

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Meg Foley

In This Moment We Use Our Superpowers

by Nicole Bindler

This piece is part two of a series about dancing, making, and dreaming during the global pandemic, inspired by many colleagues who are using embodied and community-based strategies to invent new ways of being alive together. Part one can be found [here](#).

It is a month into quarantine. I have experienced my first sighting of an accidental video turned-on-while-going-to-the-bathroom incident. I have canceled all of my dance touring projects through the summer. I wonder when freelancers will be able to apply for unemployment benefits in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I have received an honorable mention twice in the [SOLO BUT NOT ALONE](#) Online Dance Festival. I have figured out when the line is shortest at Mariposa Food Coop. I have attempted to experience “touch” by rolling in the grass at Clark Park. I have acquired a homemade mask by [Rachel Beck](#) (Philadelphia) that has yellow and black swirls. My phone tells me I am averaging 50 hours a week of screen time. Does that include podcasts?

Morgan Bassichis' [quarantunes](#) persist at an even more urgent pace, “Every single Seder, every single Seder up until this Seder has prepared us for this Seder... when is this over, when is this over, when is this over?”

[Stuart Meyers](#) (New York City) wears all white: a jacket without a shirt underneath, a cap, one dangling earring, and red lipstick. Ambulance sirens stream by his window as we contemplate freedom at his gathering, [We're Coming OUT! A very queer Passover Seder](#). No one has all of the Passover items. One person provides the Seder plate, another the [afikoman](#). One person shows us her drawing of a Seder plate, which feels as real as any other, as she points to and describes all of the items. As Stuart screen-shares and reads from his personal rendition of the Passover story, many people notice his computer battery is about to die. The chat box lights up with warnings that he ignores. Finally someone unmutes and implores him to charge his computer.

I attend a weekly video call playfully referred to as “study hall” and/or “detention” by conveners [Kimya Imani Jackson](#) and Pablo Virgo (Philadelphia). The hangout consists of a meandering conversation about whether/how the internet might break, how to shop for food, and what is dating without the prospect of seeing anyone in person? Kimya, a seer, led a workshop that I attended just a month before

quarantine began called Lonely/Together, “a mashup of movement exercises, tea and snack breaks, an indoor tour, and conversations that explore what it means to feel cold, emotionally and/or physically and what are ways to warm and cheer up.” I ask her if she has any new insights about loneliness. She replies with [an article](#) about the artist Haegue Yang, who recently made an installation in Florida about hurricanes called “In the Cone of Uncertainty.”

[Zoe Cohen](#) (Philadelphia) hosts a performance called [Not Sure What Yet \(a salon\)](#) in which I perform [another belly button monologue](#).

[Meg Foley](#) (Philadelphia) performs a new solo that begins with the camera under layers of blankets lit from the inside, creating a glowing honeycomb formation like the inside of bone, or sheets of connective tissue. She emerges from the blankets and dances with the camera at the level of the floor. She crosses her forelegs, stomps around [The Whole Shebang](#), her studio that I ache to move in again, spins on a blanket, and steps onto piles of yoga blocks. As I watch Meg make a dance with the materials that live in her studio, I am reminded of the herbalist [Debra Bluth](#) (Yarmouth, Maine), who I consulted by phone during my first couple of days of quarantine when I was sick with a cold. She created a formula with me from the herbs I already had in my house.

I teach a class through [freeskewl](#) after which I stay online to chat with one of the creators of the platform, [Anna M. Maynard](#) (Western Massachusetts) who celebrates local acts of solidarity, such as [Hampshire College providing housing and food](#) for homeless people, and shares what she feels is happening in this standstill most of us are in, “this pause is creating space for old, deep traumas to surface, while new traumas are being created.” She expresses concern about the ways we are physically interacting now with trepidation, and how this crisis might embed fears within us around touch and intimacy that could be long-lasting. She speculates on the ability of dance classes to regulate our nervous systems and maintain or even build new community, and says she created freeskewl to “use our superpowers to tend to the current trauma and anxiety in our bodies.”

[Gabrielle Revlock](#) (New York City/Philadelphia) leads her solo [Restorative Contact](#) class in which she inexplicably and delightfully begins with 20 minutes of a practice she refers to as cardio-clapping. We bounce. We clap. Sometimes in jumping jacks, paddy cake, or even slapping the bottoms of our feet. After we are warm and sweaty she invites us into a contemplative practice in which we notice and make contact with the various features of our rooms. I see paint splatters on my floors that I’ve never noticed before and tiny holes in the molding of the walls. She reads a Christian religious text that she has stripped of any mention of god, “Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous.” Her emphasis is on the last line. How can we protect our joy, however fleeting, right now?

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