Dancer Research Career Services Department

DANCER RESEARCH CAREER SERVICES DEPARTMENT IS HERE TO HELP YOU GET AHEAD IN THE DANCE WORLD.

Dancer Research Career Services Department: How to Write Artist Statements for Dancers

Artist statements are an essential part of any dancer’s career. Being able to succinctly and captivatingly describe your dance or choreographic practice is crucial to applying for grants, performance festivals, residencies and even teaching positions. The Performance Journal invited me to help launch my newly inaugurated Dancer Research Career Services Department by offering various templates for dancers to use when writing their artist statements.

THE LIQUID BODY/SOFT BODY/LUCID BODY DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your work’s “spectacular displays of gladiatorial strength.”

A) Developing a healthier body-mind connection that invites movement perception to be explored under a new light!

B) Potential to support the improvement of motor skills and heightened sensitivity?

C) A state where all impulses are activated and vitality flows through the complex structure of the body?

STEP 2: Talk about how your methodology fulfills something lacking in traditional methodology, how it corrects some fundamental mistaken assumption in “mainstream” movement methodologies that portray you as the only person who “sees the light,” a messiah with a scientific lexicon of dance moves (descending from ballet and modern) so they can identify with it and are not threatened by you (similar to how Senator Harry Reid praised Obama’s viability as a potential presidential candidate because he had no trace of “negro dialect”).

STEP 3: Talk about how your performance is all about how women need a SAFE SPACE to explore the performer’s vulnerabilities and fragilities, the constant protection of the audience’s attitude of passive reception.

STEP 4: Repeat step three.

THE QUOTIDIAN DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your performance is to be “Black/Asian/Artino so that it simultaneously:

A) Uses white conventions of “elegance” and “virtuosity” and is rooted in a “white lexicon of dance moves (descending from ballet and modern) so they can identify with it and are not threatened by you” (similar to how Senator Harry Reid praised Obama’s viability as a potential presidential candidate because he had no trace of “negro dialect”).

B) Concretes a version of “Blackness/Asian-ness” that is stylizing and easily consumable so that it simultaneously allows whites to ally their guilt that “they don’t know more ethnic people” and gives them the sense that they are experiencing something “completely different” while actually not being very different from everything they have seen before.

THE “SELF” DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your performance is always related to SELF-exploration, SELF-realization, SELF-referential, your rightful movement, re-imagining dance as an un-writable

STEP 2: Talk about how in your work, there is NO notion of completion, the need to exhibit something and never “PRODUCT.”

THE “PROCESS” DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how you are “ALL ABOUT PROCESS,” never “PRODUCT.”

STEP 2: Talk about how dance is’s purpose is to free itself from the overbearing grip of the choreographer’s vision of rightful movement, re-imagining dance as an un-writable subject and aligning the relationship of choreographer and dancer into one of equal members in a dialogue.

THE MULTICULTURAL ESSENCE DANCER STATEMENT (OR HOW TO BECOME THE OBAMA OF THE DANCE WORLD):

STEP 1: Talk about how your work is a “genuss-bending exploration of race, gender, sexuality, culture and history.”

STEP 2: As one of a small number of People of Color in contemporary dance, you will be seen as a “magic talisman.” Use your dance to enlighten the white folk about what it “really means” to be Black/Asian/Artino so that it simultaneously:

A) Uses white conventions of “elegance” and “virtuosity” and is rooted in a “white lexicon of dance moves (descending from ballet and modern) so they can identify with it and are not threatened by you” (similar to how Senator Harry Reid praised Obama’s viability as a potential presidential candidate because he had no trace of “negro dialect”).

B) Concretes a version of “Blackness/Asian-ness” that is stylizing and easily consumable so that it simultaneously allows whites to ally their guilt that “they don’t know more ethnic people” and gives them the sense that they are experiencing something “completely different” while actually not being very different from everything they have seen before.

THE MODEL DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how dance’s purpose is to free itself from the overbearing grip of the choreographer’s vision of rightful movement, re-imagining dance as an un-writable subject and aligning the relationship of choreographer and dancer into one of equal members in a dialogue.

STEP 2: Talk about how your performance is always “a work in progress,” each commenting on the other to bring about change in both arenas.

STEP 3: Refer to the “postmodern lineage” that rejects modern dance’s grandiosity, angst and emphasis on interiority to instead focus on the everyday that led to the democratization of dance movement lexicon.

THE LIMINAL DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your performance is all about accessing liminal states where identity has dissolved, disorientation ensues and normal modes of social action have been suspended that allow you to transmogrify knowledge to other surfaces.

STEP 2: Talk about ritual, ecstasy, mania, “the haunting,” the trickster, the phantom limb and the marginalized parts of the consciousness.

THE “TRAVEL” DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your dance’s purpose is to free itself from the overbearing grip of the choreographer’s vision of rightful movement, re-imagining dance as an un-writable subject and aligning the relationship of choreographer and dancer into one of equal members in a dialogue.

STEP 2: Talk about your dance is always related to SELFS-exploration, SELFS-realization, SELFS-referential, your rightful movement, re-imagining dance as an un-writable subject and aligning the relationship of choreographer and dancer into one of equal members in a dialogue.

THE “SPECTACLE” DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your performance is always related to SELF-exploration, SELFS-realization, SELFS-referential, your rightful movement, re-imagining dance as an un-writable subject and aligning the relationship of choreographer and dancer into one of equal members in a dialogue.

THE “AS WITH OTHERS” DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your dance is always related to SELF-exploration, SELFS-realization, SELFS-referential, your rightful movement, re-imagining dance as an un-writable subject and aligning the relationship of choreographer and dancer into one of equal members in a dialogue.

THE “ARMS AND LEGS” DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your performance is all about accessing liminal states where identity has dissolved, disorientation ensues and normal modes of social action have been suspended that allow you to transmogrify knowledge to other surfaces.

STEP 2: Talk about ritual, ecstasy, mania, “the haunting,” the trickster, the phantom limb and the marginalized parts of the consciousness.

THE “TRAVEL” DANCER STATEMENT:

STEP 1: Talk about how your dance’s purpose is to free itself from the overbearing grip of the choreographer’s vision of rightful movement, re-imagining dance as an un-writable subject and aligning the relationship of choreographer and dancer into one of equal members in a dialogue.
THE SITE-SPECIFIC DANCER STATEMENT

HOT! HOT! HOT!

NOTE: If you choose to be a site-specific choreographer/choreographer, you have a chance to reach BLOCKBUSTER STATUS and become a cultural icon known outside of the limited, small world of dance. Follow these directions carefully:

STEP 1: (most important) Pick a high-profile super-famous location to be the site of your dance (a famous train station, a famous architect’s building, a grandiose bridge and anything else that will enhance the staging of SPECTACLE — never pick anything anonymous or unknown as your site — NOBODY WILL COME!)

STEP 2: Make the production of the work very complex (involving large numbers of people, permits from different city authorities, different historical valves overlapping and colliding upon one site) — this complexity will excite the not-dance audience and reassure them they must be seeing “art.”

STEP 3: Yet make the actual ideas of the performance itself (as opposed to the production) very simple, if not non-existent. THIS WILL ENSURE YOUR BLOCKBUSTER STATUS.

STEP 4: CONGRATULATIONS! You have now learned to occupy this insurmountable dilemma where your work has the superficial appearance of being complex enough (due to the complex production process) to be “high art,” but upon closer examination actually has no ideas behind it (site-specific dance being the ideal conduit for this achievement)! Now that you have mastered this subtle compromise of being complex enough to be high art, but still conceptually simplistic enough to be digestible to a broad audience, THIS WILL ASSURE YOUR PAYCHECK AS A LUCRATIVE CHOREOGRAPHER FOR MANY YEARS TO COME!

THE MULTIMEDIA/TECHNO-FETISHIST DANCER STATEMENT

STEP 1: Use a tiresome technological device such as motion capture, electronic muscle stimulators connected to the internet, a gesture-controlled array of lights woven into a glove that allows the user to create multicolored patterns in the air or robotics.

STEP 2: FOLLOWING THE SAME PRINCIPLE as with site-specific dance and its complex production, make sure you stuff your dance performance with so much complex technological gadgetry that it covers up the fact that you have no ideas (or rather, your idea for the performance is your infatuation with technology and your belief that technology is so magical that with it, one does not need to have any ideas behind one’s performance.)

STEP 3: On the other hand, you can’t get that far having absolutely no ideas. So sprinkle some words in your dance statement about the post-human, the cyborg body, Donna Haraway, Virilio’s theory on speed, the virtual realm creating prosthetic limbs, the digitalization of the body, the prosthetic body or giving birth to “Second Life.”

FOOTNOTE 1: Throughout this piece, I have outlined many options for dancers and choreographers who have no ideas, but still want to make it in the avant-garde NYC dance world. The best methods I can recommend for those who have no ideas but still want to be a choreographer is: showing your tits, using technology and doing “blockbuster” site-specific dance.

FOOTNOTE 2: None of the Dance Statement Templates are mutually exclusive. All dancers/choreographers should feel free to combine various statements together: for instance, “Show Your Multicultural Essence” dancer statement along with “Poetic Vulnerability” dancer statement as a popular combination. The site-specific dancer statement could probably be combined with the multimedia/techno-fetishist statement. In fact, if one is really short on ideas, one could conceivably combine showing your tits, doing blockbuster site-specific dance and burying your work under a lot of technology as a three-pronged strategy to cover up the fact that you have no ideas.

Andrea Liu is Artistic Director of the Fellowship Program for visual/performing artists called “Counterhegemony: Art in a Social Context.” Its first iteration is in Winter 2014 at Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius.

THE “STILL-EMERGING-AFTER-ALL-THOSE YEARS” SURVIVAL KIT

3 minutes showing your tits IS EQUIVALENT TO 10 minutes showing your tits IS EQUIVALENT TO 20 minutes showing your tits **BONUS** IS EQUIVALENT TO 30 minutes showing your tits IS EQUIVALENT TO 40 minutes of programatizing the traditional relationship between spectator & on-screen fetish object IS EQUIVALENT TO 1 hour of creating a “fluid spatial medium” that examines the interplay of sensation, perception & psyche between dancer and audience

20 minutes of showing your tits IS EQUIVALENT TO 40 minutes of problematizing the traditional relationship between spectator & on-screen fetish object IS EQUIVALENT TO 50 minutes of movement showing the dialogue between meaning & form to be dynamic and mercurial

40 minute TIT CARNIVAL (multiple dancers running around showing tits indiscriminately) IS EQUIVALENT TO 30 minutes of narrative about identity, mortality, loss & love

THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESSFUL DANCE PERFORMANCE:

10 minutes showing your tits

Project Page: Andrea Liu

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