

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Clayton A. Sweeney

Heard About Town: Asimina Chremos

by Asimina Chremos

Editor's Note: Philadelphia dance artists are not known so much for their language as for their ability to transcend it — but when they do speak publicly, they are worth listening to. Guest writer Asimina Chremos is a Philadelphia dance artist. The title of her Rocky Awards lecture is connected to the upcoming Mascher mini-festival, NOWHERE—Free Improvisation in Sound & Movement, Oct. 19-25, where she will perform as a movement artist. www.ImpermanentSociety.com

A LECTURE ON IMPERMANENCE, BY ASIMINA CHREMOS, GIVEN AT [THE ROCKY AWARDS](#) ON OCTOBER 1, 2015

[Standing at a podium before the audience]

Greetings all and thank you for your interest and attention, or for allowing your minds to wander elsewhere, as they will.

Impermanence

Let us break this word down to the components from which it is derived:

Imp: a small devil or demon

Perm: a hairstyle produced by setting the hair in waves or curls and then treating it with chemicals so that the style lasts for several months

Anence: a word that does not exist in any English dictionary

I'd like to note, for those of you who may be uncertain, that I am, in fact, giving this lecture in English. American English, spoken, English English, white-lady-who-went-to-college English, Philadelphia English. The fixed nature of this means of human expression helps us to understand each other. Thus, if I ask for a glass of water, wuder, watah, or whuteh, you all understand me perfectly.

English is so beautiful. It has all the qualities of timeless perfection. Only English could give rise to the immortal phrase, "deathless prose." Because if we are not talking about death than we are simply ignoring the facts.

As a surfer, I love it out here in Southern California and this is where I plan to make my final exhale—hopefully while I'm riding my longboard through the magic glory of a shimmering blue tube—sometime well before my manly physique, broad shoulders, and sun-kissed skin lose their glamour. At this moment, however, I'm checking out a bunny with a permanent wave. She's on the beach under an umbrella and with a sheer scarf around her hairdo, protecting it from the wind. Obviously she should get her pale ass back to New York City. We all know that waves are not meant to be permanent, and that in fact the wind and the waves are meant to be friendly and caress each other.

Oh, I'm sorry... did the male gaze invade the situation here? Shoo! Get the fuck out of here.

In order to talk about impermanence I'm afraid we must also kick the little devil, the imp, out of the room and discuss what is permanent, solid, unchanging, and eternal. The ikonostasis in the Orthodox Church is a screen depicting divine images (that's the "ikon" part of the word), separating the congregation from the sacred space of the sanctuary. I've always loved this idea that there is something in the church that is too special and too secret for just anybody to see. The "stasis" part of the word is what concerns us now, of course.

Stasis is a word that is etymologically connected to other fine words such as stay, stop, stand, and so on. I discovered a definition of it, carved into the stone tablet of the internet, as follows: "a state of equilibrium or inactivity caused by opposing equal forces." The word can also refer to "stagnation in the flow of any of the fluids of the body."

Oh now we are talking about the body. Thank goodness because this is a dance event and we are all very concerned with bodies here. The interesting thing about bodies is that they have this amazing life cycle that goes from a sperm and an egg from two different bodies and then there is a small imp and then there is a human and then there is a corpse. Sometimes, before the corpse stage, there is a contribution of a sperm or an egg toward the creation of a new body, this happens with the assistance of internal waves, but not always.

We here in this room find ourselves riding the fluid of life, having been dually propelled from body parts and formed by magic to appear here, in our permanent state of beauty, with eyeliner, lipstick, manscaping, and other products. As we present our bodies to be viewed with approbation, appreciation, intellectual fervor, and other lenses, through our fine art form of dance, we revel in the distinct floral bloom of our current stasis and sacred mission to further the articulation and empowerment of this fleshy excellent thing that will eventually die.

We who are about to die, salute ourselves as many times as possible before that occurrence, saluting with sun salutes, leg-drops, with grand battements, with all manner of side bends and spiral rolls, popping and locking into eternity, and so on, with faltering hopes, reactive politics, and pride-filled, blah blah blah blah blah....

Before I disappear and transform into yet another invisible visible ghost, I'd like to share with you something from Facebook:

FACEBOOK FRIEND: OMG, I just have to share this post about this awesome dance company that is closing it's doors due to lack of funding!

COMMENTS: Oh no! How horrible! Bummer! Shame! Grief, etc etc

ME: Whatever! That company had a damn good run. Don't get me started on the shitty gender politics of the work.

FACEBOOK FRIEND: Politics aside, it is just sad to see another company bite the dust.

ME: Nothing lasts forever, nor should it.

FACEBOOK FRIEND: Your right.

ME, in my head: Sigh. Annoyance. If you knew English, you silly dancer, you'd know to write Y O U apostrophe R E, not YOUR. The word you want is a contraction of You Are, a contraction [think of Martha Graham]. Say, "You are right, Asimina." I know what my rights are.

ME, typing on Facebook: I think the issue here is not so much that it's sad that a company bites the dust, but HOW it ends and what kind of rhetoric it wraps itself in when publicly discussing the cessation of activity. Moaning about there not being enough funding.... well. If that's how you want to take your final dive, then go for it. I wouldn't give it high marks. The real power and strength in being a creative human being is to use our creativity to continue to transform with the changing circumstances, to do what is necessary, as well as what is realistically possible. The world does not owe us. If anything, we owe the Earth and the other humans that make our lives possible at all.

[Die]

By Guest Writer

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