



Peter Carpenter

Performance Project

Peter Carpenter makes dances under the auspices of the Peter Carpenter Performance Project, as a commissioned artist for professional companies, and as an educator in institutional settings. He has received numerous grants for the creation of new work, including awards from the Chicago Dancemakers Forum Lab Artist Grant (2008), the Illinois Arts Council Choreography Fellowship (1997), the Dance Bridge Space Grant Initiative of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs (2008) and a Columbia College Chicago Faculty Development Grant (2008). He has received commissions for the creation of new work from Lucky Plush Productions (with whom he is an Associate Artist), Mordine and Company Dance Theater (forthcoming in 2009), Same Planet/Different World Productions, Robin Lakes/Roughdance, OutNorth Contemporary Art House in Anchorage, Alaska, the Ackland Art Museum in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and the University of Alaska, Anchorage Department of Theater and Dance. In 2008, his evening-length commission for Lucky Plush Productions, titled *The Sky Hangs Down Too Close*, was recognized by *Newcity* as one of the top five dance performances by a local company, and was the only small Chicago-based company to be recognized in the *Chicago Tribune's* "Best of 2008" end of year review.

Carpenter's interest in cultivating the politics of movement through dance informs his body of work, and he has specifically dedicated a large part of his career to tracking the complex ways in which identity has been shaped in subaltern communities by HIV/AIDS. This specific interest can be seen as early as 1993 in his first professional work *When I Say that I'm Queer Does it Frighten You?*, which adapts a passage of text by David Wojnarowicz into a dark, highly physical duet for two men. A later evening-length creation, *Pop Sadness* (2000) explores the phenomenon of fatigue syndrome and "the loss of the capacity to feel loss" amongst survivors of AIDS. In 2003, Carpenter premiered the critically acclaimed *Bareback Into the Sunset*, which looks at the reemergence of unprotected anal sex amongst communities of gay men while simultaneously interrogating the assumed whiteness, maleness and victimhood in representations of the AIDS patient. *Bareback Into the Sunset* has since been shown in evening-length and excerpted forms in numerous festivals and conferences, and was presented as part of the Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago's 2006-07 season as part of a special Critical Encounters initiative sponsored by the Office of the Provost.

Bareback Into the Sunset marks a recent openness in Carpenter's work to considering how power articulates itself not only in terms of sexuality, but also through markers of gender, race and class. This can be seen in multiple works created since 2003. Referencing *Ophelia*, commissioned by Lucky Plush Productions in 2006 for example, explores the dichotomy of sanity and madness in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as a means to control aberrances from patriarchal norms. Also for Lucky Plush, *The Sky Hangs Down Too Close*, loosely adapted from Bertolt Brecht's *Jungle of Cities*, focuses on the ways in which economic, psychic and spatial realities are inevitably entangled in both personal and societal contexts. This shift to looking at economic structures is also evident in Carpenter's *Proceed Bravely: A Public Service Announcement*, which was created on an ensemble of seventeen first year college students. This work exposed the student cast to the concept of contemporary instances of global slavery via Kevin Bales' book *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* and used the process of coming to understand their own relative positions of privilege as the subject of the dance. Carpenter is currently working on a new evening-length work titled *My Fellow Americans*, which will continue these diverse conceptions of identification while simultaneously renewing his commitment to AIDS-themed choreographies. *My Fellow Americans* will look at the iconic image of Ronald Reagan and challenge his rhetoric from the perspective of the special interest groups that his administration consistently admonished as un-American.

Early company affiliations as an Artistic Associate of Chicago's XSIGHT! Performance Group from 1993-2001 and as Resident Choreographer of the StreetSigns Center for Literature and Performance (Derek Goldman, Artistic Director) from 1992-2001 imbued Carpenter's work with a decidedly theatrical bent. Carpenter created numerous works for XSIGHT's repertory, including *The Shaman Slips* (1993), *Down to the Ground* (1996) and *still a boy, both of us* (1999). He also collaborated with Artistic Director, Brian Jeffery and fellow Artistic Associates Marianne Kim, Julia Rhoads and Holly Rothschild on numerous evening-length and repertory works, including *Cycles of Unveiling* (1997), which received a Ruth Page Award for Outstanding Choreography and Performance. With StreetSigns, Carpenter choreographed numerous highly physical adaptations of literature under Goldman's direction—including *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1996) by James Joyce, *Kaddish for Allen Ginsburg* (1997), and *White People* (1999) by Alan Gurganus. He also worked extensively with the company as it relocated from Chicago to Chapel Hill, North Carolina in 1999, engaging in numerous community-based projects with the current educational director, Lynn Johnson.

Further developing his interest in intersections between theatre and dance, Carpenter also choreographed for numerous Chicago-based theater companies during this time including Roadworks, Steppenwolf Arts Exchange, Baubo Performance Project and National Pastime Theater. He also choreographed the New York premiere of Judith Thompson's *Lion in the Streets* for New York's 29th Street Repertory Company under the direction of Abby Epstein in 1996. The Chicago production of *Lion* (also directed by Epstein in 1993), garnered Carpenter a Joseph Jefferson Citation for outstanding choreography.

Carpenter received his BS from Northwestern University's Theater Department in 1992 and his MFA in choreography from UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures in 2003. While at UCLA, his education was supported by a School of Arts and Architecture Clifton Webb Award, the Gloria Kauffman Award and numerous appointments as a Graduate Teaching Associate. His graduate education was shaped by studies with Michelle Bloom, Dan Froot, Judy Gantz, Susan Foster, Angelia Leung, Victoria Marks, David Roussève, Marta Savigliano, Peter Sellars, and Cheng-Chieh Yu. Carpenter is currently writing his dissertation for a PhD in the Department's Culture and Performance Studies Program. In 2005 he returned to Chicago from Los Angeles to join the faculty of the Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago as Assistant Professor.