

A Duet Without You

Entree

A Duet Without You by Chloé Déchery started as an attempt to reenact a *pas de deux* without a partner. In ballet, a *pas de deux* (literally, steps of two) is a type of duet. It usually consists of an entrée, an adagio, two variations (one for each dancer), and a coda. Here I attempt to describe my experience of the process as a dramaturg, using the structure of a *pas de deux* as a scaffolding.

Adagio

I sit in a studio watching Chloé describe the space and everything in it. A square of white masking tape frames the floor. A ladder stands upstage. She says it was there when she came into the room and instead of moving it she taped around it, so it became part of the set. There are marks on the wall where she traced yesterday's shadow as it moved. Stones from outside. A pile of ash. A potato. On the floor pieces of paper say 'Here' and 'Not Here', 'There' and 'Not There.' She reads a text about ancient civilizations leaving handprints on the walls of caves, they spat paint around their fingers to create negatives of their presence. As she reads I look out of the window at the walls of the building next door. Cracks have been plastered over and they look like handprints. Chloé says that when she came into the theatre she didn't know how to tame the space. I write in my notebook: 'How do you tame space?'

Variation One

I am writing about space and how we use it. I write about how we often work with what is already there when we arrive. We weave the reality of the room into our work. Ladders become our proscenium arches. LX tape marks out our stages. I think about time passing and how we might try to tame time. How we as performers and audiences are marked by the time it takes to tell a story, by the hour or so we spend together in a theatre. And how, as Italo Calvino said in *Quickness*: 'cuntu nun mette tempu' – time takes no time in a story.

Variation Two

Karen Christopher, working with Chloé as a mentor on *A Duet Without You*, once said of her work with Goat Island: 'We are standing here with time and the time it takes to stand here.' Now Chloé is standing here with the time she spent with others. Ten days working with three artists will become whatever she does now. The rehearsal space will be re-traced onto this taped out stage. Two weeks will be distilled into an hour and four people will become one. In that time, all she will have left is the space and what is already in it.

Coda

Chloé Déchery will dance a *pas de deux* tonight with the stories, bodies and voices of her absent collaborators; Pedro Ines, Simone Kenyon and Deborah

Pearson. Like the handprints on the walls of caves, they have left negatives of their presence in the creative process. They haunt this space in the way an object moves or a song is sung, in the way water is poured or a light is switched on. Now, somewhere between a duet and a duel, a summoning and a conducting, Chloe stands here with time and the time it takes to stand here.

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