

Haranczak/Navarre Performance Projects
***Seven Falls*, a performance by Karen Christopher & Teresa Brayshaw**



PROJECT SUMMARY

Seven Falls is an outdoor performance sited next to a body of water (a river, lake or sea), for an audience of passersby as well as an assembled one. The piece concerns our preoccupations with safety and the underlying assumptions and reactions that continuous danger and risk assessments have instilled in us. It also includes a series of dedications, devotions offered to the struggle of life and the passing of generations. Concerned with water and gravity, the performance is otherworldly, involves song, has rhythm, and is intended to take your breath on holiday. With a light touch it coaxes out the institutionalised dread and fear that constant disaster preparedness brings.

We started with a series of conversations, and found ourselves surrounded by many histories and personal experiences of water (not to mention crowded into barrels and pushed over the falls); this project is the record of where we went when we looked under the surface of the water all around us.

Seven Falls is remade during short residencies at each location, with some foundation elements common to each version; the method is swift and immersive. In May 2012, at GIFT (Gateshead International Festival of Theatre), Karen and Teresa premiered the piece as a duet. In June 2013, at the ACT Festival (Bilbao, Spain), we added other performers: live music was played by 11 year old Paddy Mackenzie (Teresa's son), who also constructed a paper boat large enough for himself to sit in; the shift from Gateshead to Bilbao necessitated losing some British references (including local geography and the Shipping Forecast), whilst gaining a series of dedications along with a sense of children taking over the show as two local schoolchildren delivered Spanish and Basque translations of performance texts.

<http://www.karenchristopher.co.uk/performance.1.4.html>

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PRESENTATION OPTIONS

Seven Falls can be presented in different ways, and we welcome discussing these options with presenters:

(1) A 3-5 day residency by Karen and Teresa will allow for the research and development of new performance material being integrated with the foundation elements of the project common to each version; the method is swift and immersive. This presentation option follows our experience at the GIFT Festival.

(2) A 3-5 day residency by Karen and Teresa, as with (1), also including the integration of 1-3 selected/curated local performers/residents. This presentation option follows our experience at the ACT Festival.

(3) The performance would be preceded by a workshop, with local participants developing new material and being integrated into the performance; alongside which Karen and Teresa also develop new material through local research and rehearsals. Workshop participants could be found via a public call or through a focused invitation to a local group. The workshop can be geared toward children or adults, with or without prior performance experience; 5-12 local residents could participate in the project, with workshop sessions in daytime or evenings. Ideally, Teresa & Karen would be onsite for a minimum of one week; this affords time to engage with workshop participants and plan the performance.

In all cases, the resulting project's form and content will be substantially responsive to the location, and distinct to the prior iterations of *Seven Falls*.

The performance will last between 40-60 minutes depending on circumstances. The time of year presents opportunities for this piece. It is ideally presented in daylight, just before dusk. This suggests a start time that is in concert with the season and takes sunset into account. The performance could be presented 1-2 times, perhaps ideally on a weekend.



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THE PROCESS

Once on site, we have a short time to re-make the work in response to the site and take care of logistics. The swift schedule means there's no time for arguing, it means that everything we do is about getting ready for the piece; being flexible, open to change, to uncertainty and being fearless about the possibility of getting it wrong. And if we want the process to be enjoyable it means we have to allow leisure activities to invade these work-heavy days, and food and sleep. Karen and Teresa would stay together, eat together, walk around the environs together, and treat everything as possible material for the work. When our plans are scuttled for logistical reasons we change our plans, treating it as an opportunity to improve the piece. We let the circumstances compose the piece with us and because we have not overdetermined the outcome or solidified our expectations, there is hopefully less chance of disappointment.

NEEDS

Indoor space for Karen/Teresa's rehearsals and any workshop; approval/licensing for the outdoor performance; two open-topped canoes filled with water, and two loud hailers/megaphones (hopefully these items could be borrowed or hired for the day); a PA for music (CD or mp3 player). We welcome documentation of the performance.

MORE INFORMATION AND SHORT BIOS

Excerpts from documentation of *Seven Falls* at GIFT festival May 2012, Baltic Square, Gateshead: www.karenchristopher.co.uk/performance.1.4.html More text, video and images available on request.

Seven Falls is part of *The Difference Between Home and Poem: a series of duets*, produced by Haranczak/Navarre. Duet partners here share in defining the working process and methods for generating material: seeking to avoid hierarchies in decision-making, using duets as a direct form of collaboration with no majority rule and no mitigation between points of view. Writing, documentation and publication also form elements of this research.

Karen Christopher is a collaborative performance maker, performer and teacher. She was a member of Chicago-based Goat Island performance group for 20 years until the group disbanded in 2009. With Goat Island, Karen performed and led performance-devising workshops throughout the UK and internationally. Karen has lived in London since 2009, and with her company Haranczak/Navarre is engaged in creating a series of duet performances devoted to re-defining the collaborative performance-making process with each duet pair.

Teresa Brayshaw is a teacher, a writer, a theatre maker and a Feldenkrais practitioner. She currently works part of her time as a Principal Lecturer and Head of Cultural Partnerships in the School of Film Music and Performing Arts at Leeds Beckett University. Her practice involves performing, directing, collaborating and setting up local, regional and international partnerships. She is working towards establishing a centre for wellbeing, performance development and happiness. Teresabrayshaw.com

See www.karenchristopher.co.uk for more information, videos and Karen's blog.

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The Difference Between Home and Poem: a series of duets

Haranczak/Navarre Performance Projects was established in 2009 by Karen Christopher. The first phase of the company's work is a five-year project: *The Difference Between Home and Poem: a series of duets*.

Each project in this duet series is jointly made, directed and performed by Karen Christopher and another artist. Each duet functions as research into new methods of collaboration without a single director. Duet partners here share in defining the working process and methods for generating material: seeking to avoid hierarchies in decision-making, using duets as a direct form of collaboration with no majority rule and no mitigation between points of view. Writing, documentation and publication also form elements of this research.

A series of different research questions, developed by Karen Christopher and her collaborators, inform a series of distinct duet projects, where different strategies and approaches to form and content can be explored.

"At this mid-point in my life I find myself reaching for new ways to define creative practice. Collaboration invites the inclusion of multiple voices, and exercises the ability to involve divergent viewpoints. Shifting from Goat Island's single-director collaborations, duet partners here share in defining the working process and methods for generating material: seeking to avoid hierarchies in decision-making, using duets as a direct form of collaboration with no majority rule and no mitigation between points of view.

I am using collaborative methods in support of practicing restraint, tolerance and flexibility in responding to change both creatively as well as organizationally. In collaborative processes we are looking for multiple answers to the questions we pose. We are not hoping to find just the one answer that we hope fits all circumstances. Part of collaborating is allowing influences at play in the world around us to affect the direction of the work we make."

-- Karen Christopher

Seven Falls is one project in the duet series; two other pieces, for performance studios, are complete and touring: *So Below* with Gerard Bell and *Control Signal* with Sophie Grodin.

Note from Karen: *the company name Haranczak/Navarre comes from the maiden names of my two grandmothers.*

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CVs

Karen Christopher is a collaborative performance maker, performer and teacher. She was a member of Chicago-based Goat Island performance group for 20 years until the group disbanded in 2009.

Karen has lived in London since 2009, and with her company Haranczak/Navarre is engaged in creating a series of duet performances devoted to re-defining the collaborative performance-making process with each duet pair. Recent work includes devised performances in collaboration with Sophie Grodin (“Control Signal”, 2013), Gerard Bell (“So Below”, 2012), Litó Walkey (“Double translations: telling another way to tell”, 2011), and Mark Booth & John Sisson (“Quiet (a disruptive fog (or a hogshead full of vapor called memory))”, 2010).

Karen has 25 years of experience leading performance composition workshops at numerous art centres and universities in the US, UK and Europe, including extended performance devising workshops. Karen taught part-time on the MA-Advanced Theatre Practice course at Central School of Speech & Drama (London; 2010-13), and led a DIY project at the 2010 Whitstable Biennale entitled *Writing in Public*. Karen is an Honorary Fellow of University College Falmouth (UK); an Honorary Research Fellow at Birkbeck College, University of London; a Visiting Artist at University of Roehampton (London); and an Associate Artist of Chelsea Theatre (London).

Teresa Brayshaw currently works as principal lecturer and head of cultural partnerships in the School of Film, Music and Performing Arts at Leeds Beckett University. She has 25 years experience of working in performance and higher education in the UK and has previously led performance programmes at Manchester Metropolitan University (MA in Contemporary Arts); The University of Hull: Scarborough Campus (BA Theatre Studies); The University of Leeds (MA Performance); De Montfort University, Leicester (BA Theatre).

Teresa has travelled widely and presented workshops and performances, given talks and papers and offered consultancy in a range of international academic and festival contexts. She is a qualified Mentor and Coach (Institute Leadership & Management) and fully certified Feldenkrais Practitioner FG(UK). She co-edited the 20th Century Performance Reader (3rd edition - Routledge 2013) and is currently working on the 21st century edition. Teresa has extensive experience as a consultant and book/journal editor, and has presented many conference papers on diverse performance practices.

Teresa’s recent performance collaborations have included Third Angel (Perec’s The Machine) and Rees & Ash (Beckett’s Not I). Teresa is interested in developing creative environments and practices in which people can learn to fulfil their innate potential and she is working towards establishing a centre for wellbeing, performance development and happiness. teresabrayshaw.com