

The Dance Centre Podcast Episode 14: Corporeal Imago

SPEAKERS

Gabrielle Martin, Claire French, Jeremiah Hughes

Claire French

Hello, welcome to the Dance Centre podcast. I am your host Claire French, and I'm joining you from the traditional unseeded territories of the Musqueam. Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh peoples also known as Vancouver, Canada. I'll be talking to dancers, choreographers and other members of the dance world here on the west coast to find out more about their creative work and practices, and to discuss what it means to us to be dance professionals today. Thanks for joining us.

Claire French

I am absolutely delighted to be joined by Gabrielle Martin and Jeremiah Hughes of Company Ci or Corporeal Imago Performance Society. I've seen some of the work recently and I'm just always enthralled by their background and just how they have and how they're investigating concept with the aerial dance but also just what they've achieved in their lives. So, I'm going to start with Gabrielle Martin, who's an aerial and contemporary dancer artist, choreographer and artistic producer who's performed over 1400 shows internationally. We'll be drawing on that information throughout this podcast and so I'm going to save some of the highlights, and we'll hear from Gabrielle herself, but she is extremely well awarded. She has a degree from Concordia University, she has been performing and presented all over the world. From 2011 to 2015, Gabrielle toured full time with *Cavalia* performing aerial rope, bungee trapeze, bungee dance, and harness dance numbers. And in 2015, she began working with Cirque du Soleil as part of the creation of *Toruk — The First Flight* and was also a principal performer with that company until it closed in 2019. We will hear about all of the rest. I'm just going to move to Jeremiah quickly but not to pass over you my dear. Jeremiah Hughes began his training in competitive dance at the prestigious Canadian Dance Company in Toronto. And after a decade of competing internationally and representing Canada on the world stage, he enrolled in the interdisciplinary Randolph College for the Performing Arts in Toronto, where he expanded his craft with acting, singing and stage combat. He's also been a featured soloist on *So You Think You Can Dance* and *So You Think You Can Dance Canada*, and he has also worked in Cirque du Soleil and on the production of *Toruk*, and we will find more about this later. They are co-directors of Corporeal Imago, and we are going to be talking to them about that company, the origins of that company, and they're now their residence here in Vancouver. And also, their up and coming work *Throe* that will be on at the Dance Centre. We've also had the pleasure of seeing a small showing of that through the Dance Centre. But without further ado, let's hear from them, shall we, enough of my voice, Gabrielle and Jeremiah. Welcome, welcome. Thank you so much for taking this time to talk with me.

Gabrielle Martin

Hi, yeah. Thanks for inviting us to chat with you. It's really exciting for us.

Jeremiah Hughes

Hi, Claire.

Gabrielle Martin

And we'll just acknowledge that were chatting with you from the traditional unseeded territories of the Musqueam, the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh where we're privileged to be working with Company Ci or Corporal Imago.

Claire French

There you go, you've got Corporal Imago it's very important. Now we have no excuse. Thank you so much. Okay, wonderful. So, we've got so much to talk about, but we would love to start in some ways. What do you think is your beginning? What would you like the listeners to know about your beginnings in dance? Maybe not necessarily training, maybe in relationship to what you would consider a key stage of your career?

Jeremiah Hughes

Well, I mean, interesting. I when people asked like, Okay, well, when did you start dancing? Or what was like your be like, why did, how did you find dancing, typically, I kind of have the same story, which I enjoy. When I was 11, my mother remarried, I got my dad. And so, at their wedding, I'm 11 years old, they have a huge dance floor out and a DJ. And I went out and kind of got on the dance floor for one of the first times in my life and I was out there till 1am just dancing my heart away realizing that this is something that I really connected with and really enjoyed doing was just this practice of embodiment. And so, I was eager and happy to kind of pressure my parents for the entire following summer, like every day I'd be I want dance classes. Okay, and the next day I want dance class I want to be good at this. Yeah, I played a bunch of sports I was already a very physically invested person. So, at 11 I was like I want to dance, which was a bit of a rude awakening when I first came to my first dance studio, and I realized that everybody I was training, everybody my age started when they were two. So it was that was my beginning was at my parents' wedding.

Claire French

Love it.

Gabrielle Martin

And I think just because I do know Jeremiah quite well. I think an important part of your story is also how like that was the place that you found, like your confidence and kind of your second home, which I think is wonderful.

Jeremiah Hughes

That's where, so at that place that you said the prestigious Canadian Dance Company, Alain Lupien. And, of course, Don Lupien. But particularly, I had a really strong connection with the faculty there. And I went from being an 11-year-old going, I kind of want to dance, but I don't know how I have no idea what I'm doing. And my I didn't have family that danced or in the arts, and then I was able to within about five, six years start competing to represent Canada on a national level. So, it was just, they really

do talk about the importance of having good teachers and good mentors and good coaches and what that can do for a child. And I got, the more I've traveled around the world, the more I've come to realize how fortunate I was to have that studio come into my awareness and to be lucky enough just to be at the right place and right time, because yeah, now those guys are all doing huge TV stuff across Canada, anybody's watch, like The Next Step, the TV show for kids has watched my home studio, that's the same company. So that's, I'm very fortunate to have had such a rigorous training was very intense but driven around the idea not of like technique first, but passion and performance first. And that was where I found my connection.

Claire French

So great. It feels like it kind of channeled your competitive spirit to from your sports.

Jeremiah Hughes

I'm hugely competitive and I like it, which is to my own detriment, but also the reason why I've gotten where I've gotten that was able to make it be like No, I'm gonna perform, do my absolute best to win versus it'd be, I must point my toes that much harder. So, it was the right environment for me.

Claire French

Yeah, fantastic. And Gabrielle.

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah. Well, I really came into my physical practice through sports first, I think I you know, was enrolled in ballet, like, almost like a lot of young children. And it really wasn't for me that type of physicality. But having like an intense physical practice was, has always been really integral to who I am. And then through sport, I came to circus. It's not actually, through ice hockey, I came to fire dancing doesn't necessarily make sense. But, you know, as a teenager, the kind of team sport environment just wasn't aligning with my interest, I was hanging out with hippies in the park and wanted to spin fire. And then through that I found a channel to perform actually. So, it's more performance that brought me to dance and physical performance, but it was less about training in the dance studio and more about having early experiences of being able to perform for an audience and what can transpire in that space. And that is kind of what then, you know, catapulted my career when I was in my late teens, I saw Akram Khan perform *Rush* when it was early works in like 2000, 2001 at the Cultch. And that was a pivotal moment for me where that physicality on stage and also because, you know, his integration of classic Indian dance with contemporary to me, just spoke to me in a different way than the work I'd seen before, which actually, I hadn't had a lot of opportunity before the Cultch's youth program enabled me to see work for free really, after like \$2. So little shout out to their youth program. But yeah, and then that kind of catapulted me I started to study more like release techniques. So, body mind centering with Jennifer Mascall, contact improv at EDAM. And, and then from there, I just realized that I wanted more to have more capacity in my own body and more tools to be able to express myself physically. And that took me to Montreal to study at Concordia, partly because it was a program that focused on creative process, but also because it was the only one that would take me cuz I didn't have any like, ballet or contemporary, like, you know, years of technique behind me. And then I also studied aerial circus or aerial dance forms independently in Montreal, because it's such an incredible mecca for that work. So that was kind of parallel. And that's a little bit of my, my trajectory.

Claire French

Do you remember when you were training with Jennifer Mascall? And Peter Bingham Mascall Dance and EDAM, when what what time frame was that?

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah, that would have been the early 2000s, I went to Concordia in 2006. So probably from 2000 2001, you know, through 2005, that kind of era.

Claire French

Great. So great. And so how did you, how did Cirque come up for both of you? I'm jumping maybe a little bit but I feel like when I when I was in England, before I kind of knew about Canada, just in general as in I knew what the dance community or what the dance world was, and before I even thought of coming here to train myself, I learned about Cirque. And when I went to my first Cirque show, on the outskirts of Toronto, Orange was sponsoring it. That timeframe, you may remember, I saw the show and I cried like a baby, because it felt like a part of my performance life and my art life that I had not yet been able to reach or touch. It was *Quidam*, actually, at the time, and there was just something about the, the narrative, the literalness of it, and of the scale of it, that just kind of destroyed me in that moment. And it was also so beautiful. And it was it made every, made me think that everything was possible in performance in some form. And so, it really like it holds a very special place in my heart. But I'm wondering how you two found Cirque or how it found you or however, how that worked, because my experiences of it is unforgettable, just as an audience member/spectator, but I mean, I also sought it out. You know, I also went made sure I went to see a live show. And I've seen several since but and that initial experience of it has one off, I've become just as interested in the tech people climbing the poles at the side of the stage. So I love going to see the see it from the restricted view angles, because, you know, as I'm kind of becoming more more as an artist, and more involved in process, and those things I'm more interested in that aspect, watching how people work, just at all the ways in which a performance comes together through all of the different ways that people are working, is what excites me now. So, it's kind of switched, it's kind of an inverted thing. But what was your what's your either pull to cirque, or what was your draw to it.

Gabrielle Martin

I think I'll jump in just because I, *Quidam*, interestingly, was the first Cirque show that I saw, probably back around the same time, like 2000, for me that when I was 18. And actually, just a little shout out Franco Dragone, who directed that show just passed away two days ago. and he is very important for a lot of what we represent with Cirque du Soleil, because he directed a lot of the early shows. And I agree that show was really profound for me. And actually, I think it planted a seed, seeing the aerial performances, specifically in that work, planted a secret dream inside of myself that I didn't, you know, acknowledge the rest of the world and barely to myself until many years later. But that, you know, like, for so many people Cirque du Soleil really did offer that gift of one just like showing what circus can do. But also, I think, because it brings, I think, like, new illusions and new, they work so much with fantasy, especially that show and, and a lot of their early works, which, you know, in our kind of in the contemporary world of circus, of dance and theater and the kind of postmodern movement with the hyper realism, I think it's something that sometimes we miss. And I know for me, that draws me to

circus and especially that that kind of circus work that I've seen, you know, the more contemporary that bring you into this fantastic world. And I would also describe it as visual theatre, which is something that we talk about our work line at the intersection between aerial circus, contemporary dance. and visual theatre. And I also just, you know, to say, I had mentioned how I started out with circus kind of exploring performance through circus and then moving to dance in my own trajectory. And I think that circus, there's something accessible, there was something accessible about circus for me in the sense that I could go out there and perform with, you know, my hula hoop skills, my fire breathing skills, that are skills, but you know, I could I could express myself in, in performance without having, you know, oh, well, you need like 15 years of technical dance training behind you before you can get on a stage. So, there's something quite accessible about that, and also how circuses are kind of at the intersection. You know, the physicality is so key, but it's also more theatrical than dance, I think also allowed me to express the part of myself that you know, I always think that if I wasn't a dancer, I would be a theatre artist, even though there's there's such proximity, but often also a large difference in terms of the type of work you do as an artist and the type of training and experience you have on stage. So, I can say a lot more about circus, but I'll let Jeremiah do some talking.

Jeremiah Hughes

I remember seeing my first-speaking in specifics to Cirque du Soleil because I didn't have much exposure to other forms of circus leading for a very long time. So, I remember the big tents would come through Toronto once a year, it's where I grew up and my family would take me my brother to go and pretty much once a year, we'd see a show and I remember I think one of the first things I saw was Corteo. And it was I only know that now because it'd be years later going I have these visions are stuck in my head of these beautiful scenes that I have to be like, Okay, there's these beds but and there's this thing with a chandelier and it took me being actually in the company and knowing the entire breadth of their work to go it was that show that was the show that first got me and for particularly its it was just that the work was so beyond a scale and was realized so much further than the stage that it was on. And I had never seen work that was bigger than the venue. And the venue itself was a tent. And it was like the just walking up to a tent like that you'd think, Oh, my God, this is like, just the spectacle of coming to this thing is the cool thing. I get to go inside a tent. And then by the time you leave, you're like, no, that was the show. And it was bigger than anything else I experienced. So that was probably the thing that has like sat with me the most. Then later, through training, I picked in the Canadian Dance Company, I picked up like tumbling skills, some acrobatic skills. And then I traveled, and I was working in like Orlando and theme parks and I picked up some creaturey kind of movement from shows and then I'm living in the in Las Vegas. And I mean, I've been auditioning for Cirque on and off and been considered for roles a few times for like shows like *Koozå* what have you. And it was really wonderful to make a connection with the casting team. And like some wonderful directors Nicola Montes De Oca, like there's some wonderful dancers who are now facilitating other dancers and works to be as rich as they are. But they, they'll never be called out in a podcast, but they're wonderful people. So, it was an ongoing conversation. And then eventually, you just, I was one of those types of people that was kind of good at everything. Because I didn't ever specify, I was never just a tap dancer, I was never just a hip hop dancer. And then eventually, I started getting the opportunity to do some auditions and being in the room, being a dancer who then could tumble, being an acrobat who could dance, kind of energy availed me a few roles, and one of them was, I had the casting director be like, Hey, we, we have this amazing role for creation for Cirque du Soleil. You're gonna send your aerial net, aerial chain,

aerial pole, all these like a crazy list of all the different things that I was like, I looked at it and said very clearly, I've auditioned for them enough times, and I have a very good relationship. I'm always so honored when they ask, but I don't do any of these things. So, here's what I'll do. I'll put out my best video, I'll say with a with gracious energy of a thank you, thank you for considering me. Here's me failing at these different things you asked to see. And here's a couple things I'm good at. And they ended up saying that they wanted to see more, which absolutely surprised me. But then I took that second video even more seriously and sent it in and through the process of working on our show that we that we actually met on *Toruk, Toruk - the first flight* it was a co collaboration with James Cameron's Avatar and Cirque du Soleil coming together to create one massive, immersive video projected world. So, we took over entire arenas, we had a roughly 8000 people a night, 8000 people a show, two shows a night, six nights a week or six, maybe six, six shows a week or up to 10 sometimes. So, we really packed those houses. And it was a video projection of the entire ice arena from the, from the edge of the ice to the blue line, we had a massive video projected world that interacted with us as we moved in the space that video projections were mapped off of our movements. And so, we had microphones and we had given the space. But it also meant they're like cool. Now you're gonna go climb this amazing rope and you're gonna go and do these things, and myself had never really had experience with those elements. So funny enough, back when I was first joining the cast, I had turned to somebody I had good chemistry with and who I respected. I just turned to Gabrielle and said, yeah, these coaches are expecting me to do this really big thing on stage, and I'm terrified. What do I do on my breaks? How do I train? How do I train, and she gave me a bunch of exercises. And after two weeks of vacation, I came back and I actually, I wasn't falling off the rope at the massive height. So that was pretty cool. And then eventually, we started making that a little bit of a collaboration. And we can get to all that later. But yeah, it was actually through my work with Cirque that I found aerial because again, just being a bit of a jack of all trades and picking up skills as I go, oh, I'm in this show. I'm a ballroom dancer. Oh, I'm in this show. I'm a Krump dancer and this show, I need to learn how to do aerial. So, then all of a sudden, having a pretty high level aerial coach and pretty high high level aerial training for a few years now I'm an aerialist.

Claire French

Absolutely, absolutely. And and it's all infused so much with all of this other experience, I think your work I think that's what's you know, so important and it's exciting about that is for the listeners who may not know, you will, you know, kind of be rewarded, from their, their training and all of that all of these experiences that they're talking about in their shows, I think conceptually and also content wise, but when, I haven't seen everything you've ever done, but but I feel very confident in saying that. So, thank you for talking about Cirque like that and kind of sharing those details. It's, it's, it's special to me to hear all of this and also a little bit of the audition process as well for you and how different it is for each person. And when they go through those audition things, how important it is to make connections right as well.

Jeremiah Hughes

I actually had, like, I gotta say, the audition process for me at least in Toronto was like so wonderful. Because they they cut it down. They did theirs with Nicola Montes De Oca. She cut it down to four people after like two days, out of like hundreds, which sounds brutal, and it was, and they'd be doing a ballet pass and they'd have ballet dancers go and leap across the space. And they do beautiful

Jeté and they get cut. And they're and I later was able to ask questions. I was like, What the heck, why would you like that was clearly the best Jeté in the room, maybe like, are one of like, why did they get caught doing this thing they were good at. And then Cirque was like, yeah, no, we know they're good at that. And we also saw that they weren't good at other things. So, if they're not good at the thing that they're good at, they're not like they weren't world level at that one thing. So, my mind was being boggled because I'm like, I have to follow like National Ballet dancers and I have to cross the space. And they just got cut. Okay, well, it was nice being here. But then by the end, it was this, they ended up taking the entire second day, just to do like a long workshop with dancers to really see what they can kind of harness from there. And that's fun, too, because that was like 10 years ago. And so, like that audition video pops up as like something a Cirque casting video ever occasionally. And I get to see all the people I was doing stuff with and see how they're all doing some pretty cool things too now, and it was very formative. It was something like this is early auditioning for me before I even had roles in shows. And so, it was just that like, having people not just try and like figure out who I was, but take the time to nourish something else to in an audition was, it was a unique thing that I was spoiled to have early on.

Claire French

Yeah. So great. Gabrielle, do you want to share anything about your it doesn't have to be Cirque related, but maybe some key influences of key stages of your career like that, like roles, particularly maybe or experiences traveling that have really left a mark on you for your work?

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah, I mean, it's interesting that you talk about traveling, because I was looking at, you know, you sent some questions in advance. And, and so one of them about yeah, key kind of events wasn't really related to performance, but does, you know, affect who I am in there for the work I create, which is, when I was in my mid teens, I traveled to Zimbabwe, which is where my father lived at the time where my that side of my family is from, and it was a really formative experience for me, because it was a moment where I understood how fluid identity can be, you know, having grown up in Vancouver, I at that point as a teenager, identified as black and I was from a low income family. And then when I went to Zimbabwe, the context I was in identified me as white. And I was with a, you know, in my family, there is coloured my family, there was a middle class, but what does it mean to be middle class in an economy that in a developing nation nation that is so impoverished, so all my understanding about like class and race were kind of flipped on their head. And that I think, has affected me in the sense that in my own work, I'm less interested in expressing my own sense of identity or identity politics in my own work. Because I feel like, you know, whenever I start to talk about identity, it's reflected just I feel like, you know, it's so context based. And yeah, so that's, that was a really formative experience, just in terms of who I am, and therefore also affects my work. And then yeah, I mean, I would also talk about auditioning. Interestingly, I know that was part of the last question, sort of, but you know, the, the experience of joining these major companies. So in 2011, I joined Cavalia, but not after auditioning. Like, it was my fourth audition that I got it not after failure is a big theme in my career. And in my experience, a humiliating failure. Like it is for many people. But I think when I first got on that show, I was able to acknowledge kind of my secret dreams, I had mentioned how this secret desire had been planted from having seen *Quidam* at that point, almost 10 years prior. And I think at that moment, I was like, oh, okay, maybe, maybe I can manifest my my dreams. And then I think I, I embraced my capacity

to will things into being from that point. And so that was a big event that there's and then there's several other events in terms of like our work together, what kind of sparked that and the development of our company? Yeah,

Jeremiah Hughes

I will say just that her journey is like, she's a very clearly I should think highly of the person that I've chosen to be in partnership with, but like, her journey is very inspirational of like, how hard she worked at from such an age. So, I actually teach, I teach youth in circus right now and a lot of it...the typical demographic is young women. And I just hold her on a pedestal to be like, yeah, you can start you can start later. And if you have like a level of drive and realism about what it takes, and really setting those dreams, you can really it actually is possible. I started at age 11 And I always consider myself to be a late start. And I couldn't imagine people reaching kind of the stages I had later than that in life, starting a career in dance later in life. And I was already peers with, clearly we met on the job as peers with Gabrielle, respecting her greatly. And that is only through like getting to know her deeper. I was like, wait, you, you're like so much. You started so much later, and you had these experiences. And I'm like, Oh, this is incredible what you've been able to accomplish. So clearly, I should think highly of the person I've chosen partnership with, but sincerely I do.

Claire French

Yeah. Well, the thing I'm getting from this as well is that is is experience, like you say, failing at things and failing more than others. But that's because you've you've been willing to experience so much and put yourself into a position to be able to not just learn from those you learn from them, inevitably, but put yourself there. I mean, isn't it really is incredible. Yeah.

Jeremiah Hughes

Well, I mean, talk about Delta Brae that way, then Delta Brae in Edinburgh.

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah. failure on the theme of failure,

Jeremiah Hughes

failure and failing forward?

Claire French

Do it. Yes, let's talk about that.

Gabrielle Martin

Which is, you know, when we talk about the kind of inspiration for our company, we were both at a dance intensive Deltebre Dansa in in Spain, you know, taking classes, and this festival has a lot of circus and dance classes, and then lots of performances, and we were seeing so much work. And we were seeing, and that's where we kind of really understood that our interests as as choreographers as creators really aligned, we were seeing a lot of work where artists were doing so much, and not necessarily saying a lot, and that's something that we could identify with too, having been, you know, our careers have been mostly an entertainment like, you know, trick based, okay, how how impressive

are your over splits this kind of stuff. So it is, you know, we totally could understand how, how easy it is to fall into that mentality. And then yeah, so that's kind of where our interest started. And then we we did create the first version of our, our work *Limb(e)s*, which which we are so grateful for. The Isadora award was awarded to us for that work, which was such an incredible affirmation specifically because of the journey we were on with that piece. And as creators, we took an early version to Edinburgh

Jeremiah Hughes

We took an early version, we took, okay, so we closed our show of Cirque du Soleil show in 2019. And it was in June. Point is that within I think we closed on a Friday, we flew back to Montreal on a Saturday we were teching on a Tuesday in Montreal Complètement Cirque we were like a part of the festival. But we hadn't even been able to run a full pass of the work. Because we've been living on tour, we created this work backstage at Cirque and in like random gyms along through Europe. So then when we finally got like to Montreal, we're like, okay, it makes sense, conceptually. But we haven't been able to fully run all the scenes for technical reasons. And the spaces we've been in have we been provided in the past. So here we go. And then they're like, oh, good news, your shows are so sold out that we're going to sell your, your tech show your tech run is we're going to bring all the presenters to that one because we couldn't fit them in the other shows. And we're like, that's terrible. So, we jumped in, and we so that was an ego death. And then we took a couple of weeks off because we are going to Edinburgh right away, we had our deposits, and we had to do all these things way out. During a couple of weeks to go, oh my God, are we going to just like gut this entire show and like rebuild, and we're like, No, we have to stay true. We actually like what we're doing. We just need to like realize it further. So, we just we went back in until a little bit of creation time at Centre de creation. And jumped over to Edinburgh and proceeded to do a show every night. Except we didn't know that there are some like kind of cultural dark nights that people take because there's our first time there. So, if you'd like oh, yeah, oh, you're gonna work on the dark day. And we're just there like, getting our costumes on going, I guess so. And we absolutely ran the gauntlet of being our own fliers, being on the frontlines, getting the feedback, developing the show, watching the show every night and be like, Oh, we could do this better. We could do this, being our own dance captains and giving notes and ego death, ego death, ego death for about a month. So, if we hadn't got that, as artists throughout our entire training, we definitely got a condensed version of it for an entire month. And but what came from it became pretty strong.

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah, I mean, the piece just wasn't ready. You know, we were so eager to create we were so we needed we were parched for creative expression that wasn't the same show we'd been doing for four years. And, you know, I think both of us had a certain artistic depth that even though we were playing principal characters in that show, we just felt, you know, it wasn't the theatre that we wanted to be part of in terms of the depth we wanted to go with our characters on stage and whatnot. So, you know, that piece was born from that, and then it just wasn't ready. And so we, you know, presented it for 25 shows in Edinburgh when it wasn't ready and had people walking out every night. But then we we did end up coming back to Vancouver and reworking it and you know, many an evening by ourselves as performers and choreographers not recommended. You know, we're just the two of us in our own little bubble wondering why we were doing it. And then there's just there's a lesson about perseverance there, I suppose. And then also, and, and seeking knowledge where you were missing it, because in

that time, I did a program in dramaturgy. And you know, Jeremiah and I being in partnership, we would talk about dramaturgy every night and talk about you know what that meant. And that's nothing that either of us had really studied before. And so that gave us kind of a new perspective with which to approach it and, and we were very rewarded by how much it touched the people who saw it. So that was a huge affirmation.

Claire French

That's great. I wonder if your company is also a little bit of a freedom from character, from having to take on a character in it, that's part of a kind of narrative or theme or a story. So, you've kept hold of themes and concepts, and learned so much from that in terms of artistic vision, which I think is really great. But then also being able to kind of just, you know, facets of you as people in the work as opposed to feeling like when you mentioned depth of character, you know, it's like more depth of your characters as human beings perhaps, in the work that you have now, I noticed that connection. But discovering that in Edinburgh is the whole thing in itself. I've been to Edinburgh festival many, many times. Yeah, many, many stories that place. In fact, one of my favourite all time shows ever in my life I saw at 10 o'clock in the morning, at a at the Edinburgh Fringe, it was Generally Better Productions, and they were there a mime company. But from the L'Ecole Internationale de Theatre Jacques Lecoq, all of them were trained in there. And it was on at 10 o'clock in the morning. And we saw it by accident. We saw it before breakfast by accident. And it's one of the best shows I've seen in my life. So, there you go

Jeremiah Hughes

That place is just packed. It's crazy how the city just transforms, and it was our first time there and we heard wonderful things and like heard the heard about the energy, and then we're just thrust into it and just try to like, catch the running treadmill.

Claire French

Absolutely. That's so great. Okay, so we've we've talked a little bit about your collaborative endeavors, maybe how you met maybe and how that's, it's lovely to hear your collaboration, forming and the work that you're doing. So, in a very natural kind of introduction to you two, is there anything you'd like to say like, how did it become formalized as a company? Did it become formalized? Is that like part of the dramaturgy stage? Or was it pre-Edinburgh? Yeah, how did that happen? I say formalized. But you know what I mean? Like,

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah, like, we are now society, we, one of the great things. So, we'd been living on the road, while on the same show for four years, and I'd been on the road for four years before that,

Jeremiah Hughes

Four and a half plus creation, I always say five.

Gabrielle Martin

And then we left tour, and we were kind of, you know, floating in the wind, trying to find how and where to anchor ourselves. We tried Las Vegas, and then COVID hit, and then we tried Montreal, and then we ended up here, like all within that crazy, you know, 2020 and, and one of the things that we've been

craving, which is so special that we have now is a team of collaborators, and that's what was missing before we knew that it's not ideal to perform in your own work. I mean to both be performing in our own work doing a duo with like, you know, doing the tech and the promotion all ourselves, but it was just a nature, like a circumstance, you know. And so now we have this, we're starting to establish this incredible community of collaborators with whom we're working with on *Throe*, which is the piece that's premiering at the Dance Centre in November 17 to 19. Yeah, so I think that's, you know, there's we've incorporated that happened last year. And then the other kind of formalizing, I would say, is, is establishing this this community of collaborators.

Jeremiah Hughes

Yeah. We we felt very capable of like, clearly we could make a with the two of us alone together could take a show and take it to Edinburgh we could find successes, ego death and some success. But we were able to do that and we were proud of ourselves. But then this becomes a thing of like, Yeah, but if you want to do more like we just, we hadn't even been able, we were living in hotels, we didn't have anywhere to set roots and to really build community have anything like like minded people, because all the people we had been traveling with were people that our bosses had had decided for us to become family. So here we're able to actually reach out and find amazing costumers lighting design. and composers, dancers and then like collaborators like the Dance Centre and other environments. Like we're so grateful for the resources but having that like-minded people who believe in us, people who we believe in and then able to kind of go into the studio, I mean, we were just in the studios last couple days and just feeling inspired, we took a small break, which, because we're just coming off of maternity leave, a little maternity leave. She's going into maternity break, and I was coming out of paternity. So point is, as we had our first rehearsals back, we had a little bit of time away. And it felt like home because we have dancers, who we really appreciate respect and trust and value to have in the space and be able to get back into with now with our composers' music. And we already have the costumes, we know our lights, we see the world and so feeling incredibly inspired. And so, it's like, oh, man, we haven't done this in a couple months. All right let's hop back in the studio and going it's better than it was even before. It's so good.

Claire French

Yes, well, a lot happened as well, for you two as well.

Jeremiah Hughes

Ya we're trying new things

Claire French

Like babies.

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah, we just had a baby, little baby LÖic is seven weeks old. Yeah, so another creative project of ours. I did want to just hop on that train of thought in terms of, you know, collaborators and the community you're part of, because I think one of the things that brought us together, you know, we're partners in life as well as in creation. But when we were working on in Cirque, we were two of the only members of like, 38-member cast, who, whose formative background was primarily dance. And so that's, there's

something about that, that drew us together in terms of our approach to the work as well, because I think we were two of the people who treated the stage as a sacred space. And that is, yeah, I think a lot of people we were working with came from more gymnastics or sport and so that kind of that, that, that believes in performance as ritual and ritual practice. And a proud like, a space where you can transform yourself and work communion can be experienced, like, I think, for both Jeremiah and I, it's like a spiritual practice as well. And so, I think that's also what drew us together was, how serious we took it, even though it's play, you know, like, we the the sacredness of that practice in that space.

Jeremiah Hughes

There was a different vibe within the cast, there was like, some people I would refer to like one dressing room as a locker room and one as a dressing room, because it's, okay, people had different reasons for being there. And their bosses thought it was okay, so that wasn't my position at that time to correct. But for us, like it was, like, it's a hugely about catharsis and about like embodiment and about growth, like there's so many things that you can channel, you can actually channel divinity through yourself and like, try and become something on stage, especially when you're having the energy of 8000. And the spotlights. And you have your script is literally have an emotional, spiritual experience on stage and you are given the space to do so it's like, yeah, I can find that I can find that pretty quick. And it's a wonderful practice to have. So, it was an absolute blessing and a gift that we really were present to and took it took absolute advantage of every opportunity we had to play those kinds of roles. And then in doing so just recognizing each other's commitments, strengths, and who we were as people kind of ended up having us just magnetizing and gravitate to each other. And that's why we said like that Delta Brae was so interesting, because until then, we had worked in very, like we'd seen a couple shows on online, and we had like, been in our own show and spoke about the process of our own touring show. But then, in watching other people's works, and watching, like so much work in being in such an artistic environment for a while, we really had an opportunity to see the other facets of each other and the dimensions and really notice that we have aligned values.

Claire French

So just along what you were saying, I think it's I'm just looking at your description of the company, and how you chose to write your description. And the word disenchantment really stands out because I think that helps. It's so intentional, actually, as a kind of at the enchantment of Cirque and the enchantment of all those worlds. But to own that, and to kind of honor that at the same time. But the disenchantment is actually, you know, also speaks very strongly to the direction that you have chosen that so disenchantment in terms of almost to me, it connects to ritual, or connects to that idea of sacred space because you're not always enchanted. You're not always in that zone of enchant, it being enchanted. It's a process in itself to to experience that and then the dis is extremely important in that process of you know, that it's almost like the other extreme, but it's still very much speaks to this, the scale and the size and the kind of and you're and the weight almost of what's behind the company, in a good way the theatrical weight significance that's behind the company. I think that's really, I found a real connection to that.

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah, I think we also talk about our work kind of expressing contemporary tragedy or being of contemporary tragedy, because I think, you know, we're living in tragic times. And so there's, you know,

potential for catharsis there in terms of acknowledging that on a stage in terms of exploring, exploring tragedy, and we also have talked about our work as an opportunity for us to explore, like, the shadow side of the human experience, having worked in entertainment for so long and been all about like, the, you know, the Wow, and the happy and the fun, you know, which are also important, but then there's a whole other spectrum of emotions that are maybe more true if we, you know, stop and reflect on what's happening in the world. And I think we also are, like, get interested in creating new illusions that this is a time where, you know, we have, well, there's not a lot of ritual spaces left, you know, in society, the stage is one of them, we walk in into circles of mostly atheists, you know, we're in a time where we, yeah, don't as a culture, hold on to mythologies, as you know, that we have, and a lot of contemporary work it has is, is in this hyper realized kind of mode. And so, I think it's also like we do need, while we're not trying to enter, solely entertain people now with our company's work, you know, as we were doing for so long before we're Cirque, we are, we are creating, creating new illusions, or creating entire worlds that we hope can transport people. And that's also why the audio-visual element is so important in the work we're doing.

Jeremiah Hughes

Yeah, we definitely have like it's deeply at the goal and what we're, I feel like we're succeeding and is deeply immersive work of audio visual of creating an environment in a space that I want, we would like the audience to enter and have never experienced before. It's not that it's foreign. It's not that we're trying to be chaos. But as much as it's like you enter and go, I haven't seen this, this is definitely a unique, immersive, deep environment that transcends the stage. And ideally, keeping that from where we're speaking earlier, where it's like, it's bigger, you enter a black box, like at The Dance Centre somewhere, patrons have been many a time. And to see something that completely makes you reevaluate the space that you're in like treating the bodies as like the bodies themselves as metaphor in space, allowing them to be up at like thirty feet in the air and slowly rolling or falling and descending is something that I kind of know you haven't seen at the Dance Centre, because we've had to work with incredible Chengyan in constantly to put those points up into the ceiling. So, I there's very few works, very few companies, only one of the company that I'm aware of, and very few opportunities to see this environment reimaged and presenting an entire other face of itself. So,

Claire French

Yeah, I think it's fair to say that Aeriosa in town, Julia Taffe is the director, yeah, most of her work, though, has been unseen on the outside of the building. Yes, you know, so there is, you know, I think I'm not speaking for her, of course, and her and Julia Carr, but but that they would be, they're doing very different, their aesthetic is very different, even if, you know, the dancers are up in the air. And they've used that space quite differently, you know, in the building quite differently to you. And they have their outdoor performances and things like that. So, it is very different, which is very exciting, I think, as well, because yeah, it shows that aerial, it shows the versatility of the aerial dance as well.

Jeremiah Hughes

We definitely benefited from them having those first conversations and being able to create in that space, like they've been so generous since we moved to town and also helping us because when we had those first conversations with venues and we'd say, hey, we want to put like a bunch of dancers in the air and have them like fly and then they're gonna swing and we're gonna do all these crazy things.

And a lot of times you can imagine from a responsibility level or safety people just wouldn't say no, it's very easy to say no. but The Dance Centre was like, Okay, we we've had something like this before we we can, we can work with you if you guys are of a level and just opening a conversation made us able to do these incredible things.

Claire French

Yeah, absolutely. That's that kind of community thing you're talking about as well how it kind of branches out to like your kind of co-production partners or just collaborate or just people to talk to about what you're doing. I think it's amazing. Yeah, it's great. Thank you so much. Both of you. So very exciting. Is there anything else Well, I'm excited to see throws, *Throe* I keep saying throws is it *Throe*?

Gabrielle Martin

It's *Throe*, it is the kind of play on throes, you know, being in the throes. We kind of refer to this piece as having the the artists or the the bodies that you see in space being in the throes of survival. It's a play on throes.

Claire French

But the world of *Throe*. So, I'm looking forward to seeing the premiere of it and again, I feel grateful to have been in the studio showing and part of that feedback that you you know, kind of, we're all involved in this. It was really wonderful. And the dancers, it was great to see your dancers who I've seen in other contexts, like, especially Eowynn, and Isak, who I've seen in other contexts in this context, which is really, really great. And I think that that's probably got something to do with your teaching and your coaching abilities. And I'm not 100% sure how much they were involved in aerial before you two. But I wonder if for me that segues into kind of maybe your independent work, Jeremiah, you did mention that you're teaching youth. And I wonder if you could both talk just a little bit about that. Just a couple of minutes on that.

Jeremiah Hughes

I currently am over at there's a venue called Circus West, it's in the, at the PNE, and they have an incredible program. They've been running for I'm guessing about 30 years, where they have these wonderful classes for youth. They're very affordable, and they have an incredible venue because they've been there a nonprofit that's been subsidized. And you should tell absolutely, I cannot promote them enough. There's a plenty of space for anybody who has, any kids who are interested, like if they've if they enjoy dance, but they want to do something else if they want to like learn how to juggle unicycle, aerial, all these things are made available. And they are they have some amazing coaches and truly an amazing venue. Right now, I'm also over there in the capacity as a dance teacher, as well as a tumbling coach, because it was just one of those moments where COVID I mean, during COVID, they weren't able to get spotted, they weren't able to be held. And so, what happens is that you can't really teach somebody how to do a backflip without making sure that they don't hurt themselves. Now, there's ways you can do it. But they're all terrible by comparison. Just being able to have hands on and being able to help these youth collect these skills has been amazing. The past year has been a huge amount of reward for my heart to being able to teach these youth because a lot of it has been a lot of the skills I want to teach them either about flow and spiral but then for the most part with tumbling has been teaching them how to go for it like with a with a type of an aggression or an assertiveness, that

they're just like, I will do this, I love being able to create environments for them to develop the skill to make the choices as I will land this skill and to move with absolute certainty and, and trust and confidence. Because most of the skills I'm teaching like you could do a backflip, but the thing is that you don't know how to do it and you don't believe that you could so then you're not going to just throw yourself into the air but the actual physical level to do a lot of these things is not very high. Meaning once I can get somebody to teach it to to allow themselves to do something as terrifying as a backflip, then we can do anything else. Then I can say hey, go do this other kind of crazy thing. And people are gonna go yeah, I think I can. Yeah. Confidence.

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah, I think I'll just add on, you know, you'd mentioned our dancers. And yeah, Isak Enquist, Eoywnn Enquist, Brenna Metzmeier, Alex Tam and Marissa Wong are so incredible, because they've taken on the challenge of learning aerial, and when we started this creation for *Throe*, we were wondering, you know, do we work with circus artists? Or do we work with dancers, and I think that, you know, we decided to work with dancers, because of the kind of quality of movement that we wanted to see not that there's not quality of movement that that circus artists have, but I think it has to do with the type of nuances in the physical expression we were looking for. And that kind of segues into what's coming next, we do, we're looking to start classes, we're seeking funding right now, to be able to teach professional dancers for like acrobatic dance and aerial dance, hopefully, the pilot project will allow us to offer these classes for free. So, you know, people who are listening if you're interested in you know, keep keep an eye out because we are hoping to do that. And then the other thing that I am simultaneously doing, you know, juggling as we all juggle, many roles is I am the director of programming at the PuSh International Performing Arts Festival, currently on maternity leave, but that's been an incredible opportunity as well to immerse myself in contemporary work, you know, and I hope to continue to see as much as I can locally and internationally it is an incredibly enriching opportunity.

Claire French

Thank you so much. Thank you for taking on that job. And, and also a yeah, and for both being here. I think we're richer for it. And all of your experiences are just so exciting and wonderful. Like all the scales, from the nuance to them from the nuance to the largest of scales. We're all benefiting so much from your experience and you being here and very, very excited about all of that. Congratulations on your new family. Both your *Throe* family and your home family

Jeremiah Hughes

We had a moment yesterday with our cast we were just while finishing up with a cat rehearsal and we had our baby on the mat and we're just like setting up like I had been with him and then Gabrielle was being with him. We're just saying thank you everybody and just realizing, inviting them like they really are in the like you couldn't be more in our family energy, in our environment we have our people we trust and we're like doing contact dance with. And over there we have our child safely in the same environment. And it just felt very like. Yeah, as much as people talk about it being like, it's like a family. It's like, you're really in the room right now with our entire family. So.

Gabrielle Martin

I think you might be able to hear L  ic in the background. My dad is just humming to him to try and keep in calm. So, he's, he's in the space, he's part of our our lives now.

Claire French

Even better. So, we have a music. The humming is our exit music from this interview. Yeah, thank you so much for taking this time, both of you and I look forward to talking to you again. I'm sure I will. And then in the next while,

Gabrielle Martin

Thank you so much Claire

Claire French

Can you remind us of the show dates again?

Gabrielle Martin

Yeah, November 17 to 19 The Dance Centre.

Claire French

Yep. We'll post things in their description under the podcast as well. And we'll be sure to see you there. Thank you so much.

Gabrielle Martin

Thank you.

Jeremiah Hughes

Thank you Claire

Claire French

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