



YEAR 3 | 2014–15

THE RICHARD
FISHER
CENTER
FOR THE
PERFORMING ARTS
AT BARD COLLEGE

Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

INTRODUCTION

“Through LAB, the Fisher Center has continued to grow as a home for unparalleled artistic research and excellence.”

GIDEON LESTER, DIRECTOR OF THEATER PROGRAMS

Live Arts Bard (LAB) is the interdisciplinary residency and commissioning program of the Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College. LAB creates a community of professional artists and students who develop work side by side, inspiring one another to create and experiment. LAB provides studio and stage time, research resources and dramaturgy, production support, and essential funding to a wide range of professional artists and ensembles.

The centerpiece of this year's LAB program took place in November when the Fisher Center's theaters, studio, lobbies, and backstage spaces became the setting for *The House is Open*. For four extraordinary days the Center was transformed into a temporary art museum, hosting the work of major artists working at the fast-changing intersection of the performing and visual arts. The resulting pop-up exhibition of installation and performance explored the way contemporary art is made and viewed as the audience roamed parts of the building not normally open to the public.

This year's LAB artists included: choreographer Miguel Gutierrez; playwrights Tankred Dorst and Ursula Ehler; choreographer Jack Ferver; visual artist Marc Swanson; choreographer Ralph Lemon; performance artist John Kelly; choreographer Jennifer Monson; visual artist Tad Beck; performance artist Cynthia Hopkins; musician Amanda Palmer; theater artist Aaron Landsman; and author Neil Gaiman in collaboration with author Audrey Niffenegger and musician Laurie Anderson. In Fall 2014 LAB also supported the development of *The Bed Show*, a new musical devised by singer/songwriter Amanda Palmer in collaboration with a group of current Bard students.

Though their projects and working methodologies vary widely, LAB artists share a common commitment to rigorous inquiry and innovation. At a time when developmental resources and commissioning funds for contemporary performing artists are increasingly scarce both nationally and internationally, LAB provides much needed support for artists who are creating groundbreaking and unconventional projects.

LAB provides important benefits for the wider communities of Bard and the region. Students are mentored and taught by a roster of master artists from across the performing arts, and audiences enjoy a full season of performances and works-in-progress at the Fisher Center. The program's impact is also felt far beyond Bard and the Mid-Hudson Valley. Projects developed during LAB's first three years have been performed at more than 50 venues worldwide, including BAM, the Walker Art Center, and the Edinburgh Festival.

To learn more about becoming involved in LAB, please contact Bob Bursey, Senior Producer, at bbursey@bard.edu or 845.758.7980.

“It’s unlike anything I have experienced. Her training demands a total, all-encompassing direction of energy. This has given me greater understanding and experience of what it means to be truly present and engaged in my work.” ANNA WITTENBERG ’17

SARAH MICHELSON

Choreographer Sarah Michelson won the 2012 Whitney Museum of American Arts Biennial Bucksbaum Award, and is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship. Since 2013 she has been working with a group of Bard students to develop a new work commissioned by LAB as part of the Choreographic Fellows Program, that will premiere at the Fisher Center in 2017.

“This is new for all of us, exploring what it means to create something with a group of people who have no previous history with one another, and building on that over several years by creating a safe place to work. We’re like a living petri dish – it’s fascinating.

The group has a culture, and everyone feels part of it – they’re all supporting the group and being supported by it. I’m impressed by each of them individually. Four years seems like a lot of time at the moment, though it will fly by. This is an absolutely unique experience for all of us.”

SARAH MICHELSON

“It’s just a beautiful place for us—there is space to work, and I don’t just mean the physical space, which is awesome; everyone was so supportive, kind, and accommodating—for us as artists, it was like coming home.” MIGUEL GUTIERREZ

MIGUEL GUTIERREZ

Miguel Gutierrez is a Bessie Award-winning choreographer and Guggenheim Fellow whose latest projects include the *Age & Beauty* trilogy. *Part 1: Mid-Career Artist/Suicide Note or &:-/* premiered at the 2014 Whitney Biennial. During his LAB residency, he developed and presented *Part 2: Asian Beauty @ the Werq Meeting or The Choreographer & Her Muse or &:@&* and conducted workshops for students. (LAB will commission the third part, and premiere the complete trilogy, in fall 2015.)

“The process of developing *Part 2* was unusual for me because I started with pre-existing material, ten transcripts I had recorded of our previous working sessions. Digging into the archives of my working life was more laborious than anything I had ever done.” MIGUEL GUTIERREZ



THE HOUSE IS OPEN

“For four days, this Frank Gehry complex, with its riffling steel façade, opened its many-roomed interior to artists blurring the lines between performance and visual art. By the end of the day, it was difficult to think of those disciplines as discrete categories, as anything other than symbiotic, fluid, and inseparable.” THE NEW YORK TIMES ON THE HOUSE IS OPEN

With the recent proliferation of dance in museums, artists and curators have had to reimagine nontheatrical spaces – galleries, passageways, atriums – as sites for performance, a task more delicate and complicated than it might sound. But what if the challenge were inverted? What would happen, say, if a performing arts center temporarily reimaged itself as an art museum? That was the question behind “The House Is Open,” which comprised the following five projects.

THE HOUSE IS OPEN

“It was energizing to be in such close proximity to the other works in *The House is Open*, and to be part of something that hadn’t been done before. The performers made you feel like you were the only person in the room—such concentrated energy—I wanted to climb inside the work to experience it with them.” JENNIFER MONSON

THE HOUSE IS OPEN JENNIFER MONSON

Jennifer Monson is the founder and artistic director of iLAND (Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Art, Nature, and Dance) and a professor at the University of Illinois. While at LAB she presented *Live Dancing Archive*, a physical archive of more than a decade of her dance-based environmental research.

“I’m fascinated by the memory and presence of the body. In this piece, I was focusing on ecological material so the body became a vessel for conveying information about the environment. Over the years my work has become a way to engage people in the environment through dance by transmitting the ecological information I now have in my body to others so they can experience these changes viscerally.” JENNIFER MONSON

"I wanted to exhibit the photographs in a way that would add value to the performances of *The House is Open*. It was an ideal situation to show these works. Visually they played off the architecture of the Fisher Center, and felt really at home there." TAD BECK

THE HOUSE IS OPEN TAD BECK

Tad Beck is a visual artist whose works 'read' the body in athletic, choreographic, and erotic contexts. In *The House is Open* he installed *Double Document* which hybridizes the traditions of portraiture and performance documentation in a series of photographs.

Artist talk with Tad Beck (right) led by Bill Arning, Director, Contemporary Art Museum Houston (left)
Photo: Julieta Cervantes

"John shared the genesis of his performance piece and the process of working with his collaborators. This offered the perfect opportunity to climb inside the mind-set of someone who is functioning as a director, producer, visual artist and performer, which is a process and integration I'm trying to emulate in my own work." DIEGO BARNES '15

THE HOUSE IS OPEN JOHN KELLY

John Kelly is a performance and visual artist. During his LAB residency he developed and performed *The Escape Artist Redux* and taught an undergraduate course in performance art practice.

"This has been my most intensive experience in-residence. When an artist makes a new piece, the logistics are daunting. Simple things like having enough space and time become so important. It's never safe, because if it's safe then it's going to be boring. The LAB residency allowed me to develop a new installation from two existing works, and to premiere them in *The House is Open*. The circuitous path of this project reflects the way I work and create." JOHN KELLY

“In the boundary-eroding spirit of the event, the set for the performance doubled as a stand-alone installation that underscored themes of danger, impermanence and mutable identities.” *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

THE HOUSE IS OPEN JACK FERVER & MARC SWANSON

During their Bard residency, choreographer, writer and performer Jack Ferver, and visual artist Marc Swanson (Bard MFA '04) collaborated on *Chambre*, a hybrid performance and art installation inspired by Jean Genet's iconic play *The Maids*, which LAB commissioned and premiered in *The House is Open*. Ferver also taught two undergraduate classes.

“I don't go to dance and theater to feel safe. I go there for the mutuality of the artist/audience experience and to examine questions and issues that matter. We're all culpable. And that's what I want the audience and artists to confront, both in ourselves and in what's going on around us.

I saw every piece in *The House is Open*. It's unlike anything that's been done. Museums and performance artists have interacted for a long time, but that has not been the case with theaters.”

JACK FERVER

“He's an incredible teacher because he shares what he's most passionate about. It's exhilarating to learn about his process in creating a new piece, and then to experience the work fully realized in production. Jack and the other LAB artists bring a fresh perspective and a sense of immediacy to class.”

REBECCA CAPPER '17, THEATER & PERFORMANCE

Jack Ferver received a Live Arts Bard Choreographic Fellowship, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

“The deluge of language and ideas – encompassing race, ancestry, authorship, freedom, pleasure, power, the body and especially the female body – is intended to be felt, perhaps, more than analyzed. At the same time, it feels driven by an unshakable logic, an imperative to nowhere but right there in *Scaffold Room*.” THE NEW YORK TIMES

THE HOUSE IS OPEN RALPH LEMON

Ralph Lemon is a choreographer, visual artist, and writer dedicated to the creation of cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary performance and presentation. During his LAB residency he presented the New York premiere of *Scaffold Room*, co-commissioned by Live Arts Bard and the Walker Art Center.

“Scaffold Room is meant to engage the space fully. It was so different, going from a white, pristine gallery at the Walker Arts Center to the backstage space at the Fisher Center which was darker, harder, and more emotional. As we experimented the piece changed enormously. The work was much more visceral, and that resonated in me and with the performers. Given how forceful the exterior of the building is, I found it fascinating to have ‘a conversation’ with the architect in the bowels of the building which are almost anti-Gehry.

I know all the artists in *The House Is Open*. We were all in our own cocoon, and then we shared a space in time like a gang of scientists who each had their own experiment. It was strange and fascinating.

I worked with the students for three days. They were incredibly smart, and open, and kind. For me, they exemplified the energy at Bard, and what makes the place distinctive. Working with the tech and program staff was remarkable – they said ‘yes’ to everything we asked for which is so amazing and unusual – I kept waiting for the ‘we can’t do this’, but it never happened.” RALPH LEMON

Ralph Lemon received a Live Arts Bard Choreographic Fellowship, supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. *Scaffold Room* was coproduced by Cross Performance, Inc., and MAPP International Productions.

“It was thrilling to return to Bard and begin devising a new piece using methods we were taught while students there — exploring a wide range of source material including poems, bits of film, and some media art works.”

BRIAN DORSAM '02, SKIN HORSE THEATER

20:13

SKIN HORSE THEATER

Skin Horse Theater is an ensemble founded by five Bard students who are now based in New Orleans. During its LAB residency, the Company re-developed one of its signature performances for touring, and began work on a new production.

“It was a strange feeling to have students viewing us as professional artists, and at first we wondered if they knew we were just a bunch of Bard kids. But gradually we came to realize that we have changed, that we deserved to be here, and that all this time we’ve been plugging away has actually amounted to something. It was completely surreal.” BRIAN DORSAM '02, SKIN HORSE THEATER

“I find teaching challenging because I don’t have a lot of patience. I was happily surprised that my Bard students were inventive, open-minded, and willing to experiment. I spoke a lot about the business side, and I think I scared them, because serious art is often not supported, and it’s essential to act as if your work is worthy even when you’re uncertain of this in your own mind.” CYNTHIA HOPKINS

CYNTHIA HOPKINS

Cynthia Hopkins is an internationally acclaimed composer and performer who creates multi-media productions. During her LAB residency she performed *A Living Documentary* which examines the trials and tribulations of earning a living as an artist in New York City, and taught a workshop in music and theater.

“Daniel Fish’s vibrant, essential excavation . . . asks that we listen with virgin ears to the show that changed the course of the Broadway musical.” *THE NEW YORK TIMES*

Rodgers & Hammerstein’s

OKLAHOMA!

Through a series of LAB residencies, director Daniel Fish and musical arranger Daniel Kluger developed an intimate, chamber version of *Oklahoma!* which premiered at the Fisher Center in the Bard Summerscape Festival in June 2015 to sold-out houses and great critical acclaim. Fish began working on the material with a group of Bard students eight years earlier. One of them, Patrick Vaill '07, reprised his role of Jud Fry in this year’s professional production.

“Bard was and remains a huge part of who I am as an artist, and *Oklahoma!* was the pinnacle of my experience there as a student. Returning to Bard—my first artistic home—as a professional, and working with Daniel again has been without question the richest and most rewarding experience in my life as an actor.” PATRICK VAILL '07

“Few art centers in the country could have supported the research and development of a new *Oklahoma!* with the time and care that the Fisher Center did. The project was born there with a group of remarkable Bard undergraduates, and I couldn’t be happier that it found its professional expression in the same theater. The Fisher Center genuinely supports process and discovery.” DANIEL FISH

“It’s one of the best classes I’ve ever taken because Aaron takes you deep into serious questions about life and art. I came to Bard not just to learn how to make art, but what to make art about.” ALEAH BLACK '16

AARON LANDSMAN

Aaron Landsman is an ethnographer, playwright, and performer. During his LAB residency he developed an iteration of *Perfect City*, a performance and discussion series about the future of our urban centers, and gave a public presentation. He also taught a class on socially engaged theater making.

“Perfect City began in reaction to Bloomberg administration’s 30-year sustainability plan for New York City. While at Bard I conducted research by talking to many urban policy planners, artists, activists, and young people from the towns and villages of the Hudson Valley. I use interview techniques that result in a true collaboration with the subject. As they become co-authors of the piece I’m working on, we expand the idea of what socially engaged theater making can be.”

AARON LANDSMAN

Bard College and The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts

Bard College has distinguished itself as a leader in the field of liberal arts and sciences for more than 150 years by providing a first-rate undergraduate education for its students. The College is known for its pioneering ideas in education, its passionate commitment to the highest standards of artistic inquiry and practice, and for its vigorous advocacy of liberty, citizenship, individual dignity and tolerance of differences.

The Richard B. Fisher Center for the Performing Arts, designed by architect Frank Gehry, is the most ambitious capital project in Bard’s history, and illustrates the commitment of the College to bringing performing artists of the first rank to perform and work with its students, faculty, staff and the public. The Center’s programs in opera, dance, theater, music, film and cabaret, along with its world-class facilities, provide an outstanding venue in which to create and learn.

Together these institutions provide an exceptional environment for resident artists to create original pieces, work in close collaboration with faculty and staff, and inspire students’ thinking and practice.

Thank You

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