

JULIE: Or, at least that's what I heard. I'm sure he was speaking Slovak, not German, but when he said straight away that the best thing to do was pull out my tooth, all I could think about were Nazis.

19. MOTHER TOOTH

AMANDA XSL to in front of green screen. During this text, green screen slowly moves backwards.

My grandmother has a gold tooth, and I thought about that tooth a lot when I learned about Nazi tooth collecting.

It was real in a way that was different from seeing the numbers tattooed on the arms of her sisters. Maybe because it was my grandmother, and, if I had wanted, I could reach up and touch the tooth in her mouth—

JULIE H come on stage and takes out tooth. Hands it to AMANDA.

—imagined it in my hand, imagined it in a pile with thousands of other teeth.

And when I thought of it gone, it wasn't the tooth that disappeared, it was her.

So perhaps when my tooth came out, I disappeared also.

SQ: "Amerika."

JULIE: Maybe that's why the hospital staff couldn't say my name.

21. DR GROSCH PT. 2

MONTSY squirt AMANDA twice with spray bottle.

JULIE: Dr. Grosch gave me two injections of Russian novocaine and when the numbing kicked in, he and his buxom assistant used a seemingly medieval collection of pliers and wires and metal bands to wrangle my tooth into a more vertical position.

At one point Dr. Grosch snipped off the sharp end of a wire, less than a centimeter long, and it flew through the air and landed in the forest of his chest. There was a moment before it was spotted, everyone looking around searching together for this tiny piece of metal. Then the assistant reached across me and gently plucked it out his chest hair with her long fingers. It was tender and weirdly sexual, like something from a terrible movie.

22. GREEN SCREEN SURFER

Everyone moves chairs and palm friends into place for their own little zone. AMANDA USL with patio chair and silk palm; MONTSY DSL with beach towel and fluffy palm; NICOLA SR in canvas chair and JT palm. DOM surfing in front of green screen.

NICOLA reads out loud while JULIE reads from Gidget book and MONTSY reads History of Slovakia

NICOLA: The scenery had been all set up for me like an opening performance. This was the final testing ground I had picked for myself.

I whirled around and brought the board into position. There was no waiting. I shot towards the first set of forming waves and rose. One wave, another one. I stood, high like on a mountain peak. The only sound in the vast moving green was the hissing of the board over the water.

“Shoot it, Gidget. Shoot the curl.”

There was the shore, right there. I could almost reach out and touch it.

23. CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

NIC, DOM, MONTSY sing

All the leaves are brown (all the leaves are brown)
And the sky is grey (and the sky is grey)
I've been for a walk (I've been for a walk)
On a winter's day (on a winter's day)
I'd be safe and warm (I'd be safe and warm)
If I was in L.A. (if I was in L.A.)
California dreamin' (California dreamin')
On such a winter's day

Continue to hum song during section 24 text

24. FRONT OF THE LINE

When we got home from the hospital, Zuzana told me that Doctor Grosch wouldn't have saved my sideways tooth if I were Slovak. She also told me that, despite how long it seemed we waited, we were always moved to the front of the line. And so maybe when the hospital staff called "Amerika" it wasn't just easier than saying my name, it was a sort of reminder, a tell for everyone else, that I come from a place where you're not supposed to wait and that they, even in post-communist Slovakia, had to.

JULIE: I was tired. The adrenaline was wearing off. I wanted to go home. But I didn't know where that was. Zuzana's? Mom's? My apartment in Vancouver?

25. DESTROY BEACH

DOM turn green screen to face US., push it DS until it bumps AMANDA's heels.

I came to Slovakia to surf. I came looking for California. I was searching for some crack in my grandmother's silence: 1941-1946.

AMANDA gets tape deck from SL, swap tapes, sit on back of green screen with fluffy mic.

SID TAPE VO:

It was, it was just an unbelievable way to grow up. And the more you have, and the more you lose, the more it hurts. So you know, it's tough. It's tough.

Then of course, when the horror came, I remember it was March, March 1942. It was a Friday afternoon. My father went to, before the temple, he usually went to the mitvah, then all of a sudden I see my him come back about five minutes later and he said, my child you have to go, and hide in your sister's.

And the horrible story was that the girls were being taken to service military men. And so my father said to me: Go, and save you life, whichever way you know. And so I did. A group of us left about 3 days later, illegally, we left at night. We crossed the border into Hungary which at that time was a much safer place. And I lived illegally with strange names. Fortunately I knew the language so it was easier for me to get around there. I worked as a German kinderfrau, which is a kind of a nanny. And that's how I earned my living. And then, then a year later, I was caught and deported to concentration camp. So I went through the whole process: walking from Hungary to Austria then we were put into train wagons and taken to camp.

The way Dachau operated was a little different from Auschwitz and all the other camps at least in, Dachau had many many divisions. Ours was number 11. I couldn't describe, I couldn't tell you the relationship between that and the main one, but all I know is there was no, there were no crematoria. All we did was, they didn't put names on our bodies, we just had it on our striped clothes with the star and the name of, and the number, we didn't have any names. So when you were stopped, when you had to report, all you had to say is I am number so and so and so and so.

They never cut our hair. They left our hair alone. But we slept on wooden planks 20 to a square piece of board covered with straw under, paper on top. Our, our food was minimal. We had slices of bread. Soup that was made out of all kinds of potato peel and that kind. And we were forced to take into work everyday. And if you had, for any reason, misstepped or misdome, you were beaten, on the spot. We have seen horrible things happen to people. Sometime people stole a potato, and that was in Bavaria which is very very very cold. We were waken up at about four o'clock in the morning to stand and be counted which was called tzelapel and many many people we saw by the fences with a potato in their mouths frozen solid. Dead. This is what you had to contend with. This is what you had seen. Daily.

All I know is I wanted so badly to come back and see my parents once again in my life. I learned how to preserve my strength by not talking unnecessarily, not doing any exertion beyond what I had to do.

26. FAMILIAR

I went to Slovakia. A country without an ocean. I went to the rivers and lakes where Grandma Sid swam and had picnics.

I thought I would be surrounded by men and women and children who all looked like they could be related to me. That we would make eye contact and see each other, that there would be a spark of recognition. It wasn't the case. And then I remember, oh yeah, they killed most of the people who looked like me.

But some of us survived.

During this next text NIC, DOM, MONTSY shroud objects on stage with canvas

We moved across an ocean and learned a new language and got married and had children and grandchildren. We grew older and older. But still, we wake up every morning. We wake up and read the news and track disaster and destruction. We wake up for Sunday breakfast and Shabbat dinner, for Yiddish club and symphonies on the radio. We wake up and put on earrings and lipstick even when no one is coming by to visit.

AMANDA roll green screen off SL

28. SUNSETS IN MY ROOM

AMANDA turn US. All sing: "In My Room". Sunset that turns into darkness.

There's a world where I can go and tell my secrets to
In my room, in my room
In this world I lock out all my worries and my fears
In my room, in my room

Now it's dark and I'm alone
But I won't be afraid
In my room, in my room
In my room, in my room

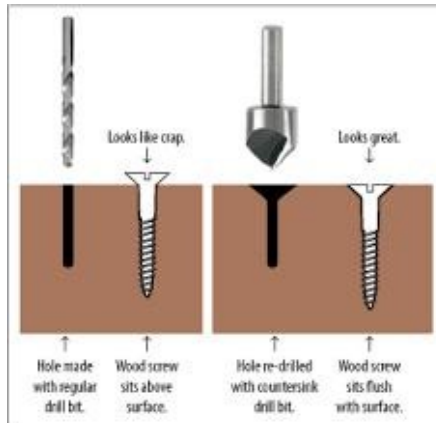
FIN.

Beach Chair Assembly Instructions

Other Inland Empires by Julie Hammond
Audience seating prototype, by Paula Viitanen
(based on chair design by Ana White)

BEACH CHAIR ASSEMBLY TIPS:

- Use 2" screws
- When using the jig that was made for the hole drilling:
don't drill full depth through the jig, only touch the wood lightly with drill, marking the position of the hole. Then remove the jig and finish the hole with drill.
- ALWAYS predrill before putting screws in
- ALWAYS use countersink bit after drilling the hole to prevent splitting of the wood. (if you don't have countersink bit, you can use a bigger drill bit than the screw hole is, and only cut deep enough so that the head of the screw is flushed with the surface. See image.)



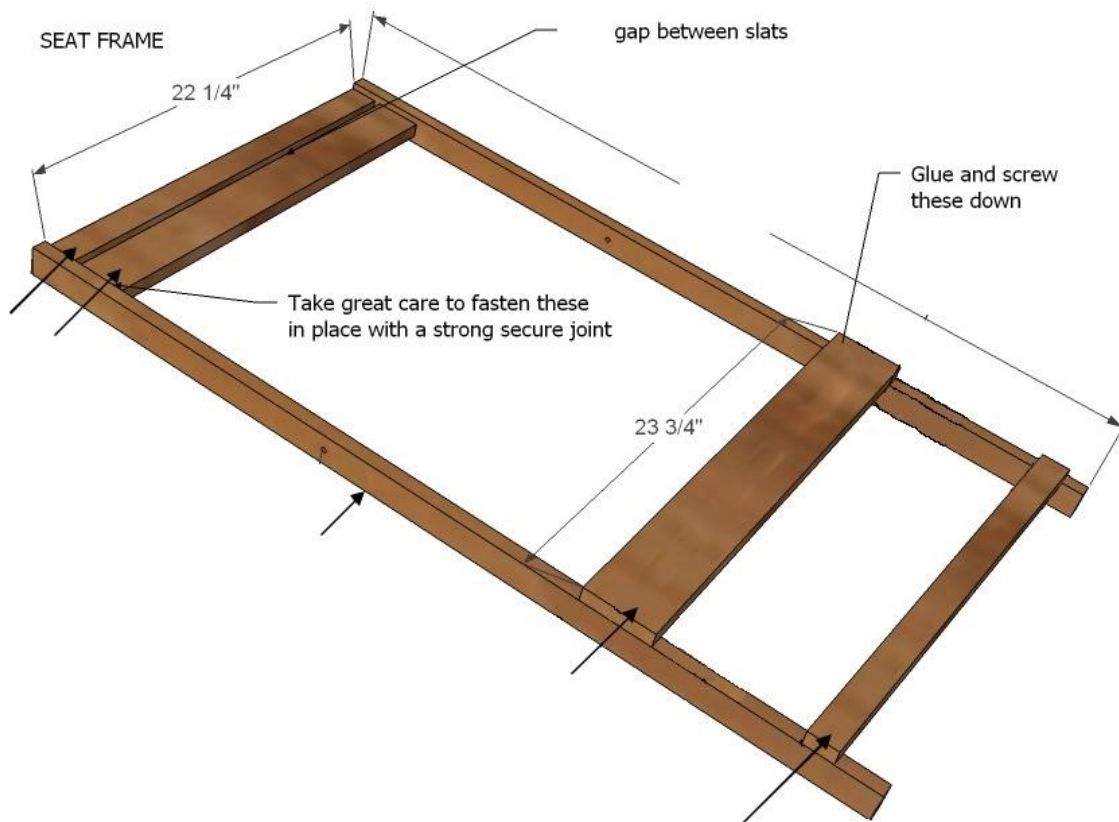
- Use glue when assembling with screws Clean up any excess glue with a damp rag
- Any splitting of the wood will make it weaker, drill with care and be precise.

Following drawings are from the DIY webpage, measurements have been changed to correspond the changes we have made.

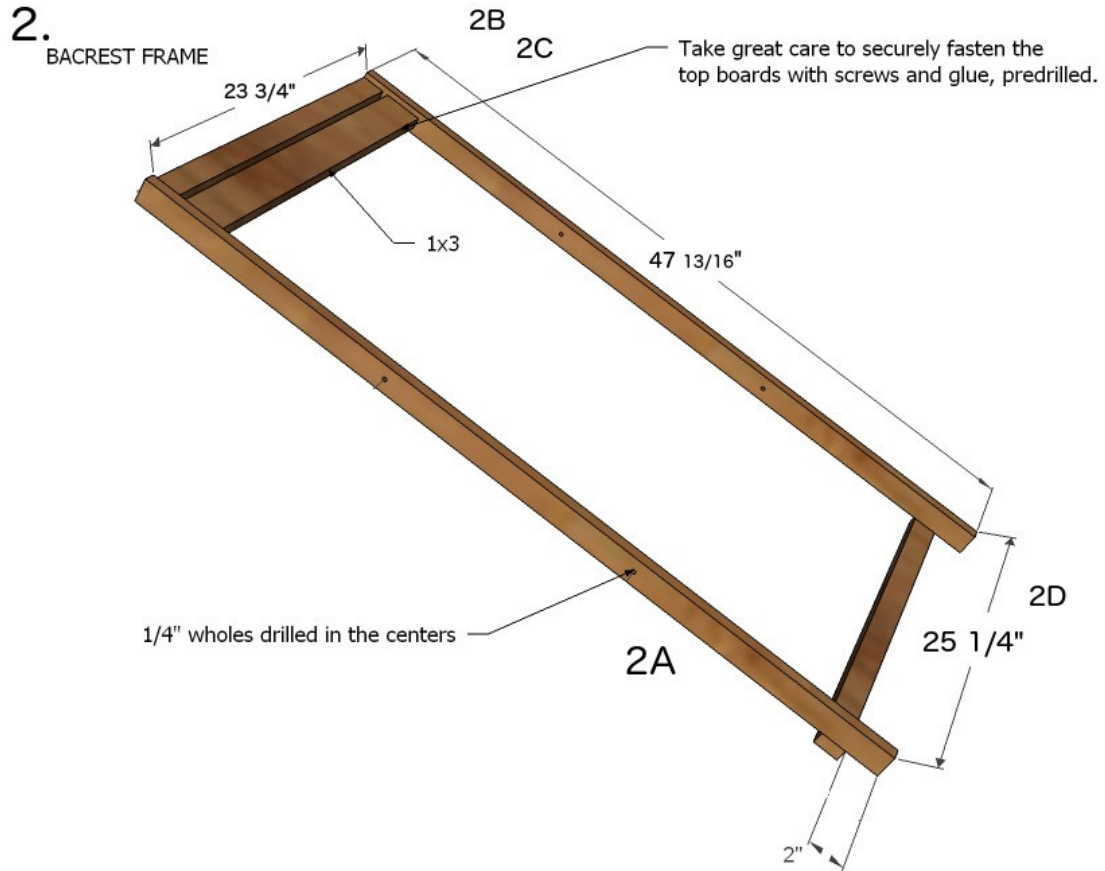
<http://www.ana-white.com/2011/06/wood-folding-sling-chair-deck-chair-or-beach-chair-adult-size>

These drawings are not in scale, use only as a reference for assembly.

1. Seat Frame



2. Backrest Frame

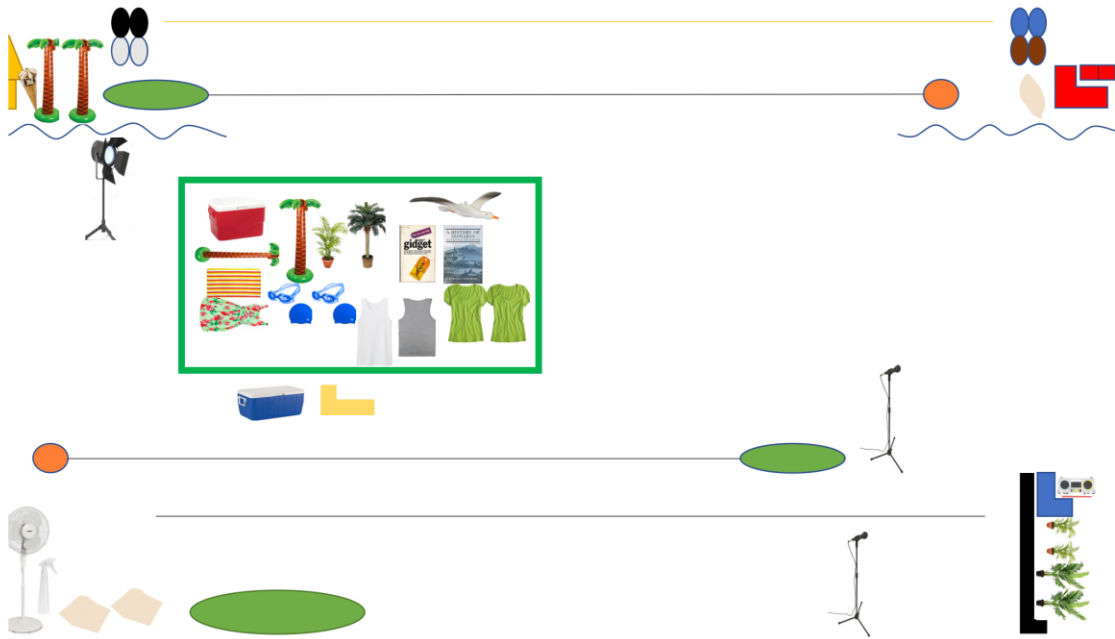


Do not assemble parts 1 and 2 together with bolts before the glue has dried.



Pre-set props diagram

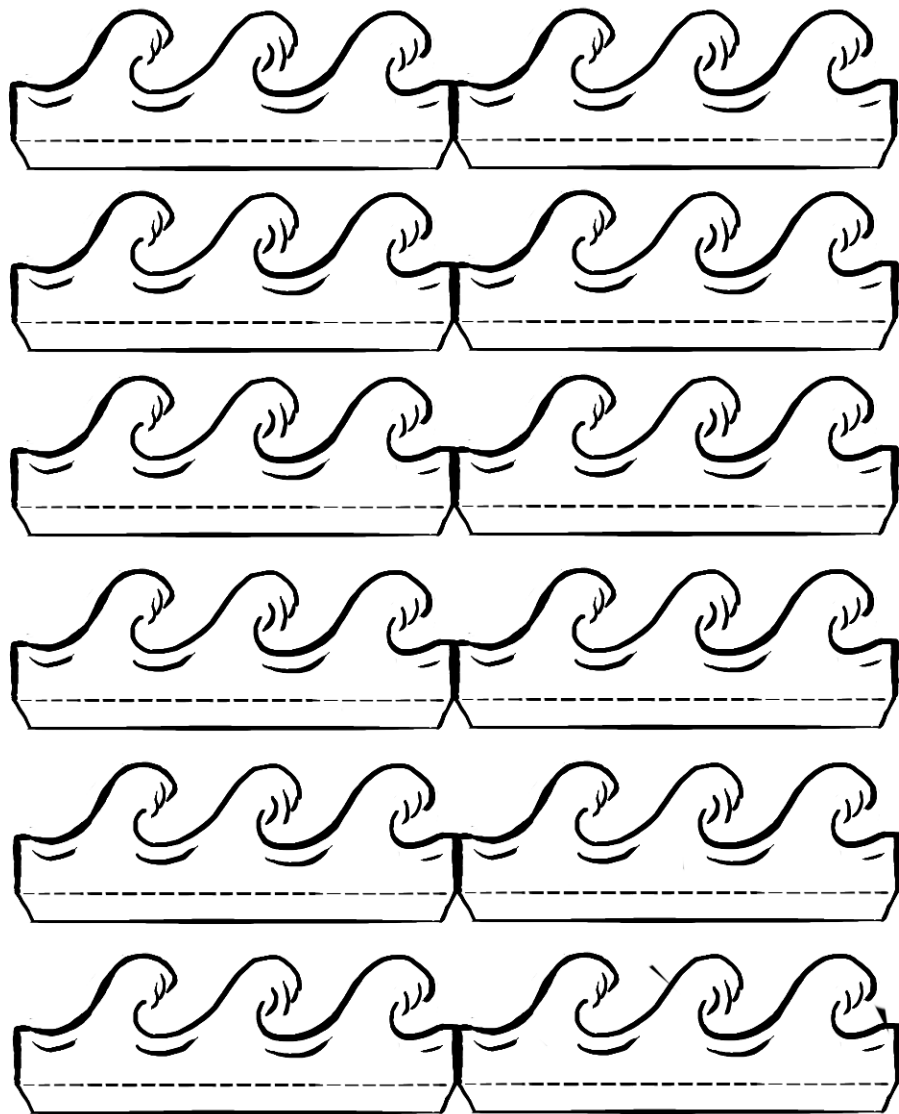
Created by Stage Manager Rita Wei



Other Inland Empires Program

Drawings and design by David Chandler.





OTHER INLAND EMPIRES

October 5-7, 2017
8pm, Studio T
Simon Fraser University

This project was created and presented on and with the unceded traditional territories of the Coast Salish peoples of the x^mməθkwəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Səlilwataʔ (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.



CUT ALONG HERE



CUT ALONG HERE

Text layout by Julie Hammond

Front page program (left) and back page (right)

OTHER INLAND EMPIRES

Written & Directed by:
Julie Hammond

Performed by:
Amanda Sum
Dominique Hat
Montserrat Videla
Nicola Rough
Matthew Ariaratnam

Stage Manager: Rita Wei
Scenic Design: Robert Leveroos
Sound Design: Matthew Ariaratnam
Lighting Design: Gilliam Hanemayer
Dramaturg / Expert Jew: Caroline Liffmann
Video Design: Marianne Thodas

Technical Director: Jocelyn Kim
Production Manager: Taylor Janzen
Lighting Operator: Emilee Shackleton
Sound Operator: Jenny Jung

Sidonia Singer interview conducted by
Abraham Singer and recorded by
StoryCorps in New York City.

Additional texts by Lorrie Moore, Frederich
Kohner, and Amanda Sum.

"Make it Real" by Matthew Ariaratnam & Julie
Hammond
"Surfer Girl" by Brian Wilson
"California Dreamin'" by John & Michelle
Phillips
"In My Room" by Brian Wilson & Gary Usher

Chair Design: Paula Viitanen
Chair Crew: CA 170 & 270, Jocelyn Kim, Raj
Gill, Dave Biddle, Gordon Havelaar, David
Chandler, Robert Leveroos, Julie Hammond,
and Megan Stewart
Green Screen Build: Andrew Curtis and Ian
MacFarlane
Skateboard Refinishing: Cindy Kao
Surfboard courtesy of Dave Biddle

Other Inland Empires was created by Julie
Hammond, the performers, designers, and
workshop participants **Annie Therrien
Boulos, Eddy Van Wyk, and Michelle
Milne.**

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Mój Gidget, was performed in June 2017
at On the Boards' NW New Works Festival.

This project would not have been possible
without the guidance and support of my
supervisors **Steven Hill, Cole Lewis, and
Dara Culhane.** Thank you for your
provocation and encouragement.

To my **incredible cast and collaborators:**
*riddle me this, how am I so lucky to have
you all?*

Additional thanks to: **DD Kugler**, for
everything, not the least being the
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Linnea Gwiazda**); **Natalie Purschwitz,
Aryan Borboruah, Ian McFarlane, Krystle
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and to **Sidonia Singer**: I love you.

Shimmer

1: A Shimmer of Form

Môj Gidget: Part 1
by Julie Hammond

I'm writing this down because I once heard that 'every poem is about the poet' but also that 'what is most personal is most universal' and I'd sure be the most miserable woman in the world if I kept this to myself. It's probably not a story and can't hold a candle to those French pieces from Avignon but it has one advantage: it's a real story on my word of honor. On the other hand a real story might not be a good story. That's what my graduate Seminar prof says—Dr. Dickinson, that casual sophisticated guy who practically invented coiffed hair. But then, he is writing about a lot of dance if you ask me and what does an academic know about making theatre from scratch anyway? Just to give you an idea of how these guys figure you can become an artist, they tell you things like this—or at least that character Dickinson does—quote: "To begin your essay use what was in your PowerPoint presentation, sit down at your computer (and put in the pictures and diagrams) and jot down bits of ideas." Unquote Dickinson!

I tried it. I was sort of desperate to write this essay so I sat in my living room (I got my yellow couch only last winter) all by myself and I plugged in that laptop and opened Word and was all set to begin at the beginning. I mean with a description of ideas. It was a bitchen day too. The sun was out and all that, even though it was near the top of December. But then, we are living in Southern BC and if you wouldn't look at a map you wouldn't think you were in Canada—honest! Except that it gets dark around five in December...and quicker than a witch's bat.

Gidget: Chapter 1
by Frederick Kohner

I'm writing this down because I once heard that when you're getting older you're liable to forget things and I'd sure be the most miserable woman in the world if I ever forgot what happened this summer. It's probably a lousy story and can't hold a candle to those French novels from Sexville but it has one advantage: it's a true story on my word of honor. On the other hand a true story might not be a good story. That's what my English comp teacher says—Mr. Glicksberg, that barfy looking character who practically invented halitosis. But then, he is dishing out a lot of bilge water water if you ask me and what does a creep of an English teacher know about writing anyway? Just to give you an idea of how these guys figure you can become a writer, they tell you things like this—or at least that character Glicksberg does—quote: "To begin your description of a place take a pencil and a notebook, sit down at your window (or on the crest of a hill, or the bank of a river) and jot down bits of description." Unquote Glicksberg!

I tried it. I was sort of desperate to write this story so I drove out the main drag (I got my junior license only last week) all by myself and I took that pencil and notebook along and was all set to begin at the beginning. I mean with the description of the place. It was a bitchen day too. The sun was out and all that, even though it was near the end of November. But then, we are living in Southern California and if you wouldn't look at the calendar you'd hardly know the difference—honest! Except that it gets dark around five in November...and quicker than a witch's bat.

I could have sat 100 hours on that couch thinking about what happened and looking through photographs and watching videos and interviews and editing audio and reading books and listening to records and wondering how I was going to turn this whole crazy mess of ideas into something resembling theatre.

Now right there I have to stop. You say "theatre" and immediately you think of something written and formal and boring with kitchen sinks and "did I leave the toaster on" looks of desperation. But of course that's not the theatre I'm writing about. What I mean is that theatre where anything is possible, where sound and lights and images and ideas and feelings are holding hands and marching right right into your head and heart like some bitchen rocket bombs. Sometimes, that is. There are lots of places and ways to try and make something with that kind of incredible power and mostly that happens in the studio. When you get in a room with materials and ideas and start moving thing around that's where the real big moments come blasting in...and once you've licked those it's only one step further to making a poster and calling in an audience. But that's in the future. I've made those plays and I'm telling you they'd damn near kill you just to think about making another one. Real big deal.

But I'm getting all out of focus. That's the trouble with writing. You mention something like theatre and some sounds and you ooze out all over the place and forget what you wanted to say. "You're sitting on a goldmine regarding the Gidget material"—that's what Dr. Dickinson said. He's probably right, too. If I don't get too distracted by the shimmers and the theories. Like my supervisor, Steven Hill. He's a teacher but he just wants to be a director. He keeps giving me books and philosophies that are really elaborate...

I could have driven those 12 miles out past the main drag with a mask around my eyes like on "What's My Line?" when they try to figure out the mystery guest, on account of having gone there at least millions of times this summer and the summers before except those before don't count. "Out there" means Old Malibu.

Now right there I have to stop. You say "Malibu" and immediately you think of the movie colony and the snazzy beach houses —and James Mason wading into the sundown on account of being a has-been and all. That's not the Malibu I'm writing about. What I mean is that one small bay along the twenty-seven miles of Rancho Malibu right next to the pier where the waves coming from Japan crash against the shore like some bitchen rocket bombs. Sometimes, that is. There is only one other place along the coast where they have that kind of incredible power and that is down south at San Onofre. When you graduate from Malibu you move down to San Onofre or Tressle where the real big humps come blasting in...and once you've licked those there is only one step further to Makaha where they have the real giant wetbacks. But that's in Hawaii. I've seen those boomers in a movie and I'm telling you they'd damn near kill you just seeing them on the screen. Real big deal.

But I'm getting all out of focus. That's the trouble with writing. You mention something like old Malibu and some waves and you ooze out all over the place and forget what you wanted to say. "You must organize your material! Have a point of view"—that's what old Glicksberg said. He's probably right, too. If I don't organize I'll never get my story on paper. Like my girlfriend, Mai Mai Richardson. She wants to be a playwright but never gets beyond the description of a place. The description is really elaborate...about six typewritten

then he reminds me to get in the studio because that's where the materials are.

Well, to come back to that couch which isn't so different from where this all started, it was just the right day to sit there and cuddle up with my laptop. I had made some tea and filled up the soda stream and turned up the heat and was watching people through the windows collect cans and dig through the recycling bins. Boy, it sure was a great day! The seagulls were circling and the squirrels were running, going up and down the fences and trees with nothing in particular to show for it.

At the end of the couch was a stack of books and bags of sand and a hard drive full of data that had been my whole life last summer. It looked quite depressing now with all that activity just a stack of stuff, like an old prompt book. Gone was giant dome roof of the Tropical Islands resort, gone the green-blue colour of the Balaton in the morning, and frantically I tried to conjure up the names of the "Beaches of Central Europe." Where were they now—"Veľký Draždiak," "Zlaté Piesky," "Kuchajda," "Gyenesi Lidóstrand," "Hévíz," "Lido Strand Vonyarcvashegy", "Wakelake"? Eating Halušky or drinking Šariš and listening to '90s b-sides? It was like the potted palms and imported sand had never existed—or like I had never really been there.

"Using Kirby and Carlson to frame your interest in the shimmery spectrum of acting/non-acting and real/imagined was a very useful way into your research for your peers." Jeez, all I have framed here so far are some crummy seagulls, some beaches and some characters trying to get some cans in their carts for deposits or such. I guess all this writing comp stuff that professors like Dickinson try to teach you is for the birds.

So the longer I sat there and thought about all this writing business, the more I

pages and by that time she's lost her desire to go into dialogue.

Well, to come back to that small bay near the pier where all this started, it was just the right day to drive out there and cuddle up with a pencil and notebook. I parked the car near the pier and walked out to the end of it where all those nice and seedy-looking people stand and chuck their fishing rods into the breakwaters. Boy, it sure was a great day! The seagulls were circling and the pelicans executed some of their power dives, coming up again with nothing in particular to show for it.

At the end of the pier I sat down on one of the benches and looked over to the strip of beach that had been my whole life last summer. It looked quite depressing now with all the props knocked out of the picture, like an old abandoned stage set. Gone was the Quonset hut of the Great Kahoona, gone the red and blue color specks of the gay sailboats, and frantically I tried to conjure up the faces and voices of the "Go-Heads of Malibu." Where were they now—"Golden Boy Charlie," "Hot Shot Harrison," "Schweppes," "Don Pepe," "Scooter Malloy," "Lord Gallo," "Malibu Mac"? Up at Rhinkon or down at Hermosa Beach for some winter surfing? It was like the waves washed them away—or like they had never really been there.

"When you're ready to write, choose from the many details you have jotted down...those that suggest the mood of the place the moment you observed it." That would be the next step. Jeez, all I have observed so far were some crummy seagulls, some pelicans and some characters trying to get some fish on their hooks for a lousy fish dinner or such. I guess all this comp stuff that teachers like Glicksberg try to teach you is for the birds.

So the longer I sat there and thought about this writing business, the more I

realized it wasn't for me. First of all, my vocabulary is about movement and action and sounds and lights and how these things work together and besides, as I've pointed out, all I want to do is make some theatrical shimmer where this fiction to the right and the reality to the left start to get into a big show-off situation and you can't even tell who's who anymore.

I bet reality has forgotten how it was and that goes for my reality too—even though I'm not too ancient. I have oodles of digital photo albums with pictures that aren't what they appear to be—from the Zeppelin factory turned tropical paradise to miniature beach scenes (mostly in Europe)—jeez, they did look real. The places I mean. Maybe they were, too. But now questions of what's real and what's imaginary are all mixed up and the way they sometimes snap at each other I can't figure they've been apart, ever. Maybe it's just shimmer. That's the way I figure it. I always thought that willing suspension of disbelief stuff is just a lot of bilge water...I really do.

realized it wasn't for me. First of all, my vocabulary is really terrible and if I tried to use all those expensive words they wouldn't be mine and besides, as I've pointed out, all I want to do is not forget when I'm an old hag like Mrs. Hotchkiss down the street, with nothing to show for a long life but forty-five bucks of social security a month and crippling arthritis.

I bet old people have forgotten how it was and that goes for my parents too—even though they're not too ancient. They have oodles of photo albums with pictures taken when they were young—from the mountains and the lakes and the forests where they were happy together (mostly in Europe)—jeez, they did look happy. On the photos I mean. Maybe they were, too. But now they're married for umpteen years and real antiques and the way they sometimes snap at each other I can't figure they've been in love, ever. Maybe it's just the years. That's the way I figure it. I always thought that Philemon and Baucus stuff is just a lot of bilge water...I really do.

2: Becoming Shimmer

"I want to write about the rehearsal process, the creation process, as one in which the event or object of the performance itself will appear only through this dynamic interaction of materials, frames, desires, intentions, accidents and without recourse or reference to a singular (single) guiding object, conception or vision. A space in which (at least, from the outset) there is no fixed line, no fixed center." – Tim Etchells

For as long as I can remember, I have known two things: Uncle Jerry was a surf bum, and Grandma Sid didn't talk about the war. Jerry, the youngest of my father's siblings, surfed the California coast from summer to fall while living off unemployment checks from his winter to spring cannery job¹. Sidonia, my maternal grandmother, emigrated to New York in 1946 after being released from concentration camp. She was

25, the youngest of 11 children, one of four to survive². She was born in 1921, three years after the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the formation of Czechoslovakia, and 72 years before the establishment of the second independent Slovak Republic (the first being 1939-45). Sixty years after her birth in Prešov, her granddaughter Julia Eva was born in Loma Linda—90 miles due east of Malibu, 60 miles from L.A.—a city hugging the western edge of California's Inland Empire. For years I held these worlds apart: father/mother, west/east, surfer/Jew. My Judaism³ had nothing to do with my California.

In June 2008 I read Peter Lunenfeld's "Gidget on the Couch" in my roommate's *Believer* and discovered the line connecting Grandma Sid's Austro-Hungarian Empire to my Inland Empire, Judaism to surfing. Tiny blonde Gidget, the international icon and spark of global interest in California and teen culture, was really a tiny brunette named Kathy, daughter of Frederick ("Frederick") Kohner, a product of realities (Kathy's surfing and phone calls, Malibu, California) and fiction (Frederick's writerly imagination). Malibu Barbie, the quintessence of a mass culture California female body and the antithesis of all I thought I stood for, was in fact inspired by *Gidget* and named for the Jewish Barbara Handler, thus making her "a double-secret-crypto-Jew" (Lunenfeld). My Judaism and family migration was not only *not* outside California, but was integral to the world-wide explosion of 'California' as a concept.



Kathy "Gidget" Kohner
(b. 1941, LA, CA)
At Malibu, c.1956



Sandra Dee and Kathy Kohner
on set for *Gidget*, 1959



Sidonia Singer, 2016
(b. 1921, Prešov, SK)



Julie Hammond, 2016
(b. 1981, Loma Linda, CA)

On July 13, 2016 I boarded a plane in Portland, Oregon and flew to Europe. I went looking for Gidget, hoping to surf in a landlocked country, seeking to uncover some corner of California—the place I was born—in the place my maternal family came from. My planned impossible was glossed by optimism: *maybe I won't learn anything about surfing or beach culture but at least I'll find something!* I hadn't left the Berlin airport before I saw the first of many surf-themed t-shirts displayed in a gift shop window—single colour prints on bright fabric. I felt like an odd detective gathering clues—"music / surf / art" shouts a poster, "nude beaches were big in the DDR" whispers a display—for a case I was still looking for.



"1989 California Dream"



"Surfer 1993"



"California" skirt/top.



"Wave Rider" tank.

Over the next month I lost count of the number of surf tees I saw worn by people of all ages and genders. In fast fashion shops and department stores the racks were packed with palm-tree printed trunks and shirts boasting surfboards, waves, and setting suns. In Prešov, Slovakia, 700km as the crow flies to the Baltic Sea (and 800km to the Adriatic and over 900km to the Black Sea), and by the shores of Hungary's Lake Balaton, I noticed surf shirts printed with "1989" and "1993", the years of the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution, end of Hungarian communism, and (re)establishment of the independent Slovak Republic. Gidget had come home to roost. While spas and Mediterranean holidays were connected to health and relaxation, the iconography of California's surfing beach culture had come to mean something bigger: freedom.

A week after arriving in Berlin, I took a train 60km south and to the "Brand Tropical Islands" stop. There, I joined a mixed-age group carrying canvas totes and backpacks stuffed with towels, suits, and sun lotions. We piled into a free shuttle bus

and 20 minutes later, having stopped to gather additional passengers at not one but two camping sites, pulled up in front of the Tropical Islands resort. It's hard to take in just how big the building is from either inside or out—at 5.5 million cubic meters it is one of the largest buildings by volume in the world—but a helpful diorama, located on one of the rainforest paths, revealed that the Eiffel Tower, laying on its side, would easily fit inside.



Exterior Tropical Islands Resort, photographed from "Amazonia" outdoor pools

Development of the Brand-Briesen Airfield began in 1938 for the Luftwaffe, Nazi Germany's air force, and the area was taken over and occupied by Soviet forces from 1945 to reunification. In 1992, following return of the land and buildings to the federal government, the site was purchased and developed by the airship company CargoLifter. A decade later, the bankrupt company sold the land and buildings to Malaysian company Tanjong who opened Tropical Islands Resort in 2004. Today, the location houses two large indoor swimming areas ("Tropical Sea" and "Lagoon"), a recently opened outdoor area ("Amazonia"), waterslides, "Tropino Club for Kids", the 10,000 m² "Tropical Islands Rainforest", activities from diving lessons to "Island Ballooning", and of course, eating, lodging, and shopping.

Once inside, there's nothing to do but swim, explore, and play in the magnitude of it all. Wearing a chip wristband connected to your on-file credit card, helps the free fall

into the imaginary world of even temperatures and easy living. Want a beer or an ice cream? Just scan your wrist at the check-out counter. And yet, Tropical Islands' zeppelin hangar's roots—promoted in branded inflatables airships and comic books—and obvious fictions—massive blue sky banner, poorly camouflaged speakers, the hot air balloon connected to a backpack-wearing employee on the ground—are never out of sight.



Interior, Tropical Islands Resort, photographed from the top of a waterslide

The joy of Tropical Islands is neither what it offers on the surface (domestic vacation) nor its forgery (tropical paradise), but the shimmer that exists between the two (domestic tropical vacation paradise). To thrill at swimming towards a blue sky on the horizon *knowing* it is a printed banner, to delight at listening closely to insect sounds emerge from a painted speaker nestled among living plants and actual dirt, to brush silica-perfect sand from your feet before stepping into climate controlled water in a climate controlled dome while a lighting rig 'sets the sun' on 'sea' and 'sky'—these are joys born of the oscillation between real and 'real', actual and fictional, acting and non-acting.

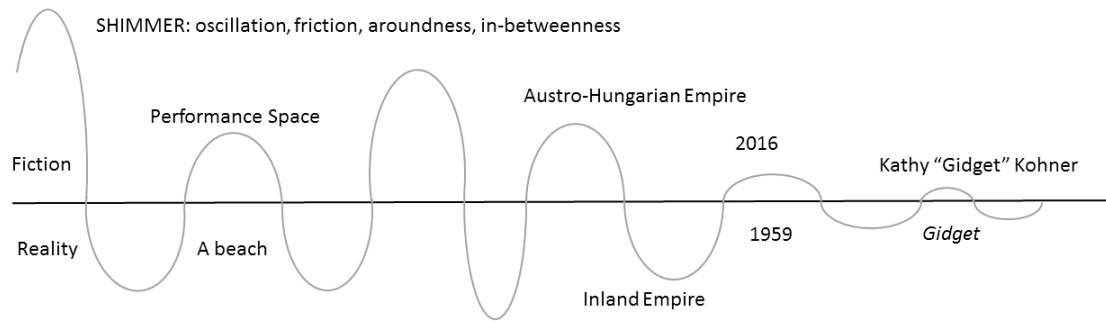
As I continue to navigate the space between California and Central Europe, Kathy "Gidget" Kohner and *Gidget*, Tropical Islands provides scenic inspiration and a material model for a shimmer that extends beyond the person/a(l). This zeppelin hangar turned beach paradise is willing suspension of disbelief on a scale at once colossal (in size and creation) and minimal (in effort for attendees). Using Michael Kirby's scale

theory of non-acting/acting alongside Erin Manning and Brian Massumi's writing on becoming, I propose that shimmer, as oscillation, friction, aroundness, and in-betweenness, can be both created by and used as a tool of theatre. From here, questions arise: If shimmer exists or appears as a result of two or more material interactions, is it itself a material that can be manipulated, or is it merely a by-product? Is shimmer a consequence or a chance?



Artificial sunset at Tropical Islands Resort

Does one 'see through' shimmer as we do light? Can the intensity of shimmer be 'turned up', as with sound? Does shimmer only exist in the reception of an individual at unexpected moments, or can shimmer be provoked and perceived simultaneously by an audience of many? I hope to come closer to understanding these questions, perhaps feeling my way towards tentative answers over the coming months of studio research, as I develop a dramaturgical vocabulary for working in, through, and with shimmer.



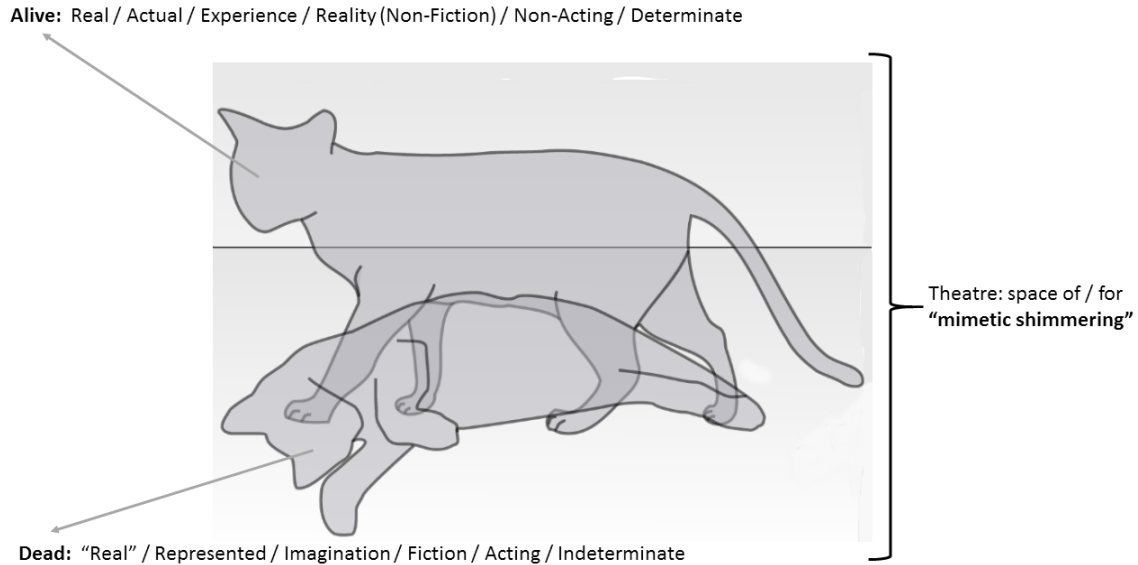
Katherine Profeta describes dramaturg and dramaturgy "as a quality of motion, which oscillates, claiming an indeterminate zone between theory and practice, inside and outside, word and movement, question and answer" (xvii). This "quality of motion" clings to work as it moves from the rehearsal room to performance to post-show lobby, from being created *for*, to being perceived, received and digested *by*. Motion is essential to shimmer; it is not only the thing happening (shimmer is a movement between two or more points), but it is through movement of the points themselves that shimmer forms. As a material or language tool of theatre, alongside light, sound, text, action, etc., shimmer invites, demands, and acknowledges constant and various states of becoming. Manning and Massumi use the writing and experiences of autistic poet Tito Mukhopadhyay and others as a launch into recognizing and questioning the world as a "field of becoming alive with co-creation" (7). They propose that questions about the borders of the body and the "relay between imagination and experience" are answered through

poetic language, not strictly fact seeking—a language for story, a language that holds onto the tensile oscillation of imagining and experiencing, that composes with the threshold of expressibility that was already active in the field, turning to expression where there is not yet either a fully bloomed object nor a fully flowered subject—only the intensely experiencing-imagining bud of a qualitative becoming toward making sense in language. (6)

In this moment, the drive to make art from and in a state of becoming feels personally and politically necessary. When so much of the world seems to want to divide into binaries or rigid categories, the fictional expectations of the theatre can create a space for heightened awareness of oscillation, uncertainty, and plays between states that are themselves becoming. Schrödinger's thought experiment of the cat that is neither dead nor alive until it is observed, provides a helpful shimmer model. In theatre,

things and events are simultaneously real and represented—an actor named Betty plays a character named Betti who brushes her teeth; Betty's on-stage tooth brushing is a representation of Betti's, just as Betti's tooth brushing is a reminder of the actor Betty's off-stage actions (the actor Betty uses her daily, 'real' tooth brushing technique to represent tooth brushing on-stage). But whose teeth are being brushed, and by whom? Does Betty brush Betti's teeth, Betti brush Betty's teeth, or are two sets of teeth being brushed simultaneously. While we may recognize instances of fiction or representation in the world at large, the theatre creates and holds a shimmer space where $1 + 1 = 3$: dead cat + alive cat = dead cat, alive cat, and dead/alive cat⁴. It is not merely a flipping between states, it is the creation of a third. Sometimes the actual unexpectedly pokes through the represented, sometimes the represented is acknowledged as such. While directing Maria Irene Fornés' *The Danube* in fall 2016, I also learned that $1 - 1 = 3$: two actors sit with their hands on a physical table, the table is removed but their hand remain poised on the now imaginary tabletop. Like the dead/alive cat, the result is three-fold: the presence of the table (we recognize what is being represented), absence of the table (there is no physical table), and the presence/absence of the table (the table is not there and yet we recognize its representation).

But what about the observer? In Schrödinger's model the cat is seen as either dead or alive at the moment of observation. In this shimmer model, the audience perceives all three states alternately and simultaneously. Is the theatre venue a container like the cardboard box? Is the audience inside the box, are they a cat, or are they peering in chanting 'alive! dead!' as the evening progresses⁵? Where and when do the walls of the box begin and end? To what extent do audience expectations of the theatre—as a physical space, as a venue for certain kinds of sound, light, actions, text, and spatial relations—create the theatre? The multi-layered questions of observed/observer are significant for theatre-makers (as well as physicists), as they challenge expectations and assumptions of how theatre 'works', and provide a platform for making and receiving within expanded becoming.



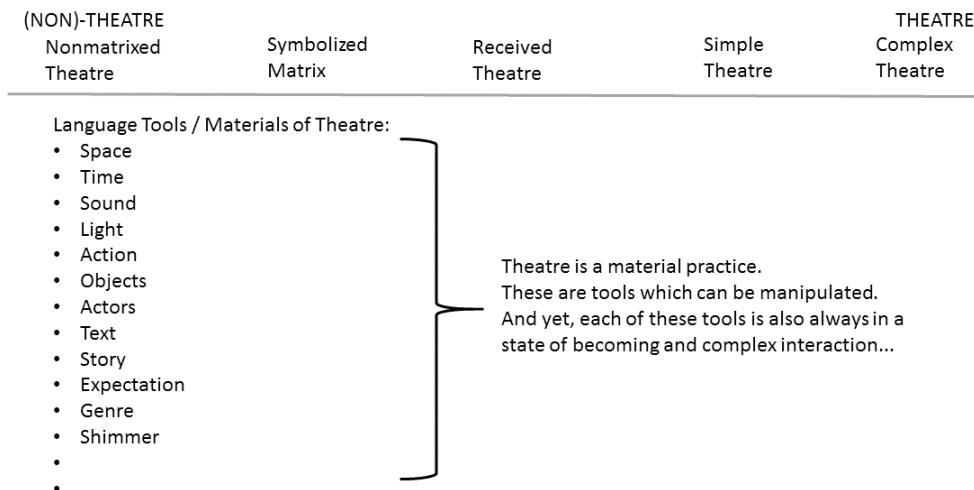
Shimmery betweenness has mostly been examined through the actor and action of acting. For Bert O. States, “the problem with the actor is that he is *there*, before us, *all at once* doing artificially what the rest of us do naturally—in one sense the primary medium of theatre, in another its end and purpose” (42). There are multiple shimmers at play here: the “artificial” actions of the actor in contrast to the “natural” actions of the audience (even if on-stage actions are not intended to duplicate off-stage naturalism) and the movement between cause and effect—do actors create theatre, or does theatre create actors? Here, Kirby’s scale provides a helpful ‘yes and.’ While at first Kirby appears to draw a binary between ‘non-acting’ and ‘acting’, his scale instead identifies a series of acting modes modulated by the performer (simple-complex acting), or by our perception of a person who appears to be performing (symbolized matrix-received

NON-ACTING				ACTING
Nonmatrixed	Symbolized	Received	Simple	Complex
Performing	Matrix	Acting	Acting	Acting

acting) or not performing (nonmatrixed performing). In received acting and symbolized matrix, the situation or external forces (costume, props) create an effect of acting. “When the matrices are strong, persistent, and reinforce each other, we see an actor, no matter how ordinary the behavior” (Kirby, 45). In other words, willingness to perceive ‘theatre’ plays a significant role in the creation of ‘theatre’. In these moments, as well as when we apprehend slips ‘in or out of character’ or the appearance of the actor/artist in the

character as in States' "Self-Expressive Mode" of acting, we see shimmer—our expectations of what is real (non-acting) and what is fiction (acting) cannot and do not stay fixed. Unintended belief holds hands with willing suspension of disbelief.

Philip Auslander contends that "performance in which the actor moves from style to style from role to role self-consciously dramatizes the construction of the actor's self from the language of theatre" (67). If we recognize that acting and actors are only one material of "the language of theatre", it is possible to use Kirby's scale to consider a theatre which "self-consciously dramatizes" using all available materials. Just as "the actor is visible within the character" (Kirby, 51), a theatre can be created where sound, light, space, and texture are recognized not only for their transformational abilities—to what extent they participate in the creation of a fictional space—but also for their abilities to reveal themselves or their fellow language tools. Light and sound can alternately obscure and reveal the physical theatre venue; time and objects can shimmer between being and representing; story can oscillate from clearly fiction to clearly non-fiction to something strangely between. As such, we can move from, through, and between Nonmatrixed Theatre and Complex Theatre within a single performance event.



My search for shimmer and attempt to understand how it works in theatre, requires a move towards the material in order to effect a human-scale shift. In promoting and recognizing theatrical shimmer states beyond the physical body of the actor, I can propose alternate ways of experiencing the world—both within and outside the theatre venue. This is not to reduce everything to the level of construct, but to make visible the

extent to which we participate (knowingly and not) in construction, and how these expectations and assumptions, and disruptions thereof, shape our being and becoming in the world. To discover Gidget on the lake-side beaches of Slovakia and klezmer tucked inside Dick Dale's revolutionary surf guitar, transforms my orientation of self and cause/effect. Following this, I aim to use all the language tools of theatre—words and light and sound and time—to create from, within, and for an expansive "field of becoming alive with co-creation". As Marvin Carlson so clearly states, the current concern of theatre is "to demonstrate that the real and the represented are not a set binary, but are the products of human consciousness and ways of seeing and encoding" (18). With shimmer as a material guide, we can interrogate 'whose seeing' and 'which consciousness' we create for, and strive to make within becoming.

And so, in the end, like Gidget at the beginning, I sit and write on an unseasonably sunny day. From the too-soft seat of my couch I can see the sky—bright, surprising blue, streaked with white clouds—snow clumped in the alley and clinging to trees, and the occasional sea gull who reminds me that waves and salt water are a literal stone's throw from my door. Though this essay is not about Vancouver, it is about a sort of me in a sort of now, like the actor whose body references the past and the space that is and pretends to be. (And of course, in its own shimmer state, this essay is all about Vancouver.) This right now is also an elsewhere, a becoming-now or now-becoming that slides across time and space, from my screen to yours.

Notes

1. While I claim to "know" these "facts" about my Uncle Jerry, I am less certain of their veracity each year. I am hesitant to either confirm or deny what have become important personal myths for fear that a new 'truth' will demand I re-write my self-styled origin story.
2. Though I remember shyly examining my Great Aunt Margit and Gizi's forearm tattoos, I did not learn that my Grandmother had survived Dachau until summer 2016.
3. It feels worth mentioning that "my Judaism" is more cultural than religious, though perhaps those words are more easily said 22 years post-Bat Mitzvah. My parents were not particularly religious, and my mother once said that she and my father decided my brother and I would have 'a more interesting existence if we were raised as Jews, as outsiders to the dominant culture.'
4. This is a variation of Paul Slagen's $1 + 1 = 3$ equation, cited by Jeremy M. Barker, where maker + spectator = something shared and communicated between.
5. Forced Entertainment's *From the Dark* (Foreign Affairs Festival, Berlin, 16-17 July 2016) in which a performer declares other performers dressed in animal costumes "dead" or "alive".



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Landscape / Storyscape

*"Our humanity is made out of stories or, in the absence of words and narratives, out of imagination: that which I did not literally feel, because it happened to you and not to me, I can imagine as though it were me, or care about it though it was not me. Thus we are connected, thus we are not separate." - Rebecca Solnit, "Silence is Broken," *The Mother of All Questions**

As an artist, I cannot separate my self from my work, my life from the stories I share: 2006, dancing on-stage to my favourite Stevie Wonder song; 2008, in rehearsal reading a letter my father wrote to my mother; 2013, sharing the words my mentor gave me when I graduated college; 2015, singing *Home on the Range* while playing a slideshow of photographs of my face-down body in sites throughout Vancouver; 2016, directing a play and giving example after example of related incidents from my past. My life and my stories are woven throughout these moments of creation. As an academic, I am more likely to connect the theory I read to my life and studio practices than to the words of another critical writer. I understand ideas in books through the traces of lived experiences housed in the archive of my body: these smells and sounds and feelings are the research library from which I create. As Soyini Madison so eloquently puts it: "performance helps me see. It illuminates like good theory" (108).

Yet here, at the end of this three month long and much too-short journey, I find myself questioning the phrase 'life story' more urgently than before: Whose life? What story? For whom? To what end? To whom do life stories belong? Can they be owned? Are we so entangled in each other's stories—as fellow travelers, as story listeners—that the boundaries between one life's potential story production and another life's story telling blur together? Even as I re-read the above list of shared moments from 'my' life I must acknowledge the explicit presence of other lives (father, mother, mentor) alongside the many implicit ones. While I do not propose, nor do I believe in, a definitive answer to these questions, it seems fitting that in this concluding paper I to return again to the Traveling Jewish Theatre: "Stories. Listen. Listen. Stories go around in circles, they don't go in straight lines, so it helps if you listen in circles. Because there are stories inside stories, stories between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home" (qtd in Myerhoff, 17).

Story Emplacement / Story Embodiment

Ivanna Yi proposes that within Indigenous storytelling traditions, the land is "a story teller itself" (5), its place names a form of "oral technology" (8). Aman Sium and Eric Ritskes, as they map decolonization strategies, examine Indigenous storytelling as a site of knowledge production, a place of decolonization in action (II). In the relationship between these locations, the places which produce stories and the stories which are sites of production, rests an opportunity for dialogue not only between place and story, but teller and listener. For just as a place is a story teller, place is also a story listener: the residue of our stories remains in places—in the land, in the body of the teller, in the bodies of those who hear. Here in Vancouver, I think of the powerful story of naming each time I see a "Welcome to Vancouver" sign, or am witness to a land acknowledgement at a gathering or cultural event. While the physical "Welcome" signs erase Indigenous presence through non-acknowledgement, public verbal recognition is part of a re-storying, one piece one the complex map of decolonization. For me, a newcomer to this city and country, these regular reminders of the land and its people are essential to how I understand this place, and how I consider the placement of my own body within this land, and within the lands I think of myself coming from.

Josephine Machon writes of the "performing body" as a "sight", "site", and "cite" (23) in which "cite" and "citing" are used "on a corporeal and sensate level to denote that which inscribes, marks, takes back to a source" (200). If we consider land as a performing body, an active storyteller, we begin to see the blurring between emplacement and embodiment. The lands Yi writes of, and the lands I live on, are sites, and though the sight of these places has and is changing, the potential for their citing remains. To say a name, or to scrape it into the wall of a church as Ursula Le Guin describes (Myerhoff 17), is to tell a story. Rebecca Schneider proposed that if we "resituate the site of any knowing of history as body-to-body transmission" (104), story telling and story listening for example, performance can then begin to "function as...bodily transmission" which creates "counter-memory" (105). This 'counter-memory' recalls Sium and Ritskes' process of decolonialization. In telling and listening to stories, we create new maps and resurrect old ones, we learn how to listen in circles to the citings around and inside, to see sights, and be in site (perhaps, even, to find some insight).

This past summer I called my grandmother Sidonia Singer from her hometown of Prešov. In the course of our conversation she mentioned Košice, a nearby city I would be travelling through in a few days. She told me, "first it was Hungary, then it's Slovakia, now it's Hungary again." I corrected her, "It's Slovakia." "No kidding," she said "that's good." I laughed, uncertain how one affiliation or another was 'good' or 'not good,' aware that within the moment of our conversation this town was simultaneously staying still and moving. The site and sights were relatively stable, but its cites were shifting, counter-memories were being produced in relationship to my grandmother's already deep memory archive.¹

On one level, the story I chose to tell is a story of geography, a story of sites and the possibility to shift what those places cite for myself, the story teller, and for my story listeners. On the surface there should be no relationship between California's Inland Empire and the part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire now called Slovakia, yet my research and telling uncovers link after link across borders of time and space. On another level, this story takes place in the site of my body—my physical experiences growing up in Southern California, travelling and being injured in Slovakia, finding my footing on a surfboard in an ocean. Finally, the story holds the sights of my body, those I see from within the story, sights of it described from a distance—small and blonde; older, darker larger of schnoz; bloody and toothless—and in the moment of performance the sight of me sitting on a blanket in front of an assembled group. And yet, just as Košice moves from Hungary to Slovakia and back again without moving at all, the body of 'my' story is also emmeshed in the bodies of my mother, my grandmother, Kathy 'the real Gidget' Kohner, the fictional Gidget made word by Kathy's father Frederick, made flesh by Sandra Dee and Sally Field, the hands of my dentists—the Slovak Dr. Grosch (seen in the straightness of my once mangled tooth) and the American Dr. Supnet (visible only when I remove my fake tooth and reveal the gap in my mouth), and of course entangled with the complex performances of Central Europe and the United States of America both today, in the past, and in an implied future.

In her call for radical specificity in autoethnographic writing, Patty Sotirin cautions against "reframing [stories] as something shared and understandable" (8). This does not mean that the stories told are not shared ones, nor does it mean that they are not understandable, rather these qualities exist as potentials within the story, "what Deleuze calls the 'micro' regime of 'imperceptible' happenings": "Underneath the large noisy

events lie the small events of silence, just as under the natural light there are the little glimmers of the Idea” (Sotirin, 10). In this way, the story I tell can be 'mine' and 'not mine' simultaneously, just as Košice can slide from Hungary to Slovakia in an instant on the telephone. While these reveals of what lies beneath the surface certainly happen for the story teller, 'body-to-body transmission' in performance creates space which allows for the production of decolonizing 'counter-memories' in the story listener. Just as the beach room in a Netherlands Alzheimer's clinic creates the conditions for patients to remember through the senses (Verbeek 144), radical specificity in storytelling can use "lines of thought, sensate experiences, and imagination that depart from the narrative—lines of flight that do not converge" (Sotirin, 10). The story teller does not need to explicitly connect A to C through point B, rather, to paraphrase Karen Barad, the electron of the idea (A) can leap instantly to the other side of the wall (C) inside the body-mind of the listener (B).

Story Writing / Story Telling

I wrote much of my story in a windowless theatre studio. I should note that even in this moment of essay typing I hesitate to use the 'wrote', and would like to consider the possibilities and implications of words such as dictate, transcribe, or transfer to describe the process of moving my story from body to screen and then back to body via voice (although then and now I tend to write while speaking aloud; in this way, voice, literal and metaphorical, is never far away). Before writing, I would often lay on the floor and close my eyes. When the time felt right to move, I would stretch my fingers and toes away from each other, feeling the long line from left hand to right foot, the diagonal journey across my centre. I would reach from end to end and then slowly curl on my side, folding these distant points in on each other until my elbows and knees touched, my nose and face were hidden in the cave of my arms. In time these movements became faster and faster, the energy from stretching and scrunching building up until I rose and stood.

I realize now that these physical warmups mirror both the content and the form of my story; I draw lines from California to Central Europe, from Gidget to Grandma, and fold them together in my self. Perhaps this is one way of doing unconsciously what Madison calls "keep[ing] my hands on the performance and my eyes on the theory" (108). While my left hand is clearly separate from my right, they are both my body. They

can do things together or in opposition, but their cooperation does not mean a loss of individuality. To call a story 'mine' need not eliminate the roles of others within it, yet doing so proposes a sort of ownership which, like the "Welcome to Vancouver" signs, can deny the essential presence of the story listener. Can a story be said to have been told if there is no one to hear to it? While I recognize the parallels between this koan-like statement and that of a tree falling alone in the woods, the presence of listeners reveals potentials unknown and unseen to even the teller. The act of listening extends the timeline of the story beyond the time of the telling and the body of the teller.

I had read my story out loud many times before sharing it in class on Monday, April 3, 2017. Earlier that day I sat in my studio and read it to a friend, the week before to a group of peers and faculty. Each of these readings presented something new—an idea or a felt energy in the room which encouraged me to speed up or slow down, to alter the inflection of my voice or change the position of my body in my seat. These actions in the present, in moments of body-to-body transmission, are as much a part of the story as the words on the page. Though I had said the words many times, on that Monday evening when I got to the section in which I describe finding my great grandfather's name on a memorial for murdered Rabbis and unexpectedly crying, I felt my throat tighten and my eyes grow damp. I was thousands of miles away from Slovakia, in a poorly lit classroom, sitting on a hard plastic chair (albeit, one covered in my mother's 1970s beach shawl), and yet the reaction of my body was folding time and space, connecting me not only to where I had been in front of that plaque, but to the pain at the centre of my grandmother's silence.

When I came to the last line of my story—*And there, she climbed up onto a plank, a shaped plank, and tried to stand*—I again felt my throat tighten, and my voice caught on the word 'tried.' I did not expect this; something was being communicated to me and through me. Was it Gidget reaching out from the page, reminding me that it was and is hard not only to stand on a surfboard but to have been and to be a woman, a Jew, part of a diaspora? For if land is a story teller, what happens to those stories when the land is no longer home. I realize only now that my grandmother's 1941-1946 silence, is also a silence of her no-longer home. Slovakia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austro-Hungarian Empire: these stationary sites with moving cites cannot hold her story, and so she cannot tell it. In 1990 after the end of communism in Hungary, my mother took my grandmother to Budapest, thinking she would want to see the city, perhaps even to take

the train to Prešov, then in Czechoslovakia. I later learned that despite my grandmother's fluency in Hungarian, she refused to speak it on this trip. She chose instead to speak German, a linguistic way of holding herself at a distance from people, from place, from herself.

Story Listening / Story Being

On the evening of Monday, April 3 I boarded the 95 bus and rode west towards Vancouver. Class was over, it was late, and my head and heart and body were filled with the sounds, tastes, sights, and feelings of my classmates' stories. Though I usually turn down a lane to reach my street, that night I walked an extra half block and turned on the sidewalk. A moment later a skunk stepped out from a bush, looked at me, and then walked away. I had never seen a skunk in my neighbourhood before, and Lisa's story of her own skunk encounter, of her grandmother's skunk sayings, of what seeing such a creature portends, was front and centre in my mind; her words, images, and presence had met mine only hours before. The skunk I saw that night, my experience meeting that skunk, the email I sent Lisa and her reply, are all now entangled in my process of story listening. Her story, like all the stories told and heard that night and on so many other days and nights, did not end when 20 minutes had passed. They travelled from body of teller to body of listener where they now reside and continue to produce. I do not mean to imply that the skunk appeared because of Lisa's story, that her story produced the skunk. Rather, her story marked the skunk for me, allowed me to see it not only as an animal in my neighbourhood, but as a being connected back and forth in time and place. Listening to Lisa's story moved the skunk from Deleuze's realm of the 'imperceptible' into the visible and perhaps knowable; in listening to Lisa's story I experienced what Sotirin claims radical specificity can do: "unfamiliar connections and relations that move both beyond and against the familiar storylines" (11-12) opened, and continue to open.

Margaretta Jolly writes that "iterative, circular, and open-ended structures mimic the more relational life story of...identification" (141). In this way, when I can tell and listen to a story as simultaneously my own and not my own, I begin to find my way through the cracks. In *The Book of Hours II*, 16 Rainer Maria Rilke wrote:

If we surrendered

to Earth's intelligence
we could rise up rooted, like trees.
Instead we entangle ourselves
in knots of our own making
and struggle, lonely and confused.

If and when I am able to listen to the specificity in my own story and in those of others, the revealed entanglements function not as barriers holding me down, but as footholds and opportunities. As I learn to tell and to listen from place—where I am, where I've been, where I hope to go—I create the conditions for listening in this same way. And so the circle widens, continues: telling begets listening which produces stories in the body (and mind and heart and voice) of the listener.

Note

1. While much of a city's sights may stay the same when borders change, I do find it interesting to consider which sights change, particularly the citing sights of flags, street names, and official signage.

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Video Documentation of *Other Inland Empires*

Videography:

Lara Abadir

Editing:

Julie Hammond

Video Support:

Vilhelm Sundin

File Name:

OtherInlandEmpires-Full-LibraryVersion.mp4

Description:

Video documentation of *Other Inland Empires* performed October 6, 2017 at Studio T at SFU's Goldcorp Centre for the Arts, Vancouver, BC. The video was shot by Lara Abadir with audio monitoring by Aryan Borboruah. Editing by Julie Hammond with support from Vilhelm Sundin.