

DEMO STAGE



DEMO
STAGE

COLLABORATION
DISCOURSE
FEEDBACK
INSPIRATION
INTERACTION

DEMOSTAGE is a temporary space for new ideas. The event brings together art makers for collaboration, sharing, and critical discourse. Presenters show what they've been working on. Audiences ask questions and give feedback. Inspiration was taken from software developers who meet in social settings to 'demo' the programs they are working on. Everyone is always encouraged to stick around and interact further. The first DEMOSTAGE was held in the spring of 2009.



Established in 2003, SECRET THEATRE supports the interdisciplinary projects of Halifax based actor Dustin Harvey and his collaborators. Working with different media and contexts, these projects propose new ways of being together, and advance innovative propositions that celebrate who we are and define our collective aspirations. Each production is about creating meaningful, shared experiences that are thoughtful, intimate, and temporary.

secrettheatre.org


NOVA SCOTIA



(WE) ARE HERE

Presenter: Dustin Harvey

(WE) ARE HERE is a live film created by me, Dustin Harvey (Secret Theatre) and Erika Hennebury with collaboration from Brian Riley. The performance follows a homesick girl on a journey far away from home, separated from her lover with whom communication is falling apart both literally and metaphorically. Using two video cameras, Erika and I create images out of postcards, handwriting and stencils to tell the story of her heartbroken drift through a city. For my demo, I showed some sketches of the design, and talked about the starting ideas. Erika and I were curious about liveness and theatricality; about telling a story through layering sound, video, narration and music; about drifting and homesickness. I answered questions about the low-fi aesthetic, and making images in view of the audience. How we can make a local theme meaningful to global audiences is what we were most interested in exploring.

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WHEN IT RAINS (CUBICLE)

Presenter: Nick Bottomley

I presented workshop designs from 2b theatre company's play WHEN IT RAINS. We were interested in using a single projector as the sole lighting source in order to produce a show that was technically lightweight and tour-able. The resulting aesthetic compelled a narrative that seemed summoned from the projector itself. I demo'd simple motion graphics we'd created: fans and clocks whose speeds and positions were controllable; live rain effects that could increase in intensity; and simple mapping techniques to illuminate sets and create depth. Finally, a puppet that was sound responsive to my voice was demonstrated. I talked briefly about the software and the exciting implications it had for directors and performers interested in embracing the technical challenges of video elements beyond the scrim. Projectors and video are still a polarizing element for theatre creators and I find myself continually pushing for further exploration between people and the illuminated image.

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BUDDIES FOR BUNNIES ADOPTION PROGRAM

Presenter: Michael D. McCormack

BUDDIES FOR BUNNIES is an adoption program which aims to provide and match loving households to mistreated, and abandoned stuffed bunnies who have been rescued from second hand agencies such as the Salvation Army, Value Village, or any place where they have been left without homes or loving families. The entire Buddies For Bunnies process is a curious delivery of a performance-based project with unexpected high expectations attached. The work reflects the character and appropriation of selection, with personified descriptions of each of the 65 plus bunnies that have been collected, altered, hand-stitched, photographed, and compiled in a photo album. Initiated in Guelph, Ontario in 2001, this ongoing project has included a number of 'reunion' events in the past years such as picnics, potato sack races, family photos, facebook albums, ice cream socials, and a variety of events as efforts to reunite or socialize the bunnies with other families.

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RETURN TICKET: HALIFAX-ABADAN-HALIFAX

Presenter: Sarah Moore

RETURN TICKET: HALIFAX-ABADAN-HALIFAX was a semi-autobiographical account of Onelight's Artistic Director, Shahin Sayadi's journey from Halifax to Iran to research and write a new play about his cousin. Thematically, the play explored the notion of home, place and belonging. The play used recorded video, photos, live feed video and on-stage Skype to tell the story. The use of technology highlighted the positive and negative of instantaneous communication, of being close to someone far away and distanced, by technology, from someone nearby. For our demo, we discussed the use of technology in the production. We also touched on the challenges of building an autobiographical story: Shahin was writing and directing a story about himself and his family. He had to cast actors to play himself, his wife, Maggie, and his sister (amongst other characters). The play also included a character based on Maggie and Shahin's daughter, Azat; but we cast her to play herself!

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FOLKLOREMOBILE

Presenters: Dustin Harvey and Robert Plowman

FOLKLOREMOBILE is an event-based audio installation created by me, Dustin Harvey (Secret Theatre) and Robert Plowman with collaboration from Brian Riley and James Foy. Taking cues from simultaneous and synchronized FM transmitters you move from broadcast to broadcast. You pass through song, through story, through one listener's sphere into another. In doing so, you explore a combination of history and memory within which different people's experiences of the present moment unfold. FOLKLOREMOBILE features 6 female narrators, music, and a trophy ceremony—everyone becomes a champion. For my first demo, I shared 3 audio samples, which I broadcasted and animated by moving around the room holding a FM radio. At a second demo a year later, I showed all six FM radios playing audio in a coordinated broadcast. I talked about our curiosity in participatory forms, and spectator shared experiences. The feedback I received was critical in deciding the project's next step.

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MOTION ACTIVATED

Presenter: Veronique MacKenzie

For my demo, I talked about the initial conceptual inspiration behind my project MOTION ACTIVATED. I, as an older dancer, am intrigued by the amount of collected muscle memory in the bodies of accomplished artists; accumulated intention as it were. Being a visual artist as well, I wondered how I could go from the two-dimensional format of video and photographic images, into the three-dimensional live body thereby blending the two art forms into a seamless thread of presentation. In collaboration with composer/projection designer Lukas Pearse and visual artist/ animator Susan Tooke, we showed our research from the Banff Centre for the Arts. Since then, we worked on bridging Susan's animation of my choreography and Lukas' work through video game sensors and multiple software programming environments. Lukas has created a data duet, allowing me to dance with my own projected image and control part of the sound score with my captured image.

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THE DEBACLE

Presenter: Susan Leblanc

THE DEBACLE is a solo theatre performance created by Ann-Marie Kerr (as director and co-writer) and me, Susan Leblanc (as performer and co-writer). The play centers on Margaret. Following an accident on the ice of the local lake, Margaret is hiding from the reality that soon she will be the only one left in her family. She shares her cramped space with a talking frog. We demo'd an excerpt from the show while it was in its very early development. We played with the idea of explaining to the audience what would happen in the show, instead of doing it, as a narrative form. We found this a compelling form of solo performance. In the end, after more exploration, the show became a more voyeuristic experience for the audience — one where they looked in on this woman in distress while she remained unaware of their presence.

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SCOPOPHILIA: INTO THE EYE OF THE SUN

Presenter: Elizabeth Anne McCarthy

This one-woman theatre work created by me, Elizabeth Anne McCarthy (writer and performer) and Christopher Little (director) opens in the atmosphere of a life-drawing studio. We follow Marina, the model, as she shares life study theory, memories, and stories of her idol, the famous dancer Mata Hari. The non-linear narrative soon takes the audience on a journey that balances between Marina's struggle for sanity and the historic rise and spectacular fall of the woman who was Mata Hari. My demo presented a scene as Marina, as she contemplates nudity versus exhibitionism. Through Scopophilia I examine ideas of female sexual power versus sexual objectification, violence and love, beauty and lies, and the woman-as-anti-heroine.

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DEPARTURE

Presenter: Jacinte Armstrong

DEPARTURE combines dance, live projection, and sound created by me, Jacinte Armstrong, and Dustin Harvey (Secret Theatre), with music by Jenn Grant. Based on one week that I spent in-studio with a Russian ballerina, DEPARTURE takes real details from her life and from the process, and rearranges them into a new fiction. For the demo, I showed a single projection where my hand is shown writing a "Russian folktale" in which Anastasia grows up alone after her royal family is killed. I danced a series of gestures in front of the projection. Layering of words and gestures create a sense of connection and meaning for the audience through their own associations. In creating this piece, we were interested in layering disparate elements in a way that would combine to tell a single story. We were seeking to activate the audience's memories, senses, and imaginations through the aural, visual, and spatial experience.

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DOMESTIC TRAIN WRECK

Presenter: Richie Wilcox

DOMESTIC TRAIN WRECK is a participatory performance/cooking show/confessional created by me, Richie Wilcox (Angels & Heroes Theatre), Aaron Collier and Melanie Bennett. The autobiographical piece uses heirlooms, childhood memories and TV culture to explore the role of the housewife. I encouraged Melanie to delve into stories of her grandmother, her mother and herself. We chose to counterbalance the tone of guilt that comes from these tales with interactive game show segments and audience reading romance novels aloud. Aaron, our game show host, also performs a live improvised sound design and projections. For my demo, I showed a film of Melanie sexually abusing her kitchen mixer as she makes cookies as I read a story about a housewife and her obsession with romance novels. The piece contemplates the roles that we are all meant to fit into and the beauty that comes from failing to live up to those expectations.

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OF MEN AND MONEY AND ME

Presenter: Clare Waque

Demostage was a great opportunity to start writing a play that has been haunting me for a while. The experience of running a performing arts venue in the North End of Halifax has develop many of my skills, allowing my idealism to survive the radiative glow of capitalism's waning noon day, and the coming ecological fall out, but the liabilities are high. This piece follows the development, pitch, and payout of instituting insurance against the threat of global warming. The challenge of presenting a work still in development inspired a new, character based articulation of the original project, one based in my day to-day activities and ethical dilemmas. In the format of a PowerPoint presentation I explain my intimate experiences, desperate struggle towards adulthood, and the economic viability of saving the world.

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PHONE HOME

Presenter: Sarah Moore

PHONE HOME is a one-to-one performance between myself (Sarah Moore) and a stranger. It takes place over a 25-minute telephone conversation. When we call home we put ourselves somewhere where we are not, if only for the duration of the call. I am curious about finding those permutations of home spaces and landscapes in the places we choose to inhabit. In phone home, the participant draws the ground plan of their childhood bedroom on top of a map of their current location. As we walk and share memories of our early spaces, they locate elements of their room in the landscape around them. For example, the view of a passing train is seen in an alley or a pile of Lego sits under a stop sign. My demo was a video of animated sketches accompanied by my voice put through a telephone line effect explaining the piece's concept.

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