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Upcoming Events at Charter Oak Cultural Center

- Nov. 10 7:00pm**, 2012 Miller Reel Jewish Woman Filmmaker Award Honoring Lisa Gossels with a screening of her documentary *My So-Called Enemy*
\$18 • students free with current ID
Location: Wilde Auditorium, University of Hartford
- Nov. 11 5:30pm**, Kristallnacht Commemoration • FREE
- Nov. 13 7:00pm**, Embraced By Her Common Words: A Tribute to Adrienne Rich (1929-2012)
\$5
- Nov. 15 7:00pm**, Galeet Dardashti • Monajat Multi-media concert-performance
\$20
- Nov. 29 5:30pm – MIXUS**
Melissa Croghan
Under My Skin: The Social Construction of Race and the Tragic Story of Malaga Island
Gallery exhibitions | FREE



JUDY DWORIN | JDPP
PERFORMANCE PROJECT
Moving for Change Since 1989



MEDITATIONS FROM A GARDEN SEAT

November 1-3, 2012
Charter Oak Cultural Center

Judy Dworin Performance Project is an arts non-profit based in Hartford, CT, founded by Judy Dworin in 1989. JDPP is an organization of professional artists who—on stage, in schools, in prisons and in the community—innovate, inspire, educate and collaborate. JDPP harnesses the arts as a powerful catalyst for creative expression through performance, community building and positive change.

JDPP is the home for three distinct programmatic offerings. **The Ensemble** inspires change through innovative, movement-based performance on stage that examines social and personal issues of our time; the **Moving Matters! Residency Program** brings dance/theater into schools through collaborative projects and arts education programs that explore movement and the creative arts as tools for learning and personal growth; and the **Bridging Boundaries Arts Intervention Program** couples arts intervention with social work, to bridge the forced separations of populations affected by incarceration.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Donna Berman, Janice LaMotta and the Charter Oak Cultural Center Staff; Warden Kevin Gause, Deputy Warden Allison Black, Joseph Lea, Rob Fuoco, Elizabeth Burgess, Joan Hedrick, Mary Kuhn, The Harriet Beecher Stowe Center and Staff; The JDPP Board of Directors; and most especially to the women at York CI who are the inspiration for this work

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Edward C. & Ann T. Roberts Foundation, Gerald Lestz Memorial Fund, George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation, Greater Hartford Arts Council's Community Events Grant, State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) Office of the Arts, and the many friends of JDPP



2007.6 Salt print photograph of Harriet Beecher Stowe, c. 1856-1859

Courtesy of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, Hartford CT

perform with choreographers Eleo Pomare, Remi Charlip, Rosalind Newman, Robin Becker, Stormy Brandenberger, Lance Westergard, Lili Weiss, John Mead and Ching Wen Yeh. Alexa has been affiliated with a number of groups including Washington Square Repertory Dance Company, Sonia Plumb Dance Company, and Works / Laura Glenn Dance. She is currently the Director of Dance and Arts Department Chair at Miss Porter's School in CT. She lives in Farmington with her husband and former JDPP Board President, Ron Fleury, and their children, Thea and Emile. Working collaboratively with JDPE continues to be an extraordinary experience and has taught her much about life and art – thanks to all.

Christine Perry (Ensemble) originally began her dance training in her home state of NH at Southern New Hampshire Dance Theater. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from the Hartt School at the University of Hartford with a BFA in Dance Performance in the Spring of 2009. She also had the privilege to train at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance on scholarship. She worked with Graham legends such as Denise Vale, Donlin Forman, Steve Rook and Peggy Lyman Hayes and performed such famous repertory including *Diversion of Angels* and *Night Journey*. Along with dance she is a professional stage and production manager and has done extensive technical theater work in locations across the Northeast. Christine is currently in her third season for Hartford based modern dance company *dancEnLight* under the direction of Lorelei Chang. She is also currently a faculty member at Premier Dance Theatre, West Hartford CT and Limelite Dance Center, Wetherfield CT and is Waterfront Supervisor and Programming Coordinator for the Town of Chester Parks and Recreation.

Marcela Oteiza Silva (Set Designer) is an Interdisciplinary visual artist and Professor of Theater Design at Wesleyan University Connecticut, USA. Marcela received her BA in Fine Arts at the University of Chile. She earned a MFA in Design for performing arts at California Institute of the arts (CalArts). Her grant awarded pieces are Interdisciplinary performances, including collaborations with composers and choreographer to create hybrid works, such as: "The heart play" by Heiner Muller a music-based dance theater piece (composer Alba Triana) And "Pornographic Angel" with director Claudia Tatinge Nascimento, a digital media and performance play. As a designer she has worked in over twenty productions for theater and Dance. Marcela has an extensive visual art exhibition record, both in the US and abroad.

Jeff Shortt (Ensemble) is a 22 year old music student; he has been a gymnast for 18 years, and studied dance for 15. Jeff would like to thank his mother for introducing him to the universal art form of dance, Mary-Ellen Reilly and the staff at Dance 10 for making dancing as comfortable as breathing, and Judy Dworin for showing him endless opportunity. He would also like to thank Heidi Klecak, Frank Hatchett, Wendy and David Fish-Lawrence, Lorelli Chang, Rebecca Mehan, Frank Valentine and of course the rest of the Ensemble for conditioning him, enlightening him, and inspiring him.

Kathy Wyatt (Guest Performer) Kathy was a resident at York Correctional Institution and is now employed as the Volunteer Coordinator for CCAR (Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery). She is an active member of the Connecticut Coalition for Judicial Reform and the Windham Reentry Roundtable. While at York she participated in Wally Lamb's writing group and two of her pieces are part of his latest anthology of writings by York women entitled "I'll Fly Away: Further Testimonies from the Women of York Prison" which received the Connecticut Book Award last year. Kathy participated in all of the York residencies of the Judy Dworin Performance Project during her time there and was a writer and narrator in the performance pieces that culminated each residency. She has performed her work 'Love Letters' at the Warner Theater in Torrington as part of a fundraiser for Chrysalis programming at the prison, at 40 Forward! at Trinity College, as well as Wesleyan University, Eastern Connecticut State University, and UConn.

member of JDPP. It is with love and gratitude that I thank my family for all they have given and shared for this part of my journey.

Robert Byrd (Ensemble) Robert Byrd is a New Haven native whose love for dance and drama has been instilled and evolving since childhood. Although not ever formally trained in dance, Robert served as member and co-captain of New Haven's Mob Squad Drill and Drum team for over 7 years, where he performed competitively in front of large and small crowds, leading his team to numerous victories. He made his dance debut in JDPP's production of "In This House," playing the role of Adam Jackson. As Robert emerges in the limelight taking on the world of dance by storm with will and determination. Robert is embarking on many cultures of dance such as African, Caribbean and also Modern. He has appeared in many performances with Sankofa Kuumba, and the Caribbean American Dance Company and is still a company member with JDPP. Robert challenges his ability as a new company member with DancEnlight. Robert has really proven himself to be a true diamond in the rough!

Mellissa Craig (Ensemble) is a Hartford native who holds a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Trinity College. She began her dance career with Cultural Dance Troupe at age 10 and received numerous awards for discipline and commitment. Today Mellissa is a dance instructor for JDPP's Moving Matters programs and at the Greater Hartford Academy of the Arts Elementary and Middle schools. Mellissa has also performed workshops and performances for Sankofa Kuumba, Hartford Public Schools, New Britain Parks and Recreation, and the Multicultural Arts and Technology program at CCSU. She is also a trained stilt walker and has conducted numerous classes and workshops for students across the country and abroad, as far as Cape Town, South Africa.

Heidi Klecak (Ensemble) is a graduate of the University of Connecticut and the Hartford Conservatory, and has attended Wesleyan University taking graduate courses in Dance and Movement Studies. She has served on the dance faculty of Eastern Connecticut State University, Saint Joseph College and The Hartford Conservatory among others. She currently is owner and Director of the Stafford Academy of Dance LLC, and directs the Figments Youth Dance Ensemble. Heidi teaches creative movement at the Preschool for the Arts in Ellington and Tolland, and also choreographs a musical production for children each summer with Act Out, Sing and Shout. Time spent working with JDPE has been extremely rewarding for Heidi, and she wants to thank Judy and the entire ensemble for their constant love, support and friendship. She would also like to thank her husband, Gary, for his love and understanding.

Tracy Lombardo (Ensemble) received a BFA from Adelphi University. She performed with Adelphi Dance Theater for two years, studied with Frank Hatchett for one year and participated in a Broadway Dance Center Showcase in NYC. Tracy also performed with Sonia Plumb Dance Company for five years. Presently, Tracy is teacher and choreographer of New Steps Dance Center in Glastonbury as well as JDPP's residency programs for youth with Incarcerated parents and Parkville Community School.

Lisa Matias (Ensemble) received her BA from Trinity College, Hartford, CT., where she was awarded the President's Fellowship in Theater and Dance. She has taught and performed with several companies throughout the Northeast. Lisa currently teaches at Trinity College and at her own studio, Lisa Matias Dance Centre. Lisa has been with JDPE since its inception and continues to be inspired by Judy's work. Her greatest joy is being mother of Alyssa Ciera and Nicholas Victor.

Alexa Melonopoulos (Ensemble) began her dance training with Estelle Jones. She earned her BA in Dance from Hofstra University and holds an MA in Dance in Higher Education and Administration from New York University. She has had the opportunity to

MEDITATIONS FROM A GARDEN SEAT

Behind the Wire

Swamp Sounds

Love Letters

Regret

Loss

Dandelions

The Seed

Renewal

Wildflowers

Epilogue: The Garden

Conceived by Judy Dworin and developed with Associate Artistic Director Kathy Borteck Gersten and the Ensemble

Ensemble Performers: Robert Byrd, Mellissa Craig, Heidi Klecak, Tracy Lombardo, Lisa Matias, Alexa Melonopoulos, Christine Perry, and Jeff Shortt.

Guest Performer: Kathy Wyatt

Set design by Marcela Oteiza

Lighting design by Blu

Sound design by Martiza Ubides

Text scripted by Judy Dworin with contributions by Kelly Donnelly, Panna Krom, Robin Ledbetter, Jennifer Marchand, Shonda Northrup, Yong Mi Olsen, Nicole Pierce, Eliza Ruiz, , Yalines Torres, Kathy Wyatt and Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Sound score voices: Joan D. Hedrick, winner of the 1995 Pulitzer Prize for Biography for her book, Harriet Beecher Stowe: A Life and Charles A. Dana professor of History at Trinity College is the voice of Harriet Beecher Stowe. Also, Leslie Bird, Edward George Bird V, Ashlye Comer, Kathy Borteck Gersten, Kecia Goodwin, Janette Rodriguez, Victoria Steele

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FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Meditations from a Garden Seat asks us to spend 50 or so minutes in deep thought and contemplation about incarceration—a subject that does not come on to our radar screen often and, if it does, often gets quickly erased. It is easy to write off those who are in prison—people who made bad choices and have received what they deserve. A common notion.

Working at York Correctional Institution, the state's only prison for women, for the past seven years, I have found over and over again that it is just not that simple. In the seven years that I have been doing residencies there with the 30 or so women and a core team of JDPP teaching artists is incredibly inspiring—raw in its truthfulness, admirable in its courage, amazing in its developing craft. It has moved me time and again.

The Great Garden, a performance piece that I, with Associate Artistic Director Kathy Borteck Gersten and Musical Director Leslie Bird developed with the women in 2010/11, was the seed for *Meditations from a Garden Seat*. A beautiful and brave piece, *The Great Garden* explored what a garden means from inside the razor wire.

After the performances concluded, I began to think about how to take this piece out to the public. I took selections from that script and edited, rearranged, and recombined some of the women's words. I invited Kathy Wyatt, a prolific writer and former York resident, now the volunteer coordinator for CCAR in Willimantic who participated in our and Wally Lamb's residencies at York for several years, to add her writing and her live presence to the piece. Three additional women from Community Partners in Action Resettlement House (all formerly at York) joined the voices of the sound score developed by Maritza Ubides—taking the words from inside the razor wire out.

The idea of bringing Harriet Beecher Stowe into the mix of this piece was an intriguing one that occurred to me on a visit to the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center. As I waited to go on a tour of the house and was looking at the books and gifts on sale, a button caught my eye with a quote of Harriet's—"A garden is a place of healing for the soul."

While touring the house and grounds, I was further introduced to Harriet's deep connection to gardens as I viewed the numerous paintings that she created of flowers and saw the predominant place that gardens had in the overall landscape of her home. It struck me as powerful that this historic icon, who spoke out against slavery and for freedom, also understood the power of gardens as metaphors for life and regeneration and healing. I began to think of the possibility of her voice interfacing with voices of contemporary women who are or have been in prison—an interesting counterpoint in any portrayal of incarceration and search for personal and physical freedom.

In working on the piece, I integrated various passages, most of them from a Stowe article, "Meditations from Our Garden Seat," published in *The Independent* (August 9, 1855), as well as from "What is to Be Done with Them?" (also from *The Independent* August 21, 1862), and *Palmetto Leaves*, that allowed Harriet's voice to come forward in the script, an invisible presence from the past coming

into the present. Her words are spoken by her biographer, Joan Hedrick, someone who has spent years researching Stowe, and knows her intimately. In *Meditations From a Garden Seat*, Stowe's words interface with those of Kathy Wyatt and the York women, echoing each other throughout the piece.

The Ensemble worked with me and Kathy Borteck Gersten for a year developing the movement sections and Marcela Oteiza created the set pieces that became integral to the dances that, with Blu's lighting, create the various worlds—inner and outer—that unfold as the piece progresses. *Meditations from a Garden Seat* encourages us to think and then think again about the implications of incarceration—what it means in light of a common humanity that it suggests we cannot ignore.

~Judy Dworin

BIOS

Judy Dworin (Executive and Artistic Director) founded the Judy Dworin Performance Project, Inc. (JDPP) in 1989 based on a commitment to the important role the arts can and do play in challenging and creating change in our universe – personal, educational, and global. In addition to her work as Artistic Director of the Ensemble and a lead teaching artist for several of JDPP's residencies, Judy has taught in Bulgaria and Taiwan as well as throughout New England. She is on the Teaching Roster for the State of Connecticut and is the recipient of many awards, the most recent being an honoree of the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame. Her commitment to education has also had a forty-one year history at Trinity College, where she established the Dance Program, co-founded the Trinity/La MaMa Performing Arts, Semester in New York City, and chaired the Department of Theater and Dance for many years. She recently contributed a chapter to the book, "Performing New Lives: Prison Theatre", edited by Jonathan Shailor, and published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers that discusses the initiating JDPP project with the women of York CI that has catalyzed a powerful trajectory of Judy's work with the incarcerated and their families.

Blu (Lighting design) lived in NYC for 20 years where he was resident designer at the Cubiculo and La MaMa E.T.C., was a Bessie Award winner, and lighting designer for such renowned dance theater artists as Eiko and Koma, Ping Chong, Donald Byrd, Sally Gross, Nancy Meehan and Paula Josa Jones to name a few. He now lives in Bloomfield with his wife, Judy and their family of dogs, turtles, fish, birds, frogs, toads, and bats.

Kathy Borteck Gersten (Associate Artistic Director) has been collaborating with Judy Dworin since 1986. She was a founding member of Dance Services Network and its Director for 6 years, Past Dance Vice President for the Connecticut Association for Physical, Health Education, Recreation and Dance, on the Artist selection panel for First Night Hartford, Dance Committee member for the Connecticut Standards for Dance and the State Guide to Arts Program Development K-12, Dance Certification Committee member for the State Dept. of Education, Artist panel for Art/Artists Residencies, Arts Development Grants, and a board member of the Connecticut Dance Alliance. Currently, Kathy is a Teaching Artist and co-coordinator in JDPP's Moving Matters! Residency in Hartford schools - Parkville, Burr, Kinsella, and A.I.Prince, as well as York Correctional Institution, Hartford Performs and, is a guest lecturer in the Department of Theater and Dance at Trinity College. Kathy received the 2009 Distinguished Artist Award from the CT Dance Alliance and is a Master Teaching Artist for the CT Department for Economic and Community Development Office of Culture and Tourism's Office of the Arts. She is a member of the Greater Hartford's Dance Umbrella, Kinsella School Governance Council and board



Meditations From A Garden Seat

“I was mesmerized throughout and I would recommend this piece to anyone” ~Audience Member
Viscerally tense – yet ultimately joyous – *Meditations from a Garden Seat* blends movement, images, text, and spoken word to present the unreachable world of incarcerated women. Nourished by Harriet Beecher Stowe’s historic voice of emancipation, and interfacing with the voices of contemporary women who are both in and out of prison, *Meditations* is a provocative dance of discovery that moves into the stillness of the present moment, challenging our notions of freedom and justice while offering hope for a greener, kinder and more conscious world. *Meditations* is based on *The Great Garden*, a piece created and performed by women at York Correctional Institution participating in JDPP’s Bridging Boundaries Arts Intervention residency program inspired by the notion of gardens as a source of healing and regeneration.

[Hartford Courant Article by Sharma Howard](#)
[Glimpse/Wire Sell Sheet](#)