

Artist Statement / Manifesto

From the moment a playwright records the first words of their play, those unable to understand the language in which the play is written are immediately alienated. How can we create theatre that is accessible to all audiences when the source material for the “traditional” play is a text that inherently inhibits certain audience members from engaging with the performance due to the language barrier? How could I feel satisfied inviting my parents to a play, people who are hardly proficient in English, knowing they won’t have the same understanding and engagement with the performance as those around them? Thus, I seek a more universal language of performance: the language of gestures and movement, of light and shadows, and of human emotions. That which interests me lies beyond the text of the play, but rather in elements that are more visceral and intuitive, common to all peoples and cultures. The perceivable yet intangible medium of light compels me. Light encompasses so much of our lives, affecting our every waking moment, that it feels almost surreal that we can control and manipulate light as a medium. I wish to capture its transient and ephemeral nature.

There is an electric quality about the intimacy of a performance, the tension and emotional connection, and the transfer that a small performance space fosters. I want to push the edge of where the performance ends and the audience begins, immersing the audience in the experience, the story, and the lives of the characters. At the same time, the audience is made aware that they are part of the theatrical performance; they see themselves, the people around them, and the performer. It contrasts the performer’s dynamism and movement with the audience’s stillness and silence, drawing them in and out of the performance as their spirits are taken on a journey with the performer while their bodies remain in the same space. I push back against the idea of portraying an effortless performance; there is beauty in seeing the effort and strain that goes into each performance, and there is power in hearing the labored breaths of the performers, knowing that they are pushing the limits of the human body.

I want to create work on a human scale that can be reproduced anywhere. There is beauty in simplicity and the human body, unobtrusive and natural. My work resonates with music emotionally and spiritually, both literally and figuratively, in an interpretive dance, playing with impulses in how my body wants to move with the tone, rhythm, meter, and soul of the music. The human body is at once both strong and weak, holding power while being graceful. The spontaneity that emerges brings forth another form of energy that is free and exciting, enhancing the liveness of the performance. So much of design feels so mechanical, so structured, that it is difficult to channel impulses into a material form. The movements of the human body are most deeply and directly connected to human impulses, and I seek to design in the same way. How do I create impulsively and spontaneously while interfacing with a structured system to manifest my impulses?

I seek to create ephemeral performance, existing only in that specific moment and time, not only because no two performances can be the same, but because it is spontaneous, it is impulsive, and it is transient, just as our lives. The only record of the performance should be the impact and connections it has made with the audience. These impacts and connections will go

on to outlive the performance. My love for dance, movement, music, and lighting is all encompassed within this emotional, dynamic performance.

I aspire to be a theatre and performance artist of new works and contemporary dance, pushing the boundaries of theatre and dance while simultaneously telling stories that tackle the pertinent issues of today. I want to tell human stories, stories about humans, to humans, and from humans. Every day, I fear that we are losing more and more of our humanity; we need to tell stories that remind us of human connection, of empathy, of what it means to be human. I believe that the most potent way to address and speak on the issues that plague our status quo is through the language and the voices of artists today, those who are living, writing, and creating within our contemporary context. I seek to tell these stories through the universal language of light, movement, and human emotions.

Yujie Alex Yang