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Embodying Mrs. Wrights: The Dramaturgy of Embodiment as Praxis

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**EMBODYING *MRS. WRIGHTS*:
THE DRAMATURGY OF EMBODIMENT AS PRAXIS**

by

Jenni Reinke

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in Dance

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

December 2018

ABSTRACT

EMBODYING *MRS. WRIGHTS*: THE DRAMATURGY OF EMBODIMENT AS PRAXIS

by

Jenni Reinke

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018
Under the Supervision of Professor Simone Ferro

Cartesian mind-body dualism undergirds much of modern Western culture, determining its ontological and epistemological values. Peeling away the hegemony of cognition, this thesis illustrates embodiment as a complementary way of knowing. It proposes the dramaturgy of embodiment as an emancipatory framework for interdisciplinary choreographic and ethnographic praxis. As method, embodied performance uses the body as the primary site for making and dissemination of information, asserting the validity of subjective epistemologies.

Detailing the practical and academic exploration of an embodied dramaturgical process, this thesis analyzes the author's creation and performance of *Mrs. Wrights*, an evening-length solo dance theatre production. Inspired by the five women closest to American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the show blends embodiment and text to display lived experiences and convey historical stories. Covering a continuum from the phenomenal to the semiotic, the show's form functions as an analogue to its content. Embodiment reflects the ephemerality of the women's domestic lived experiences, while text mirrors the relatively permanent record of Wright's architectural legacy. Confronting a sexist ontology of womanness, *Mrs. Wrights* invites audiences to consider cultural amnesia – collective forgetting on the basis of social power structures.

Referring to ethnographic methods – in particular, (historical) performance and sensory ethnography – this thesis demonstrates the epistemological value of embodied performance to excavate the experiences of underrepresented subjects. Much like the structure of the show, it promotes a dialectic between text and body by examining legibility within embodied performance and embodiment as a catalyst for discourse. In this way, *Mrs. Wrights* serves as a model for an expansive interdisciplinary exchange between dance, performance and the social sciences. As case study, it reveals the potential for dance and performer training to deepen ethnographers’ sense of embodiment, and for ethnographic theory to augment dance and performance-makers’ articulation of embodiment as method.

KEY WORDS: Anthropology, Architecture, Avant-garde, Choreography, Dance studies, Dramaturgy, Embodiment, Epistemology, Ethnography, Existentialism, Feminism, Gender studies, History, Interdisciplinary, Performance ethnography, Performance studies, Phenomenology, Philosophy, Postmodernism, Sensory ethnography, Somatics, Theatre studies, Frank Lloyd Wright

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Ordinarily, I am happy to let go of a show – eager to move on to a new creative project, working in the studio rather than on the stage – but *Mrs. Wrights* is quite special to me. I have lived with these colorful and incredible women for more than a year now – through conceptual and embodied research, performing them into the present from the past (collectively, their lives spanning more than 100 years – 1869-1985). If nothing else, this project has taught me that a “solo show” is a myth – both Frank Lloyd Wright’s “self-made” image, and my own work. It is with deep gratitude that I acknowledge the following people who helped bring my creative work and intellectual inquiry to fruition.

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Introduction.
Embodying *Mrs. Wrights*

Past and Presence

What is past is not dead. It is not even past. We cut ourselves off from it; we pretend to be strangers. – Christa Wolf, *Patterns of Childhood*

After performing *Mrs. Wrights* at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) for my thesis presentation, I performed the same show at the Hillside Theater at Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin Home and Architecture School in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Christopher Locke, a recent Master of Architecture degree graduate of the School of Architecture at Taliesin, very enthusiastically congratulated me afterward. Here is a paraphrase of what he said: "Every Taliesin student should see this. Nobody talks about these things. It's like we are living with ghosts. Nobody talks about the fire. It was 105 years ago! This is the first time these topics publicly have been breached on this land" (Personal Conversation). Through my presence in performance, I had resurrected a forgotten past in the present.

Silence about the women closest to Frank Lloyd Wright – whether by choice or ignorance – also had been my experience. As a young apprentice at The Spice House in Wauwatosa owned by William Penzey, Sr. and Ruth Penzey, I became acquainted with Wright because William admired his work and thought. Spice Workers regularly read the philosophical writings of G. I. Gurdjieff, spiritual teacher to Olgivanna, Wright's third wife. Yet I never had heard of her – nor of the other women for that matter.

On a tour of Taliesin in October 2017, tour guide Margaret Ingraham did not say much about the women unless I raised the question. In the coming years, I was told, Taliesin Preservation will restore the interior design of the home and studio to its condition before

Olgivanna came into the picture – eliminating, for example, blighted swaths of gold paint no doubt inspired by her Orthodox Christian upbringing in Montenegro.

It was from this void – censure, absence, erasure – that *Mrs. Wrights* was born.

Embodying *Mrs. Wrights*

This thesis details the practical and academic exploration of an embodied dramaturgical process to create and perform *Mrs. Wrights*, an evening-length solo dance theatre production that premiered on May 5, 2018 at University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Inspired by the five women closest to American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, the show blends embodiment and text to display lived experiences and convey historical stories. Covering a continuum from the phenomenal to the semiotic, the show's form functions as an analogue to its content. Assembled from historical documents, the text mirrors the permanent record of Wright's architectural legacy. In contrast, the ephemerality of embodiment reflects the transience of the women's lived experiences. The concreteness of text anchors the ineffability of embodiment, while the mobility of the latter disrupts the stability of the former. This dichotomy becomes a larger metaphor for male and female historical representation, supporting the show's larger agenda to address cultural amnesia – collective forgetting on the basis of social power structures – by considering who and what makes history.

Moving from historical content to contemporary dance theatre, the creation of *Mrs. Wrights* enacts a fundamental tension between experience and representation in performance. The thesis begins by contextualizing that tension within epistemic paradigms of the body to reveal a critical shift in the early twentieth century. First is the philosophical transition from mind-body dualism to bodymind integration through existential phenomenology. Second is the

turn away from dramatic theatre/dance towards contemporary “embodied performance,” which traces its roots to the early twentieth century avant-garde movement. The relationship between these parallel cultural shifts is interwoven throughout.

Dramaturgy of Embodiment

Looking to *Mrs. Wrights* as a case study in embodied performance, I describe a dialectic between cognition and embodiment, beginning with my considerations for conceptual and movement research. Genealogizing “embodiment,” I arrive at its contemporary usage in order to define my research paradigm. Next, a genealogy of “dramaturgy” demonstrates its semantic evolution from dramatic to postdramatic performance. Dramaturgical considerations for *Mrs. Wrights* follow, including a discussion of the project’s *de facto* dramaturgs – collaborator and Quasimondo Physical Theatre Producing Artistic Director Brian Rott, and thesis committee members Professor Simone Ferro (Committee Chair), Assistant Professor Maria Gillespie and Lecturer Dan Schuchart.

Much like the structure of the show itself, this thesis proposes a conversation between the body and text by examining legibility within embodied performance and embodiment as a catalyst for discourse. It suggests that contemporary choreography might productively be framed as the dramaturgy of embodiment. Going outside the proverbial (black) box, *Mrs. Wrights* interacts with ethnographic research – in particular, (historical) performance and sensory ethnography – demonstrating the epistemological value of embodiment to excavate the experiences of underrepresented historical subjects.

The thesis concludes with a final project analysis of *Mrs. Wrights*. Based on a tour to five venues from June through September 2018, I examine the show’s development since its

premiere. Referring to committee, peer and audience feedback, as well as logistical realities, I discuss plans for continuing to refine and tour the show. In light of the theoretical lens of embodiment as a dramaturgical paradigm for contemporary performance, I consider alternative dramaturgical choices.

Chapter Overview

Tracing cultural paradigms of the body from antiquity to the present day, in Chapter One: Epistemic Paradigms of the Body, I contextualize the performative tension between representation and experience in order to lay the conceptual groundwork for later defining “embodiment” in Chapter Two. I identify existential phenomenology as a pivotal point in the paradigm shift from mind-body dualism to bodymind integration. I then related this to analogous ruptures within dance, theatre, and performance.

“Embodied performance,” a form that investigates the phenomenal body and semiotic body through bodymind integration, emerges as my primary theoretical lens. I describe it as inclusive of twentieth-century dance and theatre forms that have been variously labeled – physical theatre, dance theatre (from the German *tanztheater*), postdramatic theatre, postmodern dance, somatics, performance art, corporeal mime, clowning, and others – and acknowledge the influence of non-Western forms and practices. I locate embodied performance within the lineage of existential phenomenology and recognize its interdisciplinary artistic, societal, cross-cultural, and scientific constitution.

As method, embodied performance uses the body as the primary site for making and dissemination of information, asserting the validity of subjective epistemologies. As methodology, embodied performance subverts the primacy of text and codified physical

vocabularies, dismantling hierarchies of knowledge, equalizing the materials of performance, and opening up access to underrepresented subjects.

Recontextualizing the body in history, Chapter Two: Embodiment genealogizes the word “embodiment” in order to arrive at its contemporary usage and to describe my research method. Only in the twentieth century does the definition of “embodiment” evolve to imply a critique of systems of representation, when in the 1990s anthropologist Thomas Csordas redefined it as, “the existential ground of culture and self,” in contrast to previous anthropological treatments of the body “as either empirical thing or analytic theme” (Fischer-Lichte 33; Csordas “Introduction...” 6). Applied to performance, Csordas’ redefinition of “embodiment” describes a dialectic that mediates the phenomenal body and semiotic body.

Likewise, when I use the word “embodiment,” I am relying on a revised definition with roots in twentieth century philosophy, social sciences, and performance theory – particularly phenomenology, the performative turn, and postdramatic performance, an outgrowth of the avant-garde movement. I articulate “embodiment” as such in order to resist a dualist worldview and evade Enlightenment-era connotations. Throughout my research, I employ the compound, “bodymind” in order to express the discursive relationship between body and mind.

Using *Mrs. Wrights* as a case study for embodied performance, I detail my artistic process. (Later, in Chapter Four, I look to *Mrs. Wrights* as a case study for ethnography.) After an overview of the show’s historical context, I discuss conceptual and embodied research methods, one character at a time. Where appropriate, I apply Effort Factor categories from Laban Movement Analysis to support my observations. Recognizing my inherent subjectivity, I reflect on the methods, assumptions, cognitive and bodily experiences that arose within my process to generate my particular interpretation, organization, and performance of knowledge.

Pairing my graduate training in postmodern dance and somatics with prior professional experience in physical theatre, I engaged a range of methods along the semiotic-phenomenal continuum, including text, voice, mime, clowning, object manipulation, embodiment, movement improvisation, and dance composition. These coalesced in psychophysical conversation between historical information conveyed through text; sensory experiences gathered from artifacts, images and sounds; and fully embodied explorations. In contrast to mind-body dualism, I maintain that my process demonstrates embodiment as an epistemologically legitimate way of knowing.

Deepening my case study, Chapter Three: Dramaturgy applies the theoretical framework of dramaturgy to *Mrs. Wrights*. As in Chapter Two, I begin with a genealogy, demonstrating dramaturgy's semantic evolution from dramatic to postdramatic performance. In its literal and historic sense, "dramaturgy" is equated with the structure of a work, established by the playscript and enacted through the action on stage. Dramaturgs in the traditional theatre "attend to" dramaturgy – they observe, contemplate, discuss, and write about it (Profeta 3-4). Moving between receptivity and activity, the dramaturg – commonly considered "the work's first audience" – metaphorically reads as well as writes a work (Profeta 88).

Fundamentally, dramaturgy has to do with the legibility of a given work. I look to the physicality of the Proto-Indo-European root of "legibility," "leg-" – meaning, "to collect, gather" – in order to connect dramatic and embodied dramaturgy. Instead of "reading" text-based language, the bodymind is an archive that collects or gathers sensory and kinesthetic impressions within rehearsal and performance. In the studio, performers, choreographers and dramaturgs co-create work through the transmission of embodied knowledge – sensation, kinesthesia, weight,

space, and tempo – and then share it with audiences. It is precisely the tangible sensibility of movement which makes possible its legibility.

Using *Mrs. Wrights* as a case study for dramaturgy within embodied performance, I discuss the role of the audience in “reading” a work. Relatively recent scientific discoveries, kinesthetic empathy and mirror neurons help to explain an audience’s relationship to body-based works. In decentering text, embodied performance liberates audiences to encounter the multivalent and discover new forms and modes of perception. I demonstrate this through my interactions with two different audience groups – multidisciplinary artists at The Field Milwaukee and the Frank Lloyd Wright aficionados of Wright in Wisconsin. I then apply dramaturgical analysis to show how form and content, embodiment and text, coalesce in new ways of perceiving and making meaning.

More fundamental than the tension between text and embodiment, performance studies scholar André Lepecki identifies the tension between “knowing and owning” as central to dramaturgy (“Errancy as Work...” 52). Taking the position of owner, I discuss my work with the project’s four *de facto* dramaturgs. I reveal how they multifariously destabilized my knowledge according to their different values and lineages, literally and figuratively setting both my bodymind and the work in motion.

Finally, I extend points of convergence between phenomenology and contemporary dramaturgy to offer an emancipatory framework for choreography. Since the 1960s, choreographic practice has broadened as a result of collaborative authorship, interdisciplinarity, world dance practices, improvisation, postmodern dance, and somatics. Positioning choreography as the dramaturgy of embodiment generalizes the development of contemporary choreographic practice and pedagogy. Rather than representing conceptual information or replicating technical

virtuosity, its legibility lies in displaying the bodymind, which audiences “collect” and “gather” through intersubjective experiencing. I then apply this choreographic paradigm to my creation and performance of *Mrs. Wrights*.

Situated within the lineages of both dance and theatre, my performative agenda for *Mrs. Wrights* most closely aligns with the visions of *tanztheater*, postdramatic theatre and postmodern dance. Because of its hybridity, however, the work can be multifariously situated. In terms of narrative content, the show has similarities to the literary genre of historical fiction and the theatrical genre of history play. Although I set out to create an artistic work, my process also bears striking resemblance to ethnographic research within the social sciences, particularly anthropology. In Chapter Four: Ethnography, I examine the methodological intersection of embodied performance and ethnography, focusing on historical performance and sensory ethnography.

Cultural amnesia has foregrounded certain historical figures such as Wright, while all but erasing others, such as the women. Historical performance and sensory ethnography propose alternative methods for excavating historical information in the face of limited historical documentation. I examine ethnography as a productive lens through which to view *Mrs. Wrights*, and assert that my artistic process in embodied performance offers tools for ethnographic research.

Confronting a sexist ontology of womanness, my performance invites audiences to consider their role in cultural forgetting and remembering. My body becomes a living archive that resists established historical canons, interrogates historical authorship, projects marginalized voices and stories, and destabilizes notions of history as terminal, fixed and unchanging. I propose that dance training and somatic practices are uniquely suited to prepare ethnographic

researchers for being embodied. They increase sensory and kinesthetic awareness and attune the bodymind to movement within an environment through awareness of body, effort, space, and time. Moreover, dance and theatre performance explores the dramaturgical relationship between performer and audience.

Circling back to *Mrs. Wrights* as an artistic artifact, in Chapter Five: Final Analysis of *Mrs. Wrights*, I discuss the work's ongoing development since its premiere. From June 2018 through September 2018, I toured the show to five different venues, including two Wright buildings. I discuss revisions I made based on dramaturgical feedback and constraints posed by the venues. I also provide audience responses and critical reviews.

I continue on to evaluate *Mrs. Wrights* based on the theoretical lens of embodiment as a dramaturgical and choreographic paradigm for contemporary performance. Of primary importance is the legibility of the show's dramaturgical through-line, which I believe rests on both semiosis and phenomenology – both representation and experience. In light of my theoretical lens, I explore a desire to shift my dramaturgical priorities towards the body and away from representation, perhaps in future iterations of *Mrs. Wrights*, and certainly in new projects I might pursue. I additionally express my desire to use embodiment as a paradigm for choreography, performer pedagogy and personal physical practice. As a performing artist, this framework clarifies my values, focuses my long-term vision, and articulates my brand as I consider future work. As an academic and activist, embodiment opens up new possibilities for interdisciplinary collaborations, research, and activism.

Finally, I assert my commitment to performing and touring *Mrs. Wrights* much as the work stands. I allude to the shift from artistic to administrative labor that will support the development of my work in this way. I also discuss changes that may need to take place to

accommodate different venues, as well as my aging body. Just as performance allows for the re-presentation and re-membering of history, my artistic “artifact” is continually made and remade each time it is staged and received by new audiences.

Conclusion

I conclude with a reflection on embodied performance as method and methodology within my case study of *Mrs. Wrights*. I discuss the value of addressing the evasiveness of “embodiment” as a methodological framework. I then consider the legibility of the dramaturgical through-line in *Mrs. Wrights*. Moving beyond the work itself, I comment on how it serves as a model for an expansive exchange between dance, performance and the social sciences via ethnography. Where appropriate, I draw attention to areas that could be supported by further research and discussion. Finally, I offer the dramaturgy of embodiment as an emancipatory framework for contemporary choreographic, performance, and ethnographic praxis.

Chapter One. Epistemic Paradigms of the Body

1.1. From Mind-Body Dualism to Bodymind Integration

Western philosophical paradigms of the body from antiquity to the present day contextualize my discussion of the performative tension between representation and experience. In this section, I trace the pivotal departure from mind-body dualism to bodymind¹ integration brought about by existential phenomenology. In so doing, a number of key terms and concepts emerge. They help to define what I mean by “embodiment” with contemporary performance and support my analysis of embodiment in *Mrs. Wrights*.

Classical Greek philosopher Plato (born 428 BC) generally is attributed as the initiator of a kind of dualism between body and thinking that continues on in different ways through ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC), French philosopher René Descartes (1596-1650), and others, up until German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) begins to dismantle this construct. In the dialogue *Phaedo*, Plato formulates his famous Theory of Forms as distinct and immaterial substances of which the objects and other phenomena that we perceive are only shadows (93-154). The forms are ideal universals existing out of space and time. Both non-physical and non-mental, they are *a priori* (prior to) human experience. Although we cannot access them, they are fundamental to our ability to understand the world.

Plato’s student Aristotle argues against the primacy of forms, believing instead that form and matter co-exist. According to philosophy scholar Thomas Ainsworth, “This doctrine has been dubbed ‘hylomorphism,’ a portmanteau of the Greek words for matter (*hylê*) and form (*eidos or morphê*)” (par. 1). In *De Anima*, Aristotle treats the body and soul as a special case of

¹ I have coined and use throughout this paper the compound word, “bodymind” to denote the dialectical interdependence and unity of the human body and mind, in opposition to the subject-object split proposed by mind-body dualism.

matter and form. He writes, “That is why we can wholly dismiss as unnecessary the question whether the soul and the body are one: It is as meaningless as to ask whether the wax and the shape given to it by the stamp are one, or generally the matter of a thing and that of which it is the matter” (book 2, chapter 1, par. 5). Although matter and form are interdependent, they nonetheless remain separate. Likewise for the body and soul, he contends,

the body cannot be soul; the body is the subject or matter, not what is attributed to it.

Hence the soul must be a substance in the sense of the form of a natural body having life potentially within it. But substance is actuality, and thus soul is the actuality of a body as above characterized. (*De Anima*, book 2, chapter 1, par. 4)

For Plato, matter is an imperfect representation of form, but for Aristotle the two interact in a causal relationship. Although different, both philosophers advance a dualistic worldview.

It is not difficult to find analogy in the Christian Doctrine of Incarnation, which rests on a mind-body dichotomy. According to *Merriam-Webster*, the first known use of “incarnation” occurred in the fourteenth century and meant, “the embodiment of a deity or spirit in some earthly form” (“Incarnation”). Incarnation is the central Christian doctrine that God became flesh, assumed a human nature and became a man in the form of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and the second person of the Trinity (*Encyclopedia Britannica*, “Incarnation”). Defying dualistic logic, Jesus is both fully divine and fully human. Parallels to my research become explicit in the Gospel of John, which indicates, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” (*King James Bible Online*, John 1.1, 1.14). In this passage, there is a clear distinction between mind (Word/God) and body (flesh). Embodiment is the process by which the former is transformed into and

signified by the latter. From Word to flesh, text to body, a productive tension between mind and body has permeated Western culture since antiquity.

Modern versions of dualism have their origin in Descartes' *Meditations*. Philosophy scholar Daniela Vallega-Neu summarizes, "At the beginning of modern philosophy the question of the body shifts away from its connection with the soul and comes to stand in an opposition to thought, while the question of the soul is replaced by the exploration of human consciousness" (22). This is apparent in Descartes' "Second Meditation" when he questions Aristotelian attributes of the soul - nutrition, locomotion, sense perception, and rational thought. Searching for an Archimedean point from which to know truth, Descartes assigns the first three attributes to the body, which results in their opposition to thought. Descartes reasons that since the body can deceive and misinform, its existence and all sensory information must be doubted. Even in doubting, however, thought exists. It is thus that Descartes advances his famous *cogito* argument: "*I think, therefore I am*" ("Discourse..." Part Four, par. 32, p. 18). He proclaims, "At last I have discovered it - thought; this alone is inseparable from me. I am, I exist - that is certain...I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind, or intelligence, or intellect, or reason" ("Meditations..." Second Meditation, par. 27, p. 17). For Descartes, then, mind and body are irreconcilably other, and mind is superior to body.

There is an important distinction between ancient and modern dualism. Dance scholar and somatic practitioner Sondra Horton Fraleigh writes, "Even though soul and body are empirically distinguished throughout the ancient tradition, the 'original togetherness' of body and soul is, nevertheless, an empirical fact for Plato and Aristotle. Modern (metaphysical) dualism precludes this unity" (10). She goes beyond philosophy to note that part of the problem also lies in language. She writes, "The English language has only one word for body, while other

languages express the body's varying levels of reality with different words" (10). For example, Fraleigh indicates, the German *Körper* refers to a physical object, while *Leib* denotes a body and its lived experience; the German *Erkenntnis* names the experience of an object, while *Erlebnis* indicates bodily experience. Similarly, the French language makes a distinction between *expérience* – experience of a detached nature – and *vécu* – lived experience (10).

Considered the father of modern Western philosophy, Descartes laid the foundation for seventeenth century continental rationalism and established a basis for modernity, which spanned the nineteenth century. His sublimation of soul by consciousness and opposition of body to thought effectively exiles the living body through the modern period. Bodily experience – feelings, sense perception, motion – is understood through consciousness and translated by thought, which is immaterial. The activity of the lived body is only verifiable through objective scientific (quantitative) measurement. As such, according to Vallega-Neu, the lived body (*Leib*) and lived experience (*vécu*) are “exiled” from the world (22). The only way to understand the body within the modern paradigm is to understand it as a physical object (*Körper*).

In the nineteenth century, Nietzsche goes beyond Cartesian dualism in order to return the body to the world. In fact, according to Fraleigh, his philosophical poetry exhibiting “Dionysian passion about being body, doing, risking, and creating” influences early modern dance through Isadora Duncan and Doris Humphrey, and postmodern dance through Kenneth King (xxxix). But it isn't enough for Nietzsche simply to reverse dualism by valorizing body over mind. He writes, “The true world – we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one” (486). Demoting reason as the locus of truth, Nietzsche does not merely replace it with sensibility but endeavors to overcome the metaphysical opposition between the two (Vallega-Neu 22). In so doing, Nietzsche paves the

way for existentialist and phenomenological thought, both of which influence the meaning of “embodiment” as it is used in contemporary discourse on performance, dance and theatre.

Danish Christian philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) is considered the founder of existentialism, although the label is not utilized until nearly a century later, when French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) adopted the term coined in the 1940s by his compatriot, Catholic philosopher Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973). German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is regarded as the founder of phenomenology. Marked variations exist within the different iterations of existentialism and phenomenology expounded by these founders and those who came after them. Kierkegaard is not a phenomenologist, and Husserl is not an existentialist, but the two schools of thought coalesce in German philosopher Martin Heidegger’s (1889-1976) book, *Being and Time*, published in 1927. According to Fraleigh, “Existential phenomenology fuses a theory of conduct (existentialism) with a theory of knowledge and meaning (phenomenology)” (3). After Heidegger, and in addition to several contemporaries, Sartre and French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) developed Heidegger’s existential phenomenology each in their own way.

The term phenomenology first was used in 1797 by German physicist Heinrich Lambert (1728-1777) and is coined from the Greek *phainomenon* and *-logia* (Harper, “phenomenology (n.)”). The word wasn’t widely adopted, however, until after 1901, when Husserl introduced it as his method of studying consciousness in the second volume of his book, *Logical Investigations*. According to American philosopher William Barrett,

For Husserl, phenomenology was a discipline that attempts to describe what is given to us in experience without obscuring preconceptions or hypothetical speculations; his motto was, ‘to the things themselves’...Instead of making intellectual speculations about

the whole of reality, philosophy must turn, Husserl declared, to a pure description of what is. (213)

With this, Husserl proposes a middle way between the deadlocked positions of late nineteenth century realist and idealist schools of philosophy. Rather than making intellectual speculations about the nature of reality – affirming the independent existence of the object, like the realists, or the priority of the subject, like the idealists – phenomenology aims at describing reality in light of experience (Barrett 213-214). This perspective aligns with the values of postmodern performance, where text, code and form are decentralized and deconstructed in order to prioritize pre-reflective experiences that liberate creators and spectators from the constraints of representation and interpretation. Further implications for dance and physical theatre emerge from Husserl's differentiation between *Leib* (lived body) and *Körper* (body as a physical object), which remains an important distinction in phenomenological thought.

Heidegger accepted Husserl's general definition of phenomenology but rejected his neo-Cartesian transcendental idealist method – *epoché* – which decontextualizes objects of perception and the act of perceiving by assuming, like Plato and modernists such as German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), *a priori* conditions of knowledge (Smith, “Phenomenology,” “4. The Histories and Varieties...”). Philosophy scholars David Stewart and Algis Mickunas compare Husserl's phenomenology with the existential brand Heidegger developed from his. They write, “Whereas Husserl saw the task of transcendental phenomenology to be that of describing the lived-world from the viewpoint of a detached observer, existential phenomenology insists that the observer cannot separate himself from the world” (64). Heidegger's interest in etymology, especially in Greek words, led him to the Greek

definition for the modern European usage of the word “phenomenon” – ‘that which reveals itself.’ Barrett summarizes:

Phenomenology therefore means for Heidegger the attempt to let the thing speak for itself. It will reveal itself to us, he says, only if we do not attempt to coerce it into one of our read-made conceptual strait-jackets...we do not know the object by conquering and subduing it but rather by letting it be what it is and, in letting it be, allowing it to reveal itself as what it is. (214)

Heidegger thus birthed existential phenomenology, which others further developed. Most notable among them are Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, who were concerned with explaining “bodily being” and “perception” (Fraleigh 3). Merleau-Ponty went farthest in elaborating a phenomenology of the body (Vallega-Neu 41).

It is important to note that phenomenology has a basis in non-Western thought. According to Smith, “phenomenology has been practiced, with or without the name, for many centuries. When Hindu and Buddhist philosophers reflected on states of consciousness achieved in a variety of meditative states, they were practicing phenomenology” (“Phenomenology,” “4. The Histories and Varieties...”). Husserl had read translations of Theravada Buddhist texts and had written about Buddhism. Heidegger had read translations of Zen Buddhist and Daoist texts. They recognized similarities between their own methods and those of Buddhist practitioners (F. Hanna 366-367; Parkes 6-7). Others have compared Sartre’s conception of the self as nothingness to Buddhist concepts of *śūnyatā* (emptiness) and *anātman* (not-self) (Laycock 118). Merleau-Ponty’s notion of the “lifeworld” recognizes the interdependence of self, body and world in the same way that Buddhism unites body and mind (*shēnxīn*) (Park and Kopf 4-5).

With its revolutionary ideas about the body, phenomenology informs embodiment within contemporary dance and performance. By acknowledging the lived body (*Leib*), it insists that the body cannot be reduced to an object. At the same time, phenomenology paradoxically maintains the reality of both the body-as-object and body-as-subject, which mutually help to define one another. Fraleigh writes, “The body-object can be known, in the sense that the body itself can become the object of our attention, but the body-subject can only be lived” (15). This is an extrapolation of Sartre’s observation that “the body is lived and not known” (Sartre 300). The body-object exists through reflective awareness of and thinking about the body with an objective attitude, while the body-subject is experienced pre-reflectively, in the immediacy of the present moment.

Offering vivid descriptions, Fraleigh eloquently describes shifts of body consciousness between object and subject. She writes,

When I focus on my body – when I look at my hand and consider it, for instance – it becomes an object of my attention. When I do, my pre-reflective (before-noticing) stream of being is interrupted. Thus objectivity – the solid otherness of myself, things, and other people – can and do appear to me; the body so regarded and reflected upon may be termed body-object. (14)

Science approaches the body through the lens of body-object. The body-object occurs in dance or theatrical training and performance, for example, in comparing oneself to others, looking at oneself in a mirror, struggling with an injury or to execute an action, and when overcome with performance anxiety. At the same time, Fraleigh describes how dance facilitates the experience of body-subject, writing, “Dance allows us to speak, and to listen, out of a pre-reflective

wholistic state” (15). The mindfulness of body and breath that occurs in meditation is another instance of experiencing body-subject.

It is important to note, as Fraleigh does, that body-object and body-subject are not correlates of mind and body (14). Nor are they correlates of a material body and the transcendence thereof. Rather, the substance of each category is the particular relationship between mind and body that determines either objective or subjective consciousness. This introduces a historical shift in epistemology, which under the Cartesian model correlated the subject – mind – with the knower, and the object – body – with the known. Within this dualistic system, the subject could have knowledge of the object, but not of itself. The phenomenological interrelationship between body-object and body-subject, however, allows for knowledge to be both objectively and subjectively constituted. Philosopher Maxine Sheets-Johnstone writes, “we might say that the phenomenologist is concerned with ways of being-in-the-world, that is, with experience, prior to any theoretical or objectivating processing of the experience” (133). Phenomenology grants empirical validity to bodily first-person experience, such as dancing, gesturing, invoking, and performing.

Neither separate as the dualists insist, nor indistinguishable from one another, Merleau-Ponty describes body and soul as interdependent.² Fraleigh writes,

The lived-body concept attempts to cut beneath the subject-object split, recognizing a dialectical and lived dualism but not a dualism of body-soul or body-mind. A phenomenological (or lived) dualism implicates consciousness and intention and assumes an indivisible unity of body, soul, and mind. (4)

² Merleau-Ponty writes, “The body in general is an ensemble of paths already traced, of powers already constituted; the body is the acquired dialectical soil upon which a higher ‘formation’ is accomplished, and the soul is the meaning which is then established” (“The Relations...” 210).

Where I use the compound word, “bodymind,” she prefers to articulate this holism as “minded body” (9).

Marcel, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty believe that the body is “fundamentally active,” rather than passive or receptive as in mechanistic constructs (Zaner 239-40). In fact, Fraleigh indicates that Marcel sees “action as the negation of dualism” (8). She elucidates,

Lived-body concepts hold that the body is lived as a body-of-action. Human movement is the actualization, the realization, of embodiment. Movement cannot be considered as medium apart from an understanding that movement is body, not just something that the body accomplishes instrumentally as it is moved by some distinct, inner, and separable agency. Embodiment is not passive; it is articulate. (13)

This assertion of the body’s agency is important for phenomenology’s interaction with existentialism, which elucidates freedom as one of its primary themes. Fraleigh writes, “The body, in this view, is a sensitive preceptive actor. It does not have a consciousness – rather, it is a consciousness. When we understand the body in terms of intentional consciousness, body and consciousness take on new meaning. The body is intensitive; it is implicated in, rather than separate from, will and freedom” (15). It is through all those Aristotelian attributes of the soul that Descartes relegates to the body – nutrition, locomotion, sense perception – that the body willfully participates in consciousness. In his “enactive” approach to acting, international director and actor trainer Phillip Zarrilli creatively frames Merleau-Ponty’s position in opposition to Descartes’ *cogito* argument. Merleau-Ponty, he writes, “shift[s] from an examination of ‘I think’ to the ‘I can’ of the body” (46). In so doing, Merleau-Ponty reclaims the activity of the body as central to understanding human experience in and co-existence with the world.

I use the word “co-existence” intentionally here to indicate that the world is constituted neither objectively nor *a priori*, but in consort with perception, which is bodily activity. It follows that consciousness also, according to Fraleigh, “is an activity, not a passivity.” She understands, through Husserl and Merleau-Ponty, “that consciousness is intentional; it depends on one’s perceptual attention to phenomena” (7). Just as human perception determines what we know of the world, the converse is also true – the world determines human experience. Israeli somatic practitioner Moshé Feldenkrais (1904-1984) writes, “A person is made of three entities: the nervous system, which is the core; the body – skeleton, viscera, and muscles – which is the envelope of the core; and the environment, which is space, gravitation, and society” (74). Environmental stimuli act on the human nervous system through bodily perception, influencing the evolutionary development and structure of the nervous system and body.

Although seemingly separate entities, the human being and external world are intimately connected through perception, which affects the body’s experience of and being in the world. Merleau-Ponty writes, “Our perception ends in objects, and the object once constituted, appears as the reason for all the experiences of it which we have had or could have” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 76). Thus, although it appears as if the object is the source of sensory experience, in actuality it is something prior, which he calls the “pre-objective” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 14). This constitutes phenomena – “that which reveals itself,” according to Heidegger (qtd. in Barrett 214). If perception ends in objects, it begins in the body, which is where Merleau-Ponty insists on beginning. He writes, “We must return to the social with which we are in contact by the mere fact of existing, and which we carry about inseparably with us before any objectification” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 421). Embedding the pre-objective in “the social” leads to the important distinction that the pre-objective is preabstract but not precultural

(Csordas, *Body/Meaning/Healing* 62). As such, bodily experience is legible but not in the same way as are codified signs, symbols and movement techniques.

According to scholar and dancer Ann Cooper Albright, anthropologist Thomas Csordas “links Merleau-Ponty’s notion of *perception* to [French sociologist, anthropologist, philosopher, and public intellectual] Pierre Bourdieu’s [(1930-2002)] discussion of *practice* in order to think about the connections between the individual and the collective” (5). Csordas writes, “Defining the dialectic between perceptual consciousness and collective practice is one way to elaborate embodiment as a methodological field...It is within this dialectic that we move from the understanding of perception as a bodily process to a notion of somatic modes of attention that can be identified in a variety of cultural practices” (“Somatic Modes...” 137). As with the social realm, the pre-objective also is embedded within time, space and the environment. Consistent with Feldenkrais, Merleau-Ponty writes, “To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world; as we have seen, our body is not primarily in space; it is of it” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 171). Through the action of perception, then, the body enters into a symbiotic relationship with the pre-objective. Cultural practice makes this interaction meaningful.

To summarize, through the lived body concept, phenomenology describes a body that is irreducible to an object; known both objectively and subjectively; interdependent with mind and soul; fundamentally active and intentive; involved in will, freedom and consciousness; and inseparable from the world. With this framework for the body, embodiment takes on new meanings and possibilities. In part, these are articulated through numerous contemporary concepts that draw on phenomenology. Of particular note because of the frequency with which they are mentioned in performance and dance studies scholarship are embodiment, corporeality, kinesthesia, and somatic.

1.2. From Dramatic Theatre/Dance to Contemporary Embodied Performance

At the turn of the twentieth century, a paradigmatic shift in theatre and dance coincided with the philosophical dismantling of mind-body dualism. What I am calling embodied performance emerged from what I am calling dramatic theatre/dance. A comprehensive understanding of this shift examines changes in acting theory, choreography and dance, physical culture, art practice and social theory against the backdrop of a changing worldview of the body.

I should address the reductionistic coupling of theatre and dance I am setting up in my analysis. This shortcut serves my overall project – to examine the fundamental tension between experience and representation in the context of my original dance theatre production, *Mrs. Wrights*. I am formally educated as a dancer/choreographer, and most of my professional experience is as a performer and choreographer for physical theatre. Because I work fluidly between dance and theatre, often integrating them in different ways as required by each project, I herein treat the two disciplines as one. While my interdisciplinary analysis effectively focuses my research, it also ignores certain historical, economic, and institutional realities.

In her contribution to the Palgrave Macmillan series, “Theatre&,” University of London Reader in Theatre and Performance Kate Elswit tackles the interdependence of the two disciplines. She asks, “But how can we – as scholars, students, and practitioners – better account for the interdependence of forms, when the thing we call “theatre” often tends to be artificially divided from the thing we call “dance” in professional presenting organizations, historical accounts, and scholarly disciplines?” (67). Indeed, the division has made my genealogical methodology inelegant at best, and overreaching at worst. Despite ongoing exchanges between theatre and dance, historical accounts often address each discipline as if it developed

independently. Scholars look first to research within their own discipline – that with which they and their peers are most familiar, and that which grants them the greatest credentials.

My analytic framework artificially constructs a cohesive history of theatre-&-dance – “from dramatic theatre/dance to embodied performance” – where in actuality no singular history exists. Elswit argues, “the ampersand is not a singular site at which theatre and dance come together. Instead the ampersand holds theatre and dance just far enough apart to reveal the entanglements that have been going on between them all along, in particular iterations as well as the historical trajectories of which they are a part” (67-68). Following Elswit, a more comprehensive genealogy would trace the history of “‘theatre’ ‘&’ ‘dance’” and “theatre & dance” (and, for that matter, “‘dance’ ‘&’ ‘theatre’” and “dance & theatre”) – their separateness and their interaction – never attempting cohesion. Yet, my framework couples theatre and dance for the sake of concision, efficiency, and focus.

I cite Elswit’s worthwhile work only to shed light on challenges and shortcomings within my own. Although our interests overlap, her project nonetheless is not my current one. I trace the dialectical transition from drama to embodiment that occurs in twentieth century theatre and dance without explicitly addressing their separateness and interdependence. Perhaps this oversight results from my own hybridity. Departing from Elswit, I leave a genealogical examination of the interdependence of the two disciplines, and the practical implications of my artistic hybridity, as subjects for future research.

1.2.A. Acting Theory: Semiotic Body and Phenomenal Body

The paradigms of the body presented in Western philosophy overlap with German theatre studies scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte’s finding that “there exists a doubleness with regard to the

body” in theatrical performance (25). It is important to note her use of the word “doubleness,” which implies integration within a both/and relationship, rather than “dualism,” which implies division and an either/or relationship. Summarizing German philosopher and sociologist Helmuth Plessner’s research, Fischer-Lichte writes, “On the one hand, people *have* a body they can manipulate similarly to other objects, instrumentalize, and use as a sign for something else. On the other hand, people *are* their bodies; people are embodied subjects” (25). In my reading, these descriptions correspond to Fraleigh’s body-object and body-subject. They carry the same philosophical implications as *Leib* (lived body) and *Körper* (body as object).

Writing about theatrical performance, Fischer-Lichte labels the two bodies “semiotic” and “phenomenal.” The former refers to the body “used as a sign to portray” something other than itself, most often a character. The latter refers to the performer’s “bodily being-in-the-world” (Fischer-Lichte 26). These correspond to two related but opposed philosophical disciplines – semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, and phenomenology, the study of experience and consciousness. The two types of bodies are said to be doubled because of their co-existence on the continuum of performance, rather than mutual exclusivity. The degree to which each is suppressed or brought forth is determined by the performance form and tradition, artistic intention, and historical and cultural context.

Eighteenth century acting theories privileged the semiotic body, granting primacy to the text by diminishing the art of acting, which had enabled the actor to express meaning in and through the body (Fischer-Lichte 26). Critics cast suspicion on the body – erotic, unpredictable, diseased – which they believed might lead viewers into immoral activity. Further, the sensual body threatened to destabilize the fictional world of the performance, which rests on illusion. Fischer-Lichte writes,

Actors were no longer supposed to foreground physical playfulness, improvisational talents, or virtuosity. Instead they were to use their skills to communicate poetic meaning provided by a text...Actors were supposed to extinguish their phenomenal body in order to transform themselves...into a 'text' made up of signs that described the actions and emotions of a character. (26)

The actor's body previously had been used to express the emotions, states, thought processes, and personal traits of characters (Fischer-Lichte 26). In order to accomplish eighteenth century aesthetic priorities, Fischer-Lichte writes, "the actor had to go through a sort of 'disembodiment.' Everything that hinted at the bodily being-in-the-world of the actor had to be eradicated until only the semiotic body remained" (27). The phenomenal body's inherent qualities – ephemerality, animality, sexuality – could mislead, deceive, distract and demoralize. Foregrounding the semiotic body offered a more stable representation of text, which was considered a fixed system of signs.

This began to change with the paradigm of realistic-psychological acting developed in the eighteenth century and theoretically renewed by Russian theatre director and theorist Constantin S. Stanislavski (1863-1938) in the twentieth century. Stanislavski's emphasis on the body was influenced by his exposure to the James-Lange theory of emotion, which was formulated in the late nineteenth century as a result of the independent but concurrent research of American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910) and Danish physician Carl Georg Lang (1834-1900). James writes,

Our natural way of thinking about these coarser emotions is that the mental perception of some fact excites the mental affection called the emotion, and that this latter state of mind gives rise to the bodily expression. My theory, on the contrary, is that *the bodily changes*

follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur is the emotion. (449)

As such, James' famous example goes, upon seeing a bear, the observer runs, and then feels terrified – not the other way around. In short, perception follows expression in action.

Widely disseminated as “Method Acting” in the United States and as the “Method of Physical Actions” in the Soviet Union, what most practitioners know of Stanislavski's system is far from complete. According to American theatre scholar Sharon Marie Carnicke, both schools focused on Stanislavski's work in the Realist style and largely disregarded his study of avant-garde and Eastern physical practices. She writes, “Neither integrated the mind and body of the actor, the corporal and the spiritual, the text and the performance as thoroughly or as insistently as did Stanislavsky himself” (8). In actuality, Stanislavski's system cultivates the art of experiencing in contrast to the “art of representation,” which he both admired and critiqued.

Carnicke writes, “Unlike poets and representational actors who need to experience a moment of creativity only privately, experiential actors summon a dynamic creative process every time they perform in public. Their art cannot be turned into fixed forms (as are printed poems and pre-formulated gestures)” (139). In Stanislavski's scheme, the actor's inner “experiencing” and outer “embodiment” are united in pursuit of a character's “supertask” in the drama (Stanislavski qtd. in Carnicke 123; Appendix A: Stanislavski's System). Drawing attention to the vitality of the body in performance, Stanislavski describes “embodiment” as the “life of the human body in the role” (qtd. in Carnicke 220). His definition preserves the doubling of the body as both being in itself and also symbolizing something abstract beyond itself. Through physical exercises and improvisation, Stanislavski's system ignites experiencing and embodiment in order to cultivate feeling, empathy and presence. Imagined fiction becomes fact

as the actor's moment-to-moment performance becomes his reality. Some of Stanislavski's exercises have their origins in yogic breathing and physical practices.

Following Stanislavski, various practitioners offered different methods for prioritizing the body in performance. According to Fischer-Lichte, Russian and Soviet theatre director and producer Vsevolod E. Meyerhold (1874-1940) liberated the actor from dependence on literature and the type of representation promoted by eighteenth-century theorists. Nonetheless, he also removed the tension between "*being a body*" and "*having a body*." She writes, "the subject is no longer thought of as being a body so much as having complete power over that body" (29). This is an instance of the body-object – the body as instrument or machine that is molded and controlled by the performer and, ultimately, the master teacher or director.

Unlike Meyerhold, the methods of French theatre pedagogue Jacques Lecoq (1921-1999) and Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski (1933-1999) emancipate the agency of the body, thereby investigating the paradox of Fischer-Lichte's "doubled body." My lineage in physical theatre extends to Grotowski and especially Lecoq through Rott, whose work is influenced by his graduate training in European devised physical theatre at Academia Dell'Arte, based in Arezzo, Italy. Of Lecoq's neutral mask method, biographer Simon Murray writes,

Wearing the neutral mask encourages students to find a pure economy of movement which is uncluttered by extraneous social patterns and habits, and which invites them to explore a sensual and physical relationship with the world and its matter. A relationship that is - as far as possible - untainted and uninformed by knowledge, emotion, anticipation or experience. (73)

Likewise, for Grotowski, Fischer-Lichte writes, "The body is not an instrument; it is neither a means for expression nor material for creating signs. Instead, this 'material' is 'burned' and

charged into energy in the moment of action. Actors do not control their bodies...Rather, agency is given to actors' bodies, so that the actors emerge as body-subjects, as embodied minds" (30). The role is not the end goal, but a strategy by which the actor dissects and gains awareness of the psychophysical – body, consciousness, memory and experience.

1.2.B. Genealogy of Choreography

Concurrent with the evolution of theatre seen through reforms in actor training, the development of dance may be viewed through the genealogy of choreography. American choreographer and dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster's research details how the term "choreography" has changed from ancient to contemporary times, serving to validate some forms of dancing while excluding others. Etymologically, according to Foster,

The word "choreography" derives from two Greek words, *choreia*, the synthesis of dance, rhythm, and vocal harmony manifest in the Greek chorus, and *graph*, the act of writing. The first uses of the term, however, are intertwined with two other Greek roots, *orches*, the place between the stage and the audience where the chorus performed, and *chora*, a more general notion of space, sometimes used in reference to a countryside or region. Where *choreia* describes a process of integrating movement, rhythm, and voice, both *orches* and *chora* name places. (16-17)

In 1700, the term choreography was neologized to name the act of notating dances on paper using abstract symbols. Foster writes, "Invented by Pierre Beauchamps [(French, 1631-1705)], Louis XIV's [(French, 1638-1715)] dancing master, and put into print by Raoul Auger Feuillet [(French, 1659-1710)], choreographies were notated scores of dances, and choreographers were

the people who could read and write the notation” (17). It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the term choreography was adapted into the English language.

A number of implications extend from choreography’s origins as the act of translating body, space, and written symbol. According to Foster, this definition provided the basis upon which the separation of making, performing, and learning dance took place. It also enabled dances around the world to be categorized (16). Through representational and symbolic codification, however, notation took dancing out of indigenous space. Foster writes, “Cultural and historical specificities of particular dances were homogenized by a system that implemented absolute conceptions of space and time. Perhaps for the first time, dance was asserted to be a universal language” (25). Much like eighteenth century theatre’s allegiance to representing the written text, eighteenth century dancing was bound by the abstract rules established by choreographers. This, in turn, affected the dancing body – how it moved and how it was evaluated according to technical skill and virtuosity. More fundamentally, notation took dancing out of the body by fixing dance’s ephemerality and replacing intersubjective embodied transmission.

By the mid-eighteenth century, English dancer, ballet master, choreographer, and theorist John Weaver (1673-1760) contributed substantially to the obsolescence of choreography as a form of notating dance. Shortly after translating Feuillet into English, he launched the new genre of story ballet through a series of experiments with pantomime. A ballet’s narrative account of the story and action then replaced notation as the primary means of documenting dance. According to Foster, in both French and English languages, the term choreography fell out of use during the late eighteenth century and rarely was invoked during the nineteenth century (43).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Foster writes, “the term ‘choreography’ came into widespread and new usage, both in Britain and the US” (43). It now named specifically the act of crafting a dance, replacing its usage as an infrequent and indiscriminate appellation for various acts – dancing, learning to dance, and the making of a dance. Although its resurgence coincided with the emergence of the new genre of modern dance, the term “choreography” initially was used in response to the innovations in ballet introduced by Russian ballet dancers and choreographers Vaslav Nijinsky (1889-1950) and Mikhail Fokine (1880-1942). Instead of invoking “choreography,” early modern dance pioneers such as Americans Martha Graham (1894-1991), Ruth St. Denis (1879-1968), and Ted Shawn (1891-1972) initially said that, as “maker[s] of dances,” they “made up dances” (Graham in Foster 43). By the mid 1920s, according to Foster, the designation “choreographer” identified arrangers of movement in a variety of genres including Broadway musicals and reviews (44). For new modern dancers, Foster writes, “choreography began to specify the unique process through which an artist not only arranged and invented movement, but also melded motion and emotion to produce a danced statement of universal significance” (44). This rendition of choreography was supported by the new pedagogy in dance education entering universities across the US.

American dance teacher and creator of the first dance major at the University of Wisconsin Margaret H'Doubler (1889-1982) exemplified the new pedagogy. Abhorring methods based on imitating movement sequences, her instruction in choreography fused improvisation, kinesthetic awareness, scientific exploration, and collaboration (Foster 45-46). By the 1930s, Foster writes, “[modern dancers] trained...using a more prescribed regimen of exercises, often devised by the choreographer, that, on the one hand, exemplified the choreographer’s aesthetic vision, and on the other, embodied ‘universal’ principals of motion” (47). Such systems were

implemented beginning in 1934 at Bennington College's summer program by modern dancers such as Graham, Doris Humphrey (American, 1895-1958), and Hanya Holm (German, 1893-1992). Rather than eliciting authentic movement from students based on structural organization, Foster writes, these exercise regimens "exemplified the choreographer's aesthetic vision, and...embodied 'universal' principles of motion" (47). Some teachers, such as the Juilliard School's first director of dance, Martha Hill (1900-1995), grounded pedagogy in research by Hungarian dance artist and theorist Rudolph von Laban (1879-1958) and Swiss composer, musician and music educator Émile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950). Gravity replaced Feuillet's universal horizontal plane as a universal force within and against which the body articulates its dynamism (Foster 49).

Since the 1960s, new approaches to dance composition have resulted in alternative appellations for the act of creating a dance, including, making, conceiving, directing, arranging, facilitating, and managing (Foster 61, 66, 69). What is more, collaborative and interdisciplinary dance making, improvisation, pedestrian movement vocabularies, and eclectic training in world dance forms and somatics have decentered modernism's hierarchal model of dance authorship (Foster 66, 71-72). American modern dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham (1919-2009) separated dance movement from music, and postmodern dancers such as those affiliated with Judson Dance Theater (1962-1964) separated dance movement from spiritual and emotional theatricality and narrative. Rather than organizing movement around individual intention and statements of personal expression, choreography has come to emphasize process in the service of statements about movement, the body, and, by extension, cultural and individual identity (Foster 61, 66). Foster writes, "Dance makers saw the body itself as meaning-filled, and they believed that the pragmatic execution of movement offered a glimpse into the self of the performer that

felt more real and revealing than any performances in which the dancer enacted a character” (64). Relevant to my research, this postmodern lens affords the dramatic performer an opportunity to prioritize a character’s bodily experience above all else.

1.2.C. Physical Culture Movement and *Tanztheater* (Dance Theatre)

In addition to broad changes in acting and choreographing, specific reforms in physical culture at the turn of the twentieth century have influenced the development of embodied performance to this day. The industrial revolution from the late eighteenth century through the mid-nineteenth century was a time of great change in Britain, Europe and the United States. According to American dance scholar Dianne S. Howe, cities grew exponentially and were characterized by a sense of “anonymity...rootlessness, alienation and disorientation.” As a result, artists and scholars turned to “knowledge gained by intuitive discovery of underlying experience” (Howe in Loukes 198). Especially in Germany and Austria from 1905-1920, Expressionism was a thriving movement in art, architecture, literature and performance. According to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), “Amid the destruction of World War I, German and Austrian Expressionists responded to the anxiety of modern life...The Expressionists sought to depict the world as it felt rather than how it looked, and, by doing so, to reinvigorate art with authenticity and expressive force” (“Expressionism”). The Expressionists as well as other artists and thinkers appropriated non-Western forms of art, thought, performance and physical training, which the industrial revolution made readily available through an increasingly interconnected world economy. An emphasis on freedom and humanism infused psychology and education, catalyzing new pedagogies.

Against this backdrop, a physical culture movement emerged in Germany at the turn of the twentieth century. An extension of the German public's involvement in gymnastic exercise, which had been popular since the early nineteenth century, the *Körperkultur* movement was a turn-of-the-century life reform that sought to address the adverse effects of urbanization, such as a sedentary lifestyle, and to integrate the body, soul and spirit into education. According to British theatre professor Rebecca Loukes, it "comprised both sport and dance elements, as well as nudism, the youth movement, dress reform, and gymnastics (*Gymnastik*)" (199). She writes, "*Gymnastik* was understood as an approach, rather than a system or a group of certain exercises, focused on 'biological principles'...the emphasis was always on an awareness of the bodymind in space, breath, rhythm, and, as reflected in developments in philosophy and psychology at the time, the concept of the psychophysical" (201). The movement spread across Europe and the United States, but most of its key proponents were German.

Not surprisingly, German modern dance developed in conjunction with the physical culture movement. According to Loukes, "Pioneers of what has been called variously New Dance, New Artistic Dance, New German Dance, Central European Dance, and *Ausdruckstanz*...crossed over into the burgeoning *Gymnastik* movement in a desire for a 'natural,' expressive system of body training" (199). In addition to concerns about the bodymind in the context of industrialization and urbanization, *Ausdruckstanz* (expressionist dance) developed in reaction to the purist ideal of classical ballet. A pioneer of expressionist dance, German dancer and choreographer Mary Wigman (1886-1973) explains, "The great 'ballet dancer' was no longer a representative of a great inner emotion (like the musician or the poet) but had become defined as a great virtuoso" (qtd. in Loukes 205). This was achieved through a mechanistic view of the body, which was trained to emulate fixed technical forms. In contrast,

early twentieth century European dance and theatre movement training drew from an eclectic range of practices that for the first time, Loukes writes, “shared an assumption of the bodymind as a generator of its own performance material...The work embraced both the notion of the psychophysical, influenced by contemporary science and philosophy, and the vitality of the performer’s bodymind as being in a state of ‘corporeal consciousness’” (209). Choreographers, for example, used improvisation in order to investigate compositional choices before setting material. At the same time, according to Elswit, various early twentieth-century theatre directors – from Max Reinhardt (Austrian, 1873-1943) to Bertolt Brecht (German, 1898-1956) – explored the potential of the body to “transport feeling” and to “call attention to the conditions of the present” via “stylized choreography” and “staged gesture” (26). Simultaneously, she writes, “dance interrogated itself as a physical medium, whether the body was being used to mystical ends or for sociopolitical criticism” (26-27). It was these attitudes of *Ausdruckstanz* in 1920s Weimar Germany and Vienna that laid the foundation for *Tanztheater* (dance theatre) to arise.

Although Laban had used it prior, the label “*Tanztheater*” was first consistently used by German choreographer Kurt Jooss (1901-1979) around 1927 – the same year of publication of Heidegger’s existential phenomenological text, *Being and Time*. In 1924, Laban had written, “The new dance theatre aims for finding a synthesis of all possibilities of expression and bringing these together again. The synthesis can be dance tragedy, dance ballad (song), dance comedy, or a movement symphony” (qtd. in Loukes 200). Loukes observes similarities between Laban’s vision and that of German composer and theatre director Richard Wagner (1813-1883) 75 years earlier, when he used the term “*Gesamtkunstwerk*,” understood as “total theatre” (200). In line with Elswit’s arguments about the ampersand between theatre and dance, it is reductionistic to conceive of *Tanztheater* as merely merging dance and theatre into a singular

whole. Rather, the form was influenced by the particular concerns of the time. Referring to the work of post-World War II *Tanztheater* directors, Elswit writes, “Their deeply interdependent inquiries addressed concerns about the presumed logic of the theatrical space, as well as the boundaries of verbal and physical sense-making within it” (27). Part of the genealogy of embodied performance, *Tanztheater* thus engages the tension between phenomenal body and semiotic body through an integrated bodymind.

In this regard, it is worth discussing the work of Jooss’ protégé, preeminent *Tanztheater* choreographer Pina Bausch (German, 1940-2009). Comparative literature scholar David W. Price writes, “What distinguishes Bausch...is her development of an art form based upon a binary opposition that does not reproduce an either/or dichotomy; instead, Bausch’s productions are both dance and theatre. Hers is an art form that rejects a totalizing Wagnerian vision in favor of a dialectical theatricality” (322). Framed within the context of my research, this dialectic comprises the experiential – “the performance part, which according to Joestte Feral, ‘is made up of the realities of the imaginary’” – and the representational – “the theatrical part, which is made ‘made up of specific symbolic structures’” (Price 323). Using montage, she juxtaposes somatic imagery with an exploration of the body’s social construction through cultural symbolic structures (Price 323).

Displaying the body as a living artifact, Bausch’s work aptly has been called “*Theater der Erfahrung*” (“Theatre of Experience”). According to German dancer, choreographer and writer Norbert Servos, translator Peter Harris, and Canadian Professor and Director of the University College Drama Program at the University of Toronto Pia Kleber, this form “gives preference to the capacity of physically experiencing a problem over the didactic transmission of knowledge...The ‘Theatre of Experience’ aims for an emotional involvement in the formation of

problems, not in the characters” (437, 439). The problems to which Servos, et al. refer are largely physical, not psychological as in dramatic theatre. Choreographed with performer interaction, however, they are relational and therefore may be perceived as psychological.

Consistent with the James-Lange theory of emotion, Bausch’s later choreographic methods, for example, employ provocations that focus on physical action and, as a consequence, may evoke emotion (Loukes 212-214). Price writes, “Unlike performers in classical ballet, Bausch’s dancers do not attempt to make their movements appear effortless. Bausch’s dancers are physically pushed to the limit, and they exhibit their exhaustion and pain quite openly onstage” (326). To generalize, Bausch is interested in exposing the real. Servos, et al. write, “If dance until now was regarded as the domain of ‘beautiful appearance’ (*des ‘schönen Scheins’*), the refuge of autonomous technique or the abstract adaptation of existential themes, then Pina Bausch’s works refer the spectator directly to reality” (437). Likewise, they continue, “If the epic theatre of Brecht serves to create a ‘proper consciousness’ in the Marxist sense - particularly in the production of didactic plays - then in the ‘Theatre of Experience’ change is brought about (if at all) through experienced necessity instead of intellectual insight” (440). Through the bodies of her dancers, then, Bausch retains the semiosis of theatre, focusing it through bodily processes rather than literary text, and simultaneously foregrounds the phenomenal body. Rather than suppressing experiences such as breathing, sweating, falling, and sensing in the service of representational meaning, the semiotic performance of social structures, hyperbolized and transformed through repetition, catalyzes the phenomenal body in a duet of ulterior meaning-making.

Despite Bausch’s indisputable success in partnering dance and theatre, Servos, et al. offer a critique that is immediately relevant in the context of my research. They write, “along with the

formal innovations of the Wuppertal Dance Theatre there is a limitation in content. Pina Bausch's approach is in the widest sense phenomenologically determined. Her adaptation of motifs shows phenomena without naming their causes. Hence history remains reduced to the level of a concrete parameter of the aesthetic processes" (442). Although history is characteristically considered as part of the "depth structure" or "inner nature" of an "emotive" Theatre of Experience, they write, "in the Wuppertal Dance Theatre, this aspect seems too restricted to subjectivity." Metaphorical historical allusions might be made with songs from a certain period, costuming and objects, but history "is never consciously utilized as an essential moment of the plays." The ambiguity of time and space ignores the "mutability of the historical process" (Servos, et al. 442). As a result, Bausch's decontextualized critique of social conventions does not consider cultural specifics and address causes. Rather, the social problems she presents seem omnipresent and eternal. Servos, et al. write, "interpersonal alienation, sex-role struggle, and lack of communication are the given results of an unnamed process. They are fixed points in a predetermined pattern of individual relationships...The performance becomes trapped within the frame of an existential symbolism which always demonstrates fatalistic traits" (443). But perhaps this is precisely her point. Ahistorical content foments a nihilistic attitude, which does a better job of conveying the experience of powerlessness against oppression – the embodied feeling of oppression's metaphorical or actual weight and the sense of its unpredictability in space and time – than might historical specificity.

Mrs. Wrights would have been much different had I embraced Bausch's ahistorical approach. I might have developed one of the show's strongest social themes – the woman behind the man – without the specificity of historical characters and events. I might have examined universal experiences of women and then used sound, costumes and objects to contextualize

these experiences in the United States during the first half of the twentieth century and within Wright's modernist aesthetic. I might have created a suite of dances highlighting the women only, extracting them from their proximity to a historically significant male figure.

Although I am interested in these alternative approaches for future projects and even for different iterations of *Mrs. Wrights*, for this project I chose to wrestle with the productive tension between historical representation and embodied presence in performance. As a result, audiences gain valuable historical perspective. Each women's experience touches on different aspects of women's history – career, marriage and motherhood, feminism, and drug addiction and mental illness. Through the specificity of the women's individual and historically constituted bodies and stories, the audience finds points of both congruity and incongruity to their own lived experience.

1.2.D. Somatics

Concurrent with German modern dance, Western somatic studies originated in the *Gymnastik* movement in reaction to Cartesian dualism. Pioneers include Jaques-Dalcroze, French musician and teacher Francois Delsarte (1811-1871), and Dutch-American physician Bess Mensendieck (1864-1957) (Baston 1). According to American dance and movement scientist Glenna Baston, in 1970, American philosopher and movement therapist Thomas Hanna coined the term “somatics” from the Greek word “*soma*,” meaning “the body in its wholeness” (1). Hanna writes, “Somatics is the field which studies the soma: namely the body as perceived from within by first-person perception” (341). He goes on to contrast the human soma – which is subjectively, internally perceived – from the human body – which is objectively, externally observed. Hanna's soma and body are analogous to the phenomenologists' lived body (*Leib*) and body as physical object (*Körper*).

Somatic education has carried bodymind integration into contemporary dance and acting pedagogy. Baston writes, “Somatic education differs first from traditional dance pedagogy in its philosophical basis - that of dismembering mind-body dualism in pursuit of personal autonomy...Key elements of somatic training include: (1) Novel Learning Context, (2) Sensory Attunement, and (3) Augmented Rest” (1). Somatic methods share the following objectives in their approach to bodymind re-education:

(1) Process over goal-oriented product, that is, enhancing kinesthetic awareness in a non-judgmental and non-competitive non-doing environment; (2) Using sensory awareness to modulate (i.e., constrain) movement range and effort to uncover the potential for new mobility, and (3) Rest - resting phases which the dancer is given time to listen to the body, to clarify what sensations have arrived and differentiate wanted from unwanted stimuli, and to consolidate motor learning. (Baston 2)

Somatic practices frequently integrated into both dance and acting curricula include Feldenkrais Method, Alexander Technique (founder, F. Matthias Alexander, Australian, 1896-1955), and Laban Movement Analysis. Others such as Laban-based Bartenieff Fundamentals (founder, Irmgard Bartenieff, German, 1900-1981), Ideokinesis (founder, Mabel Elsworth Todd, American, 1880-1956), and Body-Mind Centering (founder, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, American, 1943-) are favored in dance pedagogy.

My genealogy of embodiment would be incomplete without a consideration of the lineage of somatics practices. Just as phenomenology has a basis in non-Western thought, somatics practitioners have appropriated and synthesized non-Western paradigms of the body. Baston writes, “Although coining the term ‘somatics,’ Hanna was well-aware of the philosophical contribution of the ancient Far East” (4). Both Feldenkrais and Bainbridge Cohen

draw heavily from Asian disciplines. Others, including Continuum Movement founder Emilie Conrad D'aoud, have been influenced by Haitian and African cultures (Baston 4). In addition to somatics, many contemporary dance and actor training methods have appropriated non-Western practices that inspire a collapse of dualism through body-subject consciousness. Examples include the Indian spiritual and physical practice yoga; the Indian martial art *Kalarippayattu*, which has influenced Zarrilli's actor training pedagogy; the Chinese martial art T'ai Chi Ch'uan; and the Japanese martial arts Judo and Aikido, the latter having influenced American postmodern dancer/choreographer Steve Paxton and his development of Contact Improvisation. Thus, worldviews of the body are culturally constructed, rendering them both temporally and geographically specific. This is consistent with my finding that the meaning of "embodiment" has changed across time and space, which I further delineate in Chapter Two: Embodiment and *Mrs. Wrights*.

1.2.E. Postmodern Dance and Postdramatic Theatre

With roots in early twentieth-century avant-garde artistic movements and mid-century philosophical and cultural movements, postmodernism and postdramaticism emerged in the 1960s and continued to reform theatre as well as dance. American dramaturg and theatre scholar Katherine Profeta summarizes the historical shift that occurred in the second half of the twentieth century:

With the advent of the theatre aesthetics that [German theatre scholar] Hans-Thies Lehmann famously characterized as postdramatic – or that Eilnor Fuchs, on this side of the Atlantic, dubbed theatre after the “death of character” – theater artists have

increasingly discarded or downgraded Aristotelean models of mimesis and dramatic coherence, as well as the playscript as a singular recipe for performance. (Profeta 10)

The word “dramatic” is derived from the Greek *dran*, “to do, to act” (*Merriam-Webster*, “Drama”). Aristotle defines tragedy as *mimesis praxeos*, imitation of human action (*Aristotle’s Poetics*, 6, 1449b24). Likewise, he describes *myqos*, or plot, as the mimesis of an action. He elevates plot as the “soul” of a drama – the cause of its being what it is (*Aristotle’s Poetics*, 6, 1450b3). The shift away from Aristotelean performance therefore is a shift away from representation and interpretation based on one-to-one correspondence between meaning and action.

Lehmann writes, “the reality of the new theatre begins precisely with the fading away of this trinity of drama, imitation and action” (38). Theoreticians Jean-Francois Lyotard (French, 1924-1998), Theodor Adorno (German, 1903-1969), and Antonin Artaud (French, 1896-1948) proposed alternative forms of mime – ways of signaling not governed by the logic of representation. Lyotard coined “energetic theatre;” Adorno’s idea of mimesis was “a presymbolic, affective ‘becoming-like-something;’” and Artaud called for “being like victims burnt at the stake, signaling through the flames” by using reactive vocal, physical and visceral gestures (qtd. in Lehmann 38). Whereas dramatic theatre was subordinate to the primacy of the text, postdramatic theatre seeks alternative “texts” through the other elements of performance.

Influenced by postmodern musicians and visual artists, American postmodern dancer, choreographer and theoretician Mary Overlie’s (1946-) *Six Viewpoints*, widely disseminated as “Viewpoints” by American theatre director Anne Bogart (1951-), offers techniques for

nonhierarchical composition.³ Deconstructing and disrupting the primacy of text, all the materials of performance – Space, Shape, Time, Emotions, Movement, and Story/Logic – obtain equal authority. Brazilian American performance studies writer and curator André Lepecki names five elements that “act” to “create events” – personal, corporeal, objectal, textual, and atmospheric (“Errancy as Work...” 58). Postmodernism both interrogates and subsumes the paradigms that precede it. For classicists, the stage provided a venue for practicing and celebrating form. Modernists used the stage to examine human existence. Postmodernists, according to Overlie, “assume the stage is there to enact microscopic interrogation of our physical, mental and emotional world” (*Standing in Space IX*). Whereas classicism and modernism sought a single permanent truth, postmodernism negotiates a plurality of truths that are always in flux. Detailed interrogation deconstructs previously fixed structures, setting them in motion.

In discarding the logos of drama, text and representation, Profeta writes that practitioners “made contemporary theater that looked more and more like contemporary dance, which itself had only recently discarded its own codes of character and mimesis” (10). A clear illustration is found in Overlie’s equating Story with Logic, which unravels Story as the primary structuring device in performance. We think of story as words, character and narrative, but Overlie insists that it is inclusive of the essential material of “all languages and art: mathematics, music, movement, painting, carpentry, architecture, engineering, the sciences” (43). Postmodern dancers rejected the codified vocabularies of modern dance, which had stagnated under hierarchal

³ In my unpublished research paper, “Two Views of Viewpoints: Mary Overlie and Anne Bogart,” I provide a detailed genealogy of Viewpoints from Overlie’s discovery of the Six Viewpoints in the context of postmodern dance through Bogart’s subsequent translation and far-reaching transmission of Viewpoints in the context of contemporary theatre.

company structures, and which were loaded with dramatic, literary and emotional signification. American dance historian Sally Banes writes,

By breaking the rules of historical modern dance, and even those of the avant-garde of the fifties...the postmodern choreographers found new ways to foreground the medium of dance rather than its meaning...The body itself became the subject of the dance, rather than serving as an instrument for expressive metaphors. (44)

Postmodernity asked new questions of performance and the body, including the socio-cultural construction of each.

Influenced by Somatics, postmodern dance and postdramatic theatre preserve the doubling of the body by mediating semiotic body and phenomenal body, body-object and body-subject, and mind and body. Philosopher David Michael Levin writes, “avant garde [sic] dance articulates the fundamental conditions and resources of performance in dance - the modes of embodiment themselves (as such), in the play of which the immanent, essential possibilities of performance in dance originate” (124). Postmodern dance improvisation inspires physical inquiry through exploration and experimentation. Somatic practices empower performers to investigate, become aware of, and repattern bodymind experiences. With roots in the Feldenkrais Method, Israeli choreographer and former Batsheva Dance Company Artistic Director (1990-2018) Ohad Naharin’s (1952-) Gaga movement language uses sensation, imagery and impulse to go beyond technique, giving the body agency to discover new ways of moving. The Japanese dance form Butoh likewise ignites the practitioner’s physical imagination through the use of imagery and sensation. My own creative practice is much more closely aligned with this lineage than with codified techniques that objectify the body. In particular, I am influenced by postmodern dance improvisation, Gaga and Eastern forms including yoga and meditation. I find

that these integrated pedagogies provide a route to bodily agency and preserve the rich complexity of Fischer-Lichte's doubled body, offering generous raw materials for performance situations.

From the 1960s onward, theatre practitioners have addressed the actor's dual condition of both being a body and having a body. Other experimental performance makers have gone further to oppose eighteenth-century acting theoreticians altogether. By enacting the phenomenal body without using it as a sign to represent meaning, they effectively erased the semiotic body. Postmodern dancers and performance artists showed the phenomenal body through dance improvisation, pedestrian movement, and process-based performance events. They insisted on displaying the body in and of itself, rather than using it instrumentally to serve narrative, emotion or technique. Even as the semiotic body is repressed, it is important to note that spectators still may read meaning into the phenomenal body.

1.2.F. Performative Turn

The performative turn is anchored in the broader cultural development of postmodernism. With roots in mid-century anthropological and linguistic theories, it was a paradigmatic shift in the humanities and social sciences. According to German geographers Peter Dirksmeier and Ilse Helbrecht, "The 'performative turn' in qualitative social research focuses on the exercise of verbal, bodily and multi-modal performances of artistic or social practices...[and] draws on a shift from the paradigm of 'representation' to techniques of art/performance" (par. 2). Previously, symbolic systems and text had been the locus of social scientific research.

In the 1980s, the field of performance studies emerged through a collaboration between cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1920-1983) and American theatre director and scholar

Richard Schechner (1934-). Schechner defines performance simply as “an activity done by an individual or group in the presence of and for another individual or group” or implied audience (*Performance Theory*, 30). Performance exists on a continuum. Although everything – from performing arts to politics and economics – can be studied *as* performance, not everything is meant to be *a* performance (*Performance Studies*, 38). My use of the label “embodied *performance*,” which includes performance from different disciplines – theatre, dance, performance art, happenings, and religious ritual – refers to the performative turn and Schechner’s definition.

Emphasizing its embeddedness in symbolic and coded aspects of culture, Schechner also describes performance as “restored behavior” (*Performance Studies*, 34). Similarly, American performance theorist Jon McKenzie writes, “Performance is a bodily practice that produces meaning” through the presentation or “re-actualization” of symbolic systems through living bodies and mediating objects such as architecture (726-729). The performative turn therefore supports foregrounding the body as the source and substance of performance, which dance and theatre artists have undertaken in postmodernity. In her seminal essay, *Against Interpretation*, writer Susan Sontag urges, “What is important now is to recover our senses. We must learn to see more, to hear more, to feel more. Our task is not to find the maximum amount of content in a work of art, much less to squeeze more content out of the work than is already there” (14). The body is the site at which Sontag’s invocation is actualized.

1.3. Identifying Embodied Performance

What I propose to call “embodied performance” is inclusive of twentieth-century dance and theatre forms that have been variously labeled – physical theatre, dance theatre (from the

German *tanztheater*), postdramatic theatre, postmodern dance, somatics, performance art, corporeal mime, clowning, and others. These labels designate performance forms linked to particular innovators, geographies and historical moments. Non-Western dance, theatre and body practices also are embodied forms that have influenced Western embodied performance.

I follow Loukes in my designation. Defending her word choice to use “embodied practices” instead of “physical theatre,” she writes, “It has been argued...that the term physical theatre describes ‘a movement of renewal in British theatre and performance’ that was clearly evident in the 1980s (Chamberlain 2007:120) but that has now become redundant” (195-196). In using “embodied performance,” I include forms that emerged at various times and places, focusing on commonalities without denying the diversity of traditions. Loukes cites English actor and stage director Phelim McDermott, who writes,

The dream is not just of a *physical* theatre but of an *embodied* theatre that combines the body, the imagination, the emotions and the voice. The performance also has a relationship beyond its own body in-the-space and is in energetic dialogue with other performers, the design environment and light, and the audience. The whole energy field is a system in constant flux as it relates to itself and organizes the system of emotions, impulses, intellect and storytelling. (qtd. in Loukes 194)

My goals and those of Quasimondo Physical Theatre, of which I am a founding ensemble member, align with McDermott’s vision. Although McDermott is reacting against his particular understanding of “physical theatre,” in practice the term refers to a panoply of work.

Recognizing that all labels are historically constituted, I tackle the challenge of naming by considering artistic process and output. In employing the label “embodied performance,” I aim

for interdisciplinarity – of both dance and theatre – and inclusivity – of variously situated bodymind practices.

Nonetheless, it remains important to consider the extent to which classifications are arbitrary, context-dependent and culturally constituted. First, the body necessarily is a part of all performance, including dramatic theatre/dance, herein opposed to embodied performance. It is not that the body is absent in the former and present in the latter, but that each conceives of and enacts the body differently. Most fundamentally, the distinction separates those performances and pedagogies which are predicated on mind-body dualism from those predicated on bodymind integration.

At first glance, in line with their respective affiliations with text and the body, one might classify dramatic theatre/dance with theatre and embodied performance with dance, but a thorough history reveals such classification as superficial and oversimplified. Classical ballet and many non-Western dance forms such as Bharatanatyam in India and Kabuki in Japan use codified gestures, employing the body as an instrument of story. Within theatre, Fischer-Lichte writes, “The historical avant-garde movement of the twentieth century (c. 1900-35) both narrowed and expanded the concept of theatre. The avant-garde understood theatre as an autonomous art rather than a medium for bringing the art of literature to an audience” (7-8). Following the avant-garde, surrealism influenced Artaud’s development of the Theatre of Cruelty, which critiqued the inadequacy of language and advocated for sensory experience. Thus, both dance and theatre can variously be described as embodied or dramatic. It was the paradigm shift from mind-body dualism that opened both disciplines to new performer training and dramaturgies predicated on an integrated bodymind.

Second, neither embodied performance nor dramatic theatre/dance is a singular, homogenous thing. Rather, a panoply of works comprise each category, with some blurring the boundaries altogether. The historic shift from dramatic to embodied performance has been non-linear and is ongoing; research and experimental work between the two continues to this day. But while the doubled body exists across both genres, embodied performance actively investigates and displays the tension between phenomenal and semiotic bodies, while dramatic theatre/dance prioritizes representation over experience. *Mrs. Wrights*, for example, was created, organized and is performed both through text and embodiment in order to represent particular historical characters and show female experiences in their historical specificity.

In summary, I define embodied performance most fundamentally as a form that investigates the phenomenal body and semiotic body through bodymind integration. I locate embodied performance within the lineage of existential phenomenology and acknowledge its interdisciplinary artistic, societal, cross-cultural, and scientific constitution. I use the term “embodied,” as Loukes writes, “to describe work that uses the body as a primary site of both the making and performance of movement material. Though, of course, one could argue that the body is such a site in any performance...I focus here on work that uses the body as the main driver to both create and perform the work” (195). This extends to the constituent materials of performance with which the body interacts – space, time, image, voice and sound. The non-hierarchy of materials from which performance is made subverts the long-running primacy of the dramatic text, with which I also include codified physical vocabulary. Finally, embodied performance employs the performer in research and creation, thereby complicating the traditional hierarchy between performer and director/choreographer.

Chapter Two. Embodiment

2.1. Defining Embodiment

Although I have been discussing the semiotic body and the phenomenal body as distinct, Fischer-Lichte writes, “Ultimately, the phenomenal and semiotic bodies are insolubly linked and one cannot appear without the other (even though the phenomenal body can be conceived of without the semiotic body, while the inverse is impossible)” (33). She introduces the concept embodiment as a way to think about the relationship between the two.

Throughout my graduate education and research, I have used the term “embodiment” as a catch-all description of what it is I do in the studio and in performance. The word is as ubiquitous around UWM’s somatically informed dance department as “5-6-7-8” is around dance studios, or “...and action” is around theatres. Coming to dance from physical theatre, the notion of embodiment has been a refuge for me as a bridge between the two worlds. If nothing else, what dancers and actors share is the display of the body in action. With far less technical background in dance than my peers, and no formal training in acting, embodiment seemed to be a term that got at what I did best as a performer, most desired in the performers with whom I worked, and most appreciated as a spectator. Rather than valuing one technique or body over another, embodiment seemed to offer a meta-technical, universally accessible value.

What exactly have I meant when I have used the term “embodiment?” I have meant things like presence, expressivity, intention, attention, and awareness. I have meant an ability to perform well, to be captivating on stage. But also, I’m not exactly sure what I have meant. The word often has found its way into conversations with Rott, but he hasn’t taken it for granted like I have. He finds it wanting in definition and specificity, and I find my attempts at explanation lacking. It is clear that if much of my research rests on embodiment, I need to take some time to

address its etymology, usage and meaning throughout history, in contemporary performance scholarship, and for myself. Despite its apparent ubiquity, a definitive definition of embodiment is not easily located. It turns out that this is because the meaning of the body is itself evasive.

Embodiment is a concept frequently mentioned in contemporary dance and performance scholarship in conjunction with related terms – phenomenology, corporeality, kinesthesia, and somatic, among others. According to *Merriam-Webster*, the first known use of “embody” is circa 1548, and “embodiment” 1828. The other terms were introduced circa the fifteenth century (“corporeal,” root of corporeality, 1651); 1605 (“phenomenon,” root of phenomenology, 1797); 1775 (“somatic”); and 1880 (“kinesthesia”). Despite being centuries old, these words have taken on new meanings in the twentieth century. For an historical comparison of the frequency of usage from 1500 until today, see Appendix B: Google Ngram Viewer for “Embody” and Related Words.

Through the performative turn in the social sciences, it became clear that bodies are historically and culturally constituted. Because all bodies exist within a social framework, there is no “natural,” “neutral” or “ideal” body existing outside of time and space. Although famous exceptions exist (and provide apology for elitist institutions) the ideal dancer body – white, thin, able-bodied, ballet-trained – is culturally constructed and upheld by those in power. Gender, too, is enacted through the performance (or resistance to performance) of cultural codes. Referencing Nietzsche, American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler goes so far as to write, “There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (25). She is explicit that this is an application of Nietzsche’s claim in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is

everything” (45). Through social performance, the action of the body – always in process, rather than fully formed – is both playwright and actor, to use a theatrical metaphor.⁴ Within Nietzsche’s framework, it does not seem to matter if there is a mind behind the body. As we shall see, Nietzsche is the harbinger of a paradigm shift in Western thought away from mind-body dualism, the reverberations of which have been felt through postmodernism and the performative turn.

Most importantly for my discussion is the conclusion that the meaning of “body” – of what it is to have and to be a body – has shifted over time, and with it, the meaning of “embodiment.” Csordas attests, “The paradoxical truth...appears to be that if there is an essential characteristic of embodiment, it is indeterminacy” (“Introduction...” 5). Csordas is responsible for introducing embodiment into the social sciences as a research paradigm. He writes, “The reader will note variations in use of the term embodiment itself: most authors regard it as an existential condition, others as a process in which meaning is taken into or upon the body, yet others prefer the term bodiliness over embodiment” (“Introduction...” 20). Just as bodies are culturally constituted, a definition of “embodiment” is necessarily context-specific. It must take into account beliefs and values about the body with an understanding that these are themselves – like the body and like dancing – in process and ephemeral. As a point of departure, I begin with what I find to be shortcomings in the dictionary definition of “embody.”

First used in the mid-sixteenth century, the word “embody” necessarily is enmeshed with mind-body dualism. Although cited in contemporary scholarship as a vehicle for performance paradigms that resist dualism, it is important to note that the denotative sense of “embodiment”

⁴ One may note analogous interests within postdramatic theatre practices – the primacy and agency of the body, deconstruction of text and hierarchal structures, and an emphasis on process.

retains overtones of the Western dichotomy. Definitions for “embody” are, according to *Merriam-Webster*:

1 : to give a body to (a spirit) : INCARNATE

2 a : to deprive of spirituality

b : to make concrete and perceptible

3 : to cause to become a body or part of a body : INCORPORATE

4 : to represent in human or animal form : PERSONIFY

All of these imply another entity – or at the very least the same entity in a different form – that is both prior to and distinct from the embodiment of it. In other words, these definitions describe representation of one thing by something else. Fischer-Lichte affirms, “In the eighteenth century, the term ‘embodiment’ described how the imperceptible world of concepts and ideas became perceptible by being articulated through a body. This definition reflects a two-world theory: meanings were understood as mental entities that were comprehensible only insofar as there were signs to convey them” (33). Language was the ideal sign for conveying meaning, while the body, according to Fischer-Lichte, “was seen as a far less dependable medium and material for acts of signification” (33). To ensure the legibility of the semiotic body, the phenomenal body was purified through codified technical training and subservience to literary text.

Fischer-Lichte identifies two tensions with this method. First, she writes, “embodiment required simultaneous disembodiment” – semiotic embodiment, but phenomenal disembodiment. Second, she continues, “the transmission of truth conflicted with the transience of performance” (33). Here again we encounter a problematic through-line within mind-body dualism, where language, affined with the Platonic ideal, is conceived as permanent, while the tangible body is mobile, mortal, and ephemeral. Going further, moral overtones are apparent in definition two (a)

of “embody:” “to deprive of spirituality,” evidencing a value differential between the original form and the embodied form. The latter is a depraved version of the former, which is pure and true. Consistent with dualism’s hegemony, the body is irreconcilably other and less than mind, spirit, and soul.

It wasn’t until the late-twentieth century that language was destabilized by the post-structuralists, including postmodern French philosophers Michael Foucault (1926-1984) and Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), who developed a form of semiotic analysis called deconstruction. In many ways, their work is an extension of phenomenology. For example, Merleau-Ponty dissolved mind-body dualism in part by demonstrating that language intrinsically is embodied. He writes,

we must, as we shall see, recognize a primary process of signification in which the thing expressed does not exist apart from the expression, and in which the signs themselves induce their significance externally. In this way the body expresses total existence, not because it is an external accompaniment to that existence, but because existence realizes itself in the body. This incarnate significance is the central phenomenon of which the body and mind, sign and significance are abstract moments. (*Phenomenology of Perception* 192)

Merleau-Ponty contrasts “incarnate significance” with “conventional means of expression,” which communicate via culturally constructed correspondence between signifier and signified. He critiques the latter as failing to “give rise to genuine communication” (192). According to Csordas, “Merleau-Ponty sees at the root of speech a verbal gesture with immanent meaning, as against a notion of speech as a representation of” (*Body/Meaning/Healing* 76). In combining the words “verbal” and “gesture,” Merleau-Ponty creates a productive paradox. While the latter

generally denotes bodily activity without spoken language, by describing speech as a “verbal gesture,” Merleau-Ponty insists that language is embodied and that bodily movement is meaningful. Csordas continues,

In this view, speech is coterminous with thought, and we possess words in terms of their articulatory and acoustic style as one of the possible uses of our body. Speech does not express or represent thought, since thought is for the most part inchoate until it is spoken (or written). Instead, speech is an act or phonetic gesture in which one takes up an existential position in the world. (*Body/Meaning/Healing* 76)

The substance of thought is language. In order for thought to be fully formed, language needs to be articulated in speech or writing, both of which are embodied acts. The conclusion that thought, too, is an act of embodiment renders Cartesian dualism a *non sequitur*.

Concurrent with twentieth century cultural and philosophical movements, avant-garde performance resisted representational frameworks. Liberation from one-to-one correspondence between form, content and meaning is an important project within postmodernity. Of postdramatic dramaturgy, American dramaturg Heidi Gilpin writes, “The task of the dramaturg in this context is to confront the effervescent necessities of performing the multivalent and simultaneously make it resonate for audiences as a new form of perception” (Gilpin 87). However, the fourth definition of “embody” – “to represent in human or animal form : PERSONIFY” – undercuts this postmodern agenda. Postdramatic works go beyond representation and personification to destabilize meaning through decentralized text and uncodified movement, and through emphasis on process over product. Further, the postdramatic paradigm prioritizes the body as an end in itself. Postmodern dancers foregrounded the medium

of dance and the body as subject (Banes 44). In contemporary performance, the body is both the experiencer and the experience, rather than or in addition to representing something else.

Only in the twentieth century does the definition of “embodiment” evolve to imply a critique of systems of representation. In the 1990s, Csordas essentially redefined the term “embodiment” as “the existential ground of culture and self,” in contrast to previous anthropological treatments of the body “as either empirical thing or analytic theme” (Fischer-Lichte 33; Csordas “Introduction...” 6). Csordas cites French sociologist Marcel Mauss (1872-1950), who, he writes,

anticipated how a paradigm of embodiment might mediate fundamental dualities (mind-body, sign-significance, existence-being) in his statement that the body is simultaneously both the original object upon which the work of culture is carried out and the original tool with which that work is achieved...It is at once an object of technique, a technical means, and the subjective origin of technique. (*Body/Meaning/Healing* 62)

Culture inscribes itself on bodies through social activity: Consumption, education, governance, medicine and the arts. Bodily activity, in turn, comprises culture: Sex, procreation, hunting and domesticating animals, growing food, fighting and peace-making. Like the phenomenologists, Csordas rejects mind-body dualism, insisting instead that the mind is embodied.

Applied to performance, Csordas’ redefinition of “embodiment” describes a dialectic that mediates the phenomenal body and semiotic body. Fischer-Lichte writes,

The concept of embodiment thus refers to those fleeting bodily processes through which the phenomenal body constitutes itself in its particularity and creates specific meanings.

Actors present their phenomenal bodies in a particular manner, so that they are

experienced as *present* and simultaneously as a dramatic character...When actors bring forth their phenomenal body and its energy, they appear as *embodied minds*. (33-34)

In my performance and directing, I understand “presence” as embodied awareness in the here-and-now. According to her “*radical concept of presence*,” Fischer-Lichte writes, “the spectators experience both self and other as *embodied mind*. The circulating energy is perceived as a transformative power, and in this sense as a life force” (34). The spectators will bring their own interpretative lens to the presence of the performer’s phenomenal and semiotic body. The postdramatic paradigm emphasizes the co-creative, embodied experience of performer and spectator over the unidirectional conveyance of a singular message or interpretation. Whatever exchange takes place depends upon the particular performer and spectators within a given time and place. Performance and its meaning rest on this specificity.

Derived from Latin in the mid-1600s, corporeality is the experience of “having, consisting of, or relating to a physical material body” (*Merriam-Webster*, “corporeality”). Social scientists Chris Gilleard and Paul Higgs distinguish corporeality from embodiment, writing, “‘Corporeality’ can be seen to signify the body as a social actant, while ‘embodiment’ might better signify the body as a vehicle of social agency” (5). Lepecki lists corporeality as one of dance’s five “main constitutive qualities.” Through embodiment, he writes, dance offers concrete ways to investigate the physical body and imagine alternatives – “thus refiguring corporeality and proposing improbable subjectivities” (“Introduction//Dance...” 15). In *Mrs. Wrights*, the embodiment of five historical female characters through my singular corporeality proposes an alternative logic to prevailing Wright-centric narratives. Through my solo performance, the experience of being a woman – fundamentally, of having a female body – becomes the narrative by which the characters are related to one another and to contemporary womanhood.

Just like the shifting cultural paradigms of the body, Foster's genealogy of "kinesthesia" indicates that its meaning has changed over the twentieth century. Coined by neurologist Henry Charlton Bastian in 1880 and derived from the Greek *kine* (movement) and *aesthesis* (sensation), Foster writes, "'kinesthesia' initially referred specifically to the muscular sense of the body's movement" (74). Following developments linking kinesthesia to specific bodily systems, in the late 1990s neuroscientist Vittorio Gallese and his colleagues developed a human neural basis for fundamental intersubjectivity and kinesthetic empathy – "the...propensity to feel what another is feeling" – by connecting mirror neuron research to the earlier insights of Merleau-Ponty and others (Foster 165-166). Yet, Gallese does not go so far as American dance critic John Martin (1893–1985), who developed his own theory of kinesthetic empathy and believed, according to Foster, that "empathy remained universally identical for all humans" (168). According to Foster, current research indicates that kinesthetic empathy occurs across humanity, but is highly individualized – depending upon culture, socio-economics, training and physical experiences (168). Kinesthetic empathy nonetheless remains important to my discussion of embodiment because it reveals the interdependence of body and cognition just as phenomenology dissolves mind-body dualism. It also emphasizes intersubjective empathy on the basis of bodily experience – sensing and feeling – prior to objectification through naming – emotion. This opens up dramaturgical possibilities for contemporary performance, pointing to legibility beyond and beside text, narrative, and character.

Stripping away dualism, the bodymind is multifariously enacted through its property of doubleness. An apt metaphor is a danced duet, setting the bodymind in motion and illustrating its inherent flux. Discursive partners negotiate leading and following, foregrounding and backgrounding, showcasing and obscuring, supporting and giving weight, imitating and

experiencing, having a body and being a body. Enacted in the present moment, the meaning that emerges from the dance likewise is in perpetual motion. As such, the present participle “being embodied” might better describe the active, subjective experience of “embodiment,” which becomes objectified as a noun. Nonetheless, throughout my writing, I employ the more common descriptor “embodiment” so as to engage in dialogue with other performance and social science scholars.

In summary, when I use the word “embodiment,” I am relying on a revised definition with roots in twentieth century philosophy, social sciences, and performance theory – particularly phenomenology, the performative turn, and postdramatic performance, an outgrowth of the avant-garde movement. I understand embodiment as mediating phenomenal body and semiotic body, body-subject and body-object, in an ever-evolving dance – not of opposites, but of partners in human being and doing. Embodiment dissolves mind-body dualism as it involves the integration of mind and body, thought and action. I use the compound, “bodymind” in order to express the discursive relationship between body and mind. In conceiving embodiment as such, I am resisting a dualist worldview and Enlightenment-era definition of “embodiment.” My genealogical analysis of embodiment contextualizes the body in history to reveal its cultural construction. Admittedly, my personal values around the bodymind and embodiment likewise are products of my particular culture and education.

2.2. Reflections on Research

Using *Mrs. Wrights* as a case study for the creation of contemporary embodied performance, I discuss my process encompassing both conceptual and movement research. I begin with an overview of general considerations and challenges related to mediating conceptual

and movement research through the bodymind. In overcoming these challenges, I realize myself both as artist and as the historical female characters.

Moving beyond artistic process, my embodied creative praxis might productively be viewed through the lens of ethnographic research – and, in particular, performance ethnography and sensory ethnography – which I elucidate further in Chapter Four: Ethnography.

Traditionally, the ethnographic method in sociocultural anthropology produces qualitative data through fieldwork consisting of participant observation supplemented by in-depth interviews (Farrer 138). My method closely resembles participant observation, with the exception that my subjects are deceased. Despite their temporal emplacement in the past, I went about researching the women and Wright not only by collecting factual information, but through first-hand bodily experiences, both outside of and inside the studio.

My various research methods coalesced in psychophysical conversation between historical information conveyed through text; sensory experiences gathered from artifacts, images and sounds; and fully embodied explorations. Discussing the body's role in meaning-making, Merleau-Ponty writes, "It is through my body that I understand other people, just as it is through my body that I perceive 'things'. The meaning of a gesture thus 'understood' is not behind it, it is intermingled with the structure of the world outlined by the gesture, and which I take up on my own account" (Phenomenology of Perception 216). In contrast to mind-body dualism, my process demonstrates, as Merleau-Ponty asserts, that embodied research is an epistemologically legitimate way of knowing. It is ultimately through the intermingling of my body with cognitive information that I accessed the historical characters, built a world on stage, and generated new meanings for audiences. This is not to say that the knowledge I produced is objectively true, but to do away with the hegemonic position of objectivity altogether. Consistent

with existential phenomenology's acknowledgement of an observer's inherent subjectivity, reflexivity is integral to ethnographic methodology. In the sections that follow, I reflect on the methods, assumptions, and cognitive and bodily experiences that arose within my process to generate my particular interpretation, organization, and performance of knowledge.

Pairing my graduate training in postmodern dance and somatics with prior professional work in physical theatre, I investigated a range of methods along the semiotic-phenomenal continuum. These included text, voice, mime, clowning, object manipulation, costuming, physicality, sensation, embodiment, dance, and choreography. I also was influenced by the work of artists similarly working at the intersection of drama and embodiment, which often manifests as a hybrid of theatre and dance. These included Mary Overlie (American, 1946-); Okwui Okpokwasili (Igbo-Nigerian American, 1972-); Meredith Monk (American, 1942-); Sheetal Gandhi (American, n.d.); Pina Bausch (German, 1940-2009); and LeeSaar The Company, directed by Saar Harari (Israeli American, n.d.) and Lee Sher (Israeli American, n.d.), protégés of Naharin.

2.2.A. Realizing Myself as Artist

One of the central challenges in my process was navigating historical fact and artistic imagination. In general, I find that perfectionism stagnates my process. I distract myself from moving forward by consuming information. I don't feel competent to begin a project until I have enough research – but it rarely feels like there is enough. This minimizes my capacity to take risks and engage my intuition, imagination, and impulses.

In addition to my usual habits, a particular challenge for this project was my concern for the audience. Profeta notes, “A common description of the dramaturg is that she is the work's

first audience...from the dramaturg's chronological 'first' often extends the idea that she operates as an 'advocate' for the full range of observers" (88). My awareness of prospective audiences was heightened through interactions with Wright admirers. In particular, I became aware that socially taboo topics such as infidelity and drug addiction might be offensive to older Wright followers. More generally, I recognized that my audiences would bring a depth and breadth of knowledge, values and opinions to my work.

In the face of highly knowledgeable audiences, I became concerned about the historicity of my work. I researched fastidiously, consulting a wide variety of sources included in Appendix C: Source Material. Sources are categorized as follows: 1) Primary sources including newspaper articles, autobiographies, and books by the historical figures or from the historical era; 2) Secondary sources such as biographies and documentaries; 3) Works of historical fiction; and 4) In-person visits to and tours of Wright architectural sites.

The more I researched for *Mrs. Wrights*, however, the less power I felt as an artist working with and through the body. Choreographer Liz Lerman's differentiation between creative and academic research is informative here. She describes asking questions as a way of life and as fuel for the imagination (1-2). But, as an artist, she doesn't "have to fulfill someone else's ideas about what constitutes real research" (208). In this, she demonstrates the importance of asking questions and, she writes, "observing with reason" in the way that best fits an artistic project, rather than as a search for objective truth (22). Lerman's observation made me realize that I often approach my questions academically, rather than as fodder for the body and imagination to consume and create. The former is informative, while the latter is generative. Describing the "power of the fragment," Profeta adds to my discussion of creative research. She writes, "Having declared itself partial and in motion, the fragment is volatile, triggering activity

in art-makers and audiences alike, who themselves spring into motion to imagine the past or future whole(s) suggested by the part” (69-70). In the creation of art, it is better to have research that inquires, rather than that instructs. I found that I needed to work from the position of artist with a point of view and desire to inspire new perspectives, rather than as an historian.

Over the course of making *Mrs. Wrights*, I became more adept at moving between fragmentary information and imagined reality, shifting my position from historical researcher to artistic creator in a non-linear process of inquiry and discovery. I began by collecting well-known historical facts that frequently were cited across many sources. This kind of information addressed questions of who, what, where and when. Within the historical fiction novels I consulted, these facts made up the skeletal structure that authors developed through plot and character relationships. The same events reappeared from one literary or biographical work to the next. Adding fragment to fragment, I broadened my scope to collect information about the characters’ historical contexts, viewed images and videos, and visited architectural sites.

At first, I collected information in a quest for complete historical accuracy, which proved to be an unrealistic and unproductive goal. Recognizing the “power of the fragment,” I began to let go of the need for complete knowledge, allowing myself to infer and to imagine. I needed to take the leap from fact to fiction, building vibrant physical characters through whatever limited information I had. I especially looked to those facts that had appeared time and time again in multiple sources and structured my work by arranging these “fragments.”

Working between conceptual and movement research, I breathed life into the characters through psychophysical differentiation and development of their personality, physicality, and voice. As I continued my conceptual research, however, I obtained new information that sometimes supported and sometimes contradicted my embodiment of each character. For

example, I did not consult American biographer Meryle Secrest's *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Biography* until about halfway through my research process, after I already had begun to employ my physical imagination to fill in fragmentary factual information. Although Secrest's tome provided particularly detailed and vivid information about Wright and the women, it did not always agree with my interpretation. In the case of Wright's first wife Kitty (Catherine "Kitty" Lee Tobin, b. 1871, Nebraska / d. 1959, California), the new information depicted a character somewhat different from what I had imagined – energetic, intelligent and fiery, rather than the tired, naïve and struggling woman of Scene 3.2: Kitty Rocking Chair Dance. In the case of his second wife Miriam (Maude Miriam Noel, née Hicks, b. 1869, Tennessee / d. 1930, Wisconsin), however, the new information affirmed what I had embodied in Scene 6.2: Miriam Letters.

Later, I realized, what mattered more than the "truthfulness" of my portrayal was sticking to my unique point of view as an embodied artist with the intention to put historical women's lived experiences on display through performance. American philosopher Alva Noë asserts, "a choreographer is in the business of making experience and of giving us opportunities to do phenomenology – to catch ourselves in the act of experiencing" (qtd. in Profeta 93). More than facts, I offer trembling, breath, spaciousness, and effort – sensed facts not fully captured by scholarly or even literary writing. Each author – whether writer, playwright, or choreographer – has a purpose and a perspective. Secrest's biography illuminates Wright's life through written scholarship. My work, on the other hand, reveals the women's lives through experience itself – embodied performance. Recognizing my unique purpose and methodology, I did not feel the need to change what I had created in light of new information because it was consistent with my historical perspective and interpretation.

In the prologue of *Mrs. Wrights*, I allude to the tension between invention and truth inherent in my research. At her husband's funeral, Wright's third wife Olgivanna (Olgivanna Lloyd Wright, née Lazovich Miljanov, b. 1898, Montenegro / d. 1985, Arizona) says, "Did you read my husband's obituary in the New York Times? / Phoenix, Arizona. April 9, 1959 – Frank Lloyd Wright dies. Famed architect was 89. / This headline is not right. / He changed his age to make him look two years less" (Reinke, "*Mrs. Wrights*" 1). Indeed, according to architecture critic and writer on architecture Ada Louise Huxtable, later in life, Wright changed his birth date from 1867 to 1869 (1). Wright had infamously said, "The truth is more important than the facts." A salesman, he branded himself in order to attain the status of mythological figurehead.

While the sentences in my prologue are borne of Wright's experience, they coincide with my own creative process. By acknowledging the slipperiness of truth, I find permission to follow my intuition, even in the face of knowledgeable and opinionated audiences. I access my imagination best through embodiment. Alongside historians, documentarians, and authors, then, I co-created stories, experiences and meanings for *Mrs. Wrights* by engaging in movement research in conversation with documented history.

Prioritizing the bodymind over language and cognition, choreographer and writer Susan Rethorst's practical philosophy of choreographic thought likewise provides a model for resisting Cartesian dualism in creative praxis. She proclaims:

We need to hold to the idea that the knowledge held in our bodies, and our art, is vast and more '...unclassifiable than we give it credit for being....' (in [American poet, essayist and feminist Adrienne] Rich's phrase). And that, as much as we love conversation and analysis, language need not lead our making. It can, yes. But it need not. And if we are

seduced by our desire to value the classifiable, we are robbed of this choice. (Rethorst 106)

Rethorst values dances which are not “about,” but which arise “out of” a choreographer/performer (107). The body is both the process and the product – not the ideas, interpretations and explanations about the body or the dance.

Conversely, for *Mrs. Wrights*, I started from a concept and research *about* my subject, but much of my research also arose *out of* my body in the way Rethorst advances. Far from working linearly, I toggled back and forth between conceptual and movement research, asking and answering questions through a dialectic between mind and body. Cognition and embodiment working symbiotically, it was the latter that liberated my artistic imagination from the perils of over-thinking.

2.2.B. Realizing Historical Female Characters

Wright’s historical legacy, to use a couple of gendered tropes, has put the women “in their place” – that is, “behind the man.” Foregrounding the women in *Mrs. Wrights* proved challenging because of Wright’s disproportionate historical footprint. His own writing and architectural renderings⁵ comprise a large portion of the historical record and his historical presence has been inflated by Wright institutions, writers, and the media. Literature scholars Mirianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith write, “From feminist and other varieties of social history,

⁵ It should be noted that the watercolor renderings of buildings and landscapes by American architect Marion Mahony Griffin (b. 1871, Illinois / d. 1961, Illinois) – probably the first licensed female architect in the United States – became known as a staple of Wright’s style, although she was not credited for them until much later. She contributed more than half of the drawings in Wright’s famous Wasmuth portfolio, which historian Vincent Scully calls “one of the three most influential architectural treatises of the twentieth century” (qtd. in Birmingham, par. 9).

we have learned that public media and official archives memorialize the experiences of the powerful, those who control hegemonic discursive spaces” (12). A master of self-promotion, Wright gained two advantages by changing his birth date from 1867 to 1869. Huxtable writes, “Two years hardly seem worth the trouble for all the chronological complications such things cause. In Frank Lloyd Wright’s case, it had the desired effect - it made a case for a precocious talent with an impressively youthful, early success in Chicago in the 1890s, and it kept him shy of the dreaded 90-mark during his brilliant late work in the 1950s” (1). Wright’s personal narrative⁶ demonstrates the elusiveness of historical facts, constructed by those in power to serve their own self-interests.

It should be noted that several of the women did leave behind their own writings, but that these have not been widely circulated like the Wright-centric documentation. Olgivanna left the most – six books, four of which are on the subject of her husband and their life together, and two of which focus on her own philosophical thoughts. Her autobiographical writings were not released until 2017, when Musicologist Maxine Fawcett-Yeske and Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation Archives Founding Director Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer teamed up to assemble her previously unpublished autobiography. Miriam wrote manuscripts about her relationship with Wright that were published in 1932 in five editions of the *Milwaukee Journal Sunday Magazine*. Wright’s lover Mamah (Martha “Mamah” Bouton Borthwick, b. 1869, Iowa / d. 1914, Wisconsin) translated three books by Swedish feminist Ellen Key. Her letters to Key are kept in

⁶ According to Huxtable,

There are two lives of Frank Lloyd Wright: the one he created and the one he lived. The first, his own embellished version, is the standard Wright mythology - the architect as maverick genius and embattled, misunderstood loner...As more documents and details become available to scholars with the opening of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives almost thirty years after Wright’s death, a series of publications appeared that were devoted to sorting out a long life full of outrageous claims and scandalous behavior. (Huxtable xiii)

two different locations in the Ellen Key Archive, Manuscripts Department, Royal Library, National Library of Sweden, Stockholm (Friedman 149). American professor of art and architecture Alice T. Friedman has published excerpts to support her research on Wright and feminism. To my knowledge, Kitty and Wright's mother Anna (Anna Lloyd Jones, b. 1838, Wales / d. 1923, Wisconsin), did not leave any written documentation.

Another challenge in foregrounding the women was that, at least superficially, their affiliation seemed arbitrary but for their connection to Wright. Journalist Sarah Churchwell's review of TC Boyle's *The Women*, a work of historical fiction comprising the same characters as *Mrs. Wrights*, indicates just that. She writes, "However interesting, and formative, the women in Wright's life may have been, the unavoidable fact remains that they are interesting in so far as they were involved with Frank Lloyd Wright, one of the greatest architects in history" (par. 12). Further, Boyle's project did not accomplish what I had set out to do. Churchwell indicates, "The real irony of *The Women* is that of all the formidable and often admirable women in Wright's life, only the unhinged Miriam really comes to life. The others remain underdeveloped, more gestures than fully realised characters" (par. 11). In general, the women's stories have been exploited to further memorialize an already immortalized Wright, rather than to shed light on the women themselves. Popular culture does not view the women as worthy of attention in their own right.

A key intention I had in creating *Mrs. Wrights* was to make a feminist show that put the women's heretofore overshadowed experiences center stage, a position which history had not bestowed them. Rather than valuing them for their shared proximity to male celebrity, my project reframes their cultural import. By bringing the historically situated problems they confronted into the present, the women become conduits for understanding gender-based challenges today.

Their desires and experiences speak to larger women's issues of motherhood, feminism, addiction, and work.

To make the women visible, then, I needed to create complex, three-dimensional female characters. Pivoting between conceptual and movement research, I navigated Merleau-Ponty's conceptual framework of the objective and the pre-objective in my development of them. My research process began with the objective – a concept articulated in a written proposal, and then distilled through historical research from books, news articles and documentaries. In the face of limited historical documentation, I associated some of the women with particular issues in American women's history. But this conceptual strategy was not enough to elevate their presence to the level of Wright's. Additionally, I needed to fully embody each character's unique lived experience psychosomatically. Retrograding, I used sensory and movement experiences to arrive at my own embodied version of the pre-objective, identifying emergent movement signatures to inform choreographic options.

My semiotic body became the go-to conduit for the translation from objective to pre-objective. Informed by my experience in physical theatre, I often began with text, gesture, mime, or object. Like a skeleton, these then provided a structure by which to enact my phenomenal body. I focused the awareness of my bodymind on cues such as sound, breath, physical connectivity, imagery, sensation, presence, space, states and drives. Moving from cognition to kinesthesia, I mobilized the semiotic and phenomenal through dialogic embodiment in order to develop complex characters, meanings and experiences.

2.3. Case Study: Embodiment and *Mrs. Wrights*

In what follows, I detail specific considerations that informed my development of *Mrs. Wrights* through embodied research. I begin with contextual historical information before moving on to each of the four main female characters, which I discuss in the order in which they appear in the show. I preface my investigation into each woman with biographical information.⁷ I then discuss strategies of embodiment, influences from other embodied performance practitioners, choreographic choices, and Laban Effort Factors. Separately, I address my use of objects in the context of embodiment. I conclude with reflections on overarching sensory experiences encountered in my interactions with primary source material during my information-gathering process.

2.3.A. Historical Context: Victorian Era America

All of the characters in *Mrs. Wrights* are confronted with the cultural conventions of the Victorian Era (1837-1901) in America to varying degrees. An offshoot of the period in Great Britain, it is so-named for Queen Victoria. British academic and journalist Kathryn Hughes writes, “During the Victorian period men and women’s roles became more sharply defined than at any time in history” (par. 1). In the early nineteenth century in the United States, court rulings established the doctrine of separate spheres. This common law principle, according to American sociologist Ashlyn K. Kuersten, “defined a male sphere that was public – one concerned with the regulated world of government, trade, business, and law, from which women were largely excluded – and a women’s sphere that was private – encompassing the unregulated realm of home, family, and child rearing” (16). Even if a woman worked or volunteered outside the home,

⁷ Brief biographies for all the characters are summarized in Appendix D: Historical Characters. A detailed historical timeline is delineated in Appendix E: Historical Timeline. Short biographies also are included for audiences to read in the program (Appendix N: Program from Thesis Performance (May 5, 2018)).

these activities were considered as extensions of her exalted role within the home. Kuersten continues, “The separate spheres ideology not only rationalized women’s exclusion from political and economic self-rule and their assignment to dependent and subservient roles but also helped to obscure that subordination by defining women’s confinement to matters of home and family as ‘natural’” (17). Women’s place within the home and child-rearing duties were justified because they were seen as weaker than but morally superior to men.

At the same time, American women were demanding equal rights. Kuersten writes, “Liberal feminism can be seen most easily in the earliest feminist movement, which stressed women’s right to education, to vote, to practice their chosen professions, and to have political representation if they are obligated to pay taxes to the state” (8). The first women’s movement in the United States was an offspring of the abolitionist movement. In 1848, the first women’s rights meeting took place in Seneca Falls, New York to discuss the social, civil and religious condition and rights of women. Connecting British oppression with gender inequality, the meeting generated a “Declaration of Sentiments” modeled on the United States Declaration of Independence. According to Kuersten, “it presented demands for equal rights of women in marriage, education, religion, employment, and politics” (5). The National American Woman Suffrage Association was formed in 1890, and the Nineteenth Amendment was passed in 1920, giving women the full right to vote with men. By 1900, most states had liberalized rules governing married women’s property.

The women not only are notable for their individual achievements, but also provide a conduit to historical women’s issues that remain relevant today. Collectively, their lives span the years 1869-1985 and mirror nineteenth and twentieth century American middle class women’s history. In order to draw out connections between past and present, I associate several of the

woman with historical movements and issues. With scant primary source material on the women excepting Olgivanna, historical context helped to ensure three-dimensional character development for Kitty, Mamah and Miriam.

2.3.B1. Olgivanna: “Immortality”

Olgivanna Lloyd Wright (née Lazovich Miljanov, b. 1898, Montenegro / d. 1985, Arizona) was the third and final wife of Frank Lloyd Wright, whom she married in 1928. She was born Olga Ivanovna Lazovich to Iovan Lazovich, Chief Justice of the Montenegrin Supreme Court, and Milica Miljanov, Montenegrin soldier and war heroine in World War I and daughter of famous Montenegrin writer and general, Duke Marko Milijanov. Iovan, who went blind at the age of 35, was good-natured and reserved, while Milica was stubborn and imperious. Olgivanna writes, “I felt deep love for my father and had an instinctive understanding of my mother’s wild nature” (20). Her father was her scholastic tutor, and she developed a deeply philosophical intellect at a young age.

Olgivanna was the youngest of five children – two boys and three girls, one of whom died of tuberculosis at age 18. Her mother tongue was Serbian, but she became fluent in Russian when she moved to Batum to live with her sister Julia. Here, she married her first husband, Russian architect Vladimir Hinzenberg (m. 1917 / d. 1925), with whom she bore daughter Svetlana Wright Peters (née Hinzenberg) (b. 1917, Russia / d. 1946, Wisconsin). Unfulfilled by Hinzenberg’s lack of philosophical depth, Olgivanna became a student of Armenian mystic and teacher George Ivanovich (G. I.) Gurdjieff (b. 1866, Armenia / d. 1949, France). When he asked her what she most wanted, she replied, “Mr. Gurdjieff, most of all I want immortality,” thus divulging a goal that would motivate her entire life (O. Wright 35). In Gurdjieff’s community,

Olgivanna contributed with physical labor and through practice and performance of his spiritual dances. After the Bolshevik Revolution had erupted, she followed Gurdjieff to Turkey and France, finally leaving to spread his teachings in the United States. Shortly thereafter, in 1924, while in the process of divorcing Hinzenberg, she met Wright at the Russian Ballet in Chicago. They quickly fell in love and Olgivanna became pregnant with her second daughter, Iovanna Lloyd Wright (b. 1925, Illinois / d. 2015, California). They could not legally marry, however, until 1928, exactly one year after Wright's second wife Miriam granted him divorce.

In "Scene 7.1: Olgivanna Final Scene" of *Mrs. Wrights*, I juxtapose Olgivanna's many accomplishments, including her positive influence on Wright's career, with the equally prevalent public criticisms cast upon her (Reinke, "*Mrs. Wrights*" 13-14). Much of the language is adapted from historical documents. In the New York Times obituary for Olgivanna, Wolfgang Saxon describes her as the "matriarchal ruler of [the] Taliesin [Fellowship]," the architecture school and commune she co-founded with Wright in 1932. Through this and other efforts, Olgivanna effectively revived Wright's floundering career in the midst of the Great Depression. Milwaukee Journal Sentinel art critic James Auer confirms, "Olgivanna...played a crucial role in the third act of Frank Lloyd Wright's long, productive career. From 1924 until her husband's passing in 1959...she contributed greatly to his personal and creative life" (14). She also was an artist in her own right – she composed more than 40 works of music, wrote five books, and with daughter Iovanna directed dance drama productions at Taliesin. She served as a counselor to apprentices, although this often involved meddling with their personal affairs. Auer reveals Olgivanna's difficult and complex personality: "Like many others I found Mrs. Wright consistently intriguing. She was, from one moment to the next, prescient, psychic, critical...appreciative, empathetic, thoughtful, remote, intense, concerned...She was fond of telling apprentices, nothing

worth doing was easy, and no goal worth achieving was simply attained” (14). It was this complexity that I aimed to embody in my performance.

Olgivanna is positioned as the protagonist in *Mrs. Wrights* for several reasons. Firstly, compared to the other women, I relate most closely with her life experiences. Like me, Olgivanna is an artist who works at one time or another in music and dance. At around the same age as her, I was exposed to the philosophy of her spiritual teacher Gurdjieff through my work with William Penzey, Sr. at The Spice House in my hometown of Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. In adulthood, I find myself in a romantic partnership with Rott that, like Olgivanna’s relationship with Wright, is also a creative and business partnership. Secondly, I find that, at least in Wisconsin, the sensational story of Mamah’s murder overshadows Olgivanna’s considerable work as an artist, teacher and leader of the Taliesin Fellowship, not to mention her indispensable influence on Wright’s career. Finally, through her writing, Olgivanna leaves behind far more historical documentation than the other women. The direct access to her voice brought me closer to her and convinced me of the importance of sharing it with audiences.

Although she is the hero, I also conceive of Olgivanna as a shapeshifter. An archetype in mythology, the shapeshifter conventionally is a different character than the hero. The latter cannot fully trust the former due to her/his changing roles from ally to enemy, both supporting and challenging the hero. Instead, I extrapolate Olgivanna’s affiliation with the occult to imagine her as a medium with the capacity to embody the other women closest to Wright, a powerful tool along her hero’s journey. Relevant to my discussion of embodiment, through psychophysical transformation, a shapeshifter embodies different characters and moods. The show’s point of departure is Wright’s death, which sets Olgivanna contemplating central themes in her life – relationship, independence, and immortality. It is conceivable that at Wright’s funeral, Olgivanna

also would have been confronted with stories about the women closest to Wright. Through shapeshifting embodiment, she merges their experiences with hers. Her journey of grief and healing culminates when she confronts criticisms directed at her, expressed on stage by the other women. In response, she asserts accomplishments in “Scene 7.1: Olgivanna Final Scene” (Reinke, “*Mrs. Wrights*” 13-14). Then, in “Scene 7.2: Epilogue – Immortality,” she revisits her partnership with Wright in an embodied monologue that alludes to “Scene 1: Prologue – Mortality” (Reinke, “*Mrs. Wrights*” 14-15, 1-2).

2.3.B2. Olgivanna: Inscribing the Body

Embodied performance has not shied away from exploring the interrelationship between words and the body, which dramatic theatre/dance addresses mostly separately. Phenomenology lays the theoretical foundation for embodiment’s line of holistic creative inquiry. Merleau-Ponty contends that language is rooted in bodily gesture and that it is through the body that words become meaningful. He writes, “It is my body which gives significance not only to the natural object, but also to cultural objects like words...[it] provides words with their primordial significance through the way in which it receives them” (*Phenomenology of Perception* 273, 275). Before words come to represent something and are made conceptually meaningful, the body encounters them as pre-objective auditory and visual experiences. Thus, words and the body are not discrete entities but co-exist on a dialogic continuum from verbal to nonverbal.

It seems fitting that this premise informs my development of the character Olgivanna, who had provided me with the most words on account of her extensive philosophical and autobiographical writing. For “Scene 4.1: Olgivanna Childhood,” I combine narrative text describing a pivotal event from Olgivanna’s childhood – her father’s premature blindness – with

excerpts from philosophical literature she read as a precocious child (Reinke, “*Mrs. Wrights*” 5-6). Rather than embodying the text, I begin my movement research with an improvisation score exploring geometric shapes. This relates to another story from Olgivanna’s childhood in which, foreshadowing her marriage to Wright, a fortune teller predicts she will meet a man associated with “triangles, circles and squares” (O. Wright 25). I rehearse this section many times, playing prerecorded text from the script as I move. Through a stream-of-consciousness process of “Moving-While-Listening,” I begin to find connections between the abstract movement and the words, although they are unrelated in their inception. Inspired by her father’s blindness, for example, I close my eyes and embody, as Schuchart observes, “an internal landscape bubbling over with feeling and ideas” (Assignment Feedback). I allow the prerecorded text to inform the duration, velocity and spacing of different movement motifs. Eventually, I decide to speak the text rather than to use prerecorded text so that Scene 4.1 remains in the same world as the rest of the show. The “Moving-While-Listening” exercise used to develop the scene succeeds in providing a structure by which to freely explore embodied response to narrative. Through this, I internalize the semiotic within my phenomenal body, thereby generating multivalent embodied meaning.

At one point, however, I begin to doubt my choices and fear the overall show is too tragic. Rather than being an adult Olgivanna recalling her childhood, I decide to portray the child Olgivanna telling a story, injecting it with humorous quips and mime. After re-working the scene, it falls completely flat. Gillespie reports that performing it “like a child...infantilizes the *womanness*” (Assignment Feedback). Schuchart suggests approaching Olgivanna’s childhood as “a really rich environmental landscape or internal world that’s overflowing, rather than being overt” (Assignment Feedback). I revert back to my earlier version and reduce the text in order to

allow my body to speak (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 22:29-27:03). Rather than portraying a child, I embody the childness that my adult body – and Olgivanna’s – still carries – saturated in feeling, desiring wholeness and healing, and resistant to gravity. Continuing Olgivanna’s journey, “Scene 4.2: Olgivanna Training” drops text altogether (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 42:53-46:47). The body, however, is treated in much the same way – as a conduit between past and present, youth and adulthood. To embody Olgivanna’s search for immortality, I use Increasing Pressure, Binding, Rising and Sinking movements – the body’s resistance to gravity.

One of my creative inquiries for *Mrs. Wrights* asks, after the women had lived in Wright’s spaces, how might his spaces then “live” in their bodies? I had thought to explore this by incorporating the raw materials of architecture into the show. A recurrent theme in Wright’s development of organic architecture, he writes, “Bring out the nature of the materials, let their nature intimately into your scheme” (“In the Cause of Architecture” 52). Yet, I recognized the logistical challenges incorporating materials such as wood would pose for rehearsing and touring the show. Instead, I develop a strategy called “Verbalizing/Being,” in which I explore the interaction of materials and body through verbalized words and the body in action.

Exploring this continuum is a way for me to connect the primary materials of my performance – body and text. I create a list of architectural materials – for example, concrete, steel, stone, and brick – and a list of different body parts – flesh, breath, heart, and bone, to name a few. Not only do these categories get at my initial question, they correlate nicely with Wright and Olgivanna’s respective vocations – architecture and dance. I judiciously include words with dynamic phonetic qualities that may be grouped with other words having contrasting phonemes. In the past, when I would try to create movement based on words, I would become entangled in

their representational meanings and would generate mimetic movement. Wanting to embody the primordial essence of these words through my pre-objective experiencing, through “Verbalizing/Being,” I subvert their representational meaning by emphasizing my bodily experience of speaking and hearing them.

I vary my pitch, volume, tempo and resonance, observing how the words feel in my mouth, throat, lungs, and diaphragm. I open my awareness of feelings, sensations, images, and impulses, using these to catalyze and guide my bodymind. Repeating the words over and over again, they become increasingly unrecognizable, but at the same time provide more and more sensory information with which to fuel embodiment. An experience of the word-as-sound triggers a movement impulse, which I explore and then develop into a short phrase as my body consumes the word. I am surprised at how emotionally resonant many of the words are – the hardness and coldness of “concrete” compared to the warmth and suppleness of “flesh,” for instance. I am satisfied with how quickly I am able to generate dynamic material by creating pairings of architectural and bodily words having contrasting phonetic qualities. These become seeds for Olgivanna’s primary movement motifs, which I use in “Scene 1: Prologue – Mortality,” “Scene 4.1: Olgivanna Childhood,” and “Scene 7.2: Epilogue – Immortality.” At the very end of the last scene, I explicitly employ the originating “Verbalizing/Being” strategy by simultaneously verbalizing and embodying the word pairs (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 1:08:17-1:08:42). The movement is semi-improvised in my thesis performance, and I have since set it.

Although I originated this strategy for *Mrs. Wrights*, other practitioners have proposed similar methods for working with words and the body. Often, these methods subvert content in order to foreground the musicality of words and vocalizations, which are experienced both

aurally and kinesthetically. Working with American playwright and theatre director Tina Landau (1962-), Bogart developed Physical and Vocal Viewpoints from Overlie's groundbreaking Six Viewpoints. Vocal Viewpoints open performers to possibilities in terms of tempo, duration, repetition, kinesthetic response, shape, gesture, space/architecture, pitch, dynamics, timbre, and silence (Bogart and Landau 106). Action Theatre, developed by American performance artist and pedagogue Ruth Zaporah (1936-), explores connections between the body and language through exercises under the heading, "The Body of Language." She writes, "We prepare for language by centering on the body and its breath" (87). American dancer, choreographer, and author Daniel Nagrin (1917-2008) catalyzes the performer's physical imagination by beginning with unspoken words and culminating with movement in his exercise, "Mutter Music." He instructs, "In the empty space of your mind wait until you hear a sentence you might want to but dare not say in public" (119). Dancers are then instructed to begin moving and to mutter that sentence inaudibly. He continues, "Say it over and over again until the words begin to fade and all that is left is the feeling and the rhythm expressed in the flow of sounds. When the words have disappeared and only the juice is left, allow that to become the music of your movements. Many different moves can come from one set of sounds" (119). Most closely resembling my "Verbalizing/Being" strategy, "Mutter Music" progresses from words to embodiment, subverting the semiotic body in order to enact the phenomenal body.

2.3.C1. Kitty: "Togetherness"

The oldest of four siblings and the only girl, Catherine "Kitty" Lee Tobin (b. 1871, Nebraska / d. 1959, California) was raised in Chicago in an upper-middle class Unitarian family (Secret 101). She and Wright met at a costume party at All Souls' Unitarian Church in Hyde

Park. After a two-year courtship, they married on June 1, 1889. She was just 18 years old, and he was 21 years old. Shortly after Kitty's marriage to Wright, the first of six children, Frank, Jr. was born on March 31, 1890, soon followed by John, Catherine, David, and Frances. Robert Llewellyn, the last of Kitty's children, was born in 1903.

Wright's mother Anna scathingly disapproved of Kitty. She made several blatant attempts to prevent the marriage, and continued to antagonize her even after the wedding. Secret writes, "There is a family story that whenever she heard Anna coming, Kitty would hide in a closet" (111). A Welsh immigrant to Wisconsin, Anna lacked the educational opportunities of her younger sisters. She suffered indignity in her marriage (1866) to William C. Wright (b. 1825 / d. 1904), a peripatetic musician, preacher, and teacher, as well as perpetual debtor. Together they had three children before their divorce (1885). After the divorce, Anna told Wright's sister Maginel to respond to questions about her father, instructing, "Say he's dead" (Secret 77).

According to Secret, Kitty has been described by family members as "very indulgent," "childlike," "impossible," "thoughtless," and a "woman of spirit" (137). She developed from a young bride into a socialite, active at church and in the Nineteenth Century Woman's Club along with Anna. In 1909, Wright left Kitty for Mamah, who was married to one of his clients. Left alone to raise six children, Kitty was grieving, angry and indignant. Secret writes, "Catherine's early comments were that she and Frank were united in their determination to break the terrible hold of this 'vampire.' Her curious explanation was that he was the innocent victim, in other words, but with her help he would win out. She continued to believe with a faith that amounted to self-delusion that he would return" (204). Faced with the stigma of divorce and the cost of childcare as a domestic Victorian woman, Kitty refused to divorce Wright until 1922. After their separation, she became involved with Jane Addams' Hull House in Chicago and Jessie Binford's

Juvenile Protection Association. She supported the women's suffrage movement and was active in the Red Cross during World War I.

In *Mrs. Wrights*, I frame Kitty as a quintessential nineteenth-century Victorian woman. Exploring the psychophysical effects of the doctrine of separate spheres on the Victorian experience of female domesticity, I pair Kitty with her antagonistic mother-in-law Anna. Both women suffer under marriages to debtor husbands, and both experience the stigmatizing event of divorce.

Kitty is with Wright during his engagement with the Arts and Crafts movement, which reversed the Unitarian concept of the church as the true home in order to advance, Secrest writes, "the home as a kind of church, a place in which to celebrate the sanctity of family life" (199). Wright and Kitty build a family and – quite literally for Wright – a home upon the ethos of the Arts and Crafts movement. Secrest explains, "His whole architectural philosophy was based on the Arts and Crafts concept that a house should express an ideal of marriage and family life" (199). This is articulated in Unitarian minister William Gannett's (1840-1923) sermon *The House Beautiful*, which Wright designed and illustrated in an 1895 book edition. It is from a poem embedded in this sermon that I abduct the motif "Together" as Kitty's motto.

Each in their own way, Wright, Anna and Kitty confront the breakdown of this Victorian ideal as they struggle to fulfill their roles within their respective spheres. Kitty bore six children in close proximity, and in many ways Wright's financial irresponsibility and erratic emotions made him like a seventh child. As his professional ambitions outsized his familial responsibility, it was Kitty – not much older than a child herself – who became overwhelmed with child-rearing and household management.

2.3.C2. Kitty: From Mime to Corporeality

I begin to discover Kitty's movement signature by physicalizing actions related to child-rearing and child development – holding, hugging, cradling, lifting and lowering, playing peek-a-boo, crawling, laying, and thumb-sucking. Essentially mimetic, the actions are imitations that employ the semiotic body to mark Kitty's social role and context. As performance devices, however, they are severely limited in their expressive capabilities.

Performed without connection to the whole Body in Space and Time, they fall short of accessing the multivalent resonance of corporeality. Providing feedback on the early work-in-progress, dance professor Daniel Burkholder writes, "I'm not sure about the 'baby rocking' arm position. I immediately have an association with it and it comes across as a little too obvious. I'm getting stuck in you holding and rocking a baby - I want to feel that intimacy, but I tend to become distracted when it feels like movement is pantomime" (Assignment Feedback). Gestures alone are insufficient for experiencing how Kitty lives in her body. Functioning as expository text, pantomime employs a one-to-one correspondence with reality in order to describe a theatrical scene. The poeticism of abstract movement, in contrast, gets at the ephemeral experience and essential nature of reality as subjective, unstable and multifarious in meaning. As such, I will discuss two strategies I used to develop the mimetic into the corporeal in embodying and choreographing Kitty.

First, using the strategy "Action Stating," I vary a single mimetic action in order to produce different States and Drives and choreographic options. The image of rocking to which I find myself instinctively drawn connects Kitty's experience to that of her children and alludes to her prematurity as a young wife and mother. I explore the physical and emotive capabilities of rocking in order to enact States and Drives relevant to her narrative. Using free association, I

engage my psychophysical imagination to extrapolate the gesture of a mother rocking a child by finding variations in the Laban movement categories of Body, Effort, Shape, and Space. I consider where and how rocking manifests in people, objects and nature: A nervous public speaker, indecisive pacing back-and-forth, a child learning to crawl, an emotionally distressed person self-soothing, ocean waves advancing and retreating, a teeter-totter. It feels right to add a rocking chair to my work. In my bodymind, I generalize rocking to a repetitive swinging motion. Associating rocking with the musicality of lullabies, which are generally in a triple meter or 6/8 time, I play them in the background as I work in the studio.

I now discuss three of my rocking variations in detail: The first exemplifies Rhythm State within Action Drive, the second demonstrates Dream State within Spell Drive, and the third is an example of Awake State within Vision Drive. I then point out other instances of rocking within my embodiment of Kitty. With this overview, I make general observations on the States and Drives that result from rocking, and connect my psychophysical experience of them to Kitty's narrative.

The first example is side-to-side shifting in the Vertical Plane that initiates in the lower half, and which is then transcribed to the Vertical Dimension and upper half ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 14:35-14:43). Standing, I shift my weight to the right and reach with my left arm to push the rocking chair. I continue to shift side-to-side in my lower half while my upper half follows with subtle Cross-Lateral torso shaping. This is an example of Rhythm State that is Decreasing Pressure and Sustaining. After about four side-to-side shifts, I fold at the hips and allow movement to initiate from my upper half. Transcribing movement initiating in my lower half in the Vertical Plane into movement initiating in my upper half in the Vertical Dimension, I reach down through one arm at a time. This is an example of Rhythm State that is

Increasing Pressure and Accelerating. I imagine my arms to be hyperbolized cow udders being milked. Intuitively, this feels like a strong image, and I repeat it at the end of the scene standing on the rocking chair.

The second example emphasizes whole-body rocking (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 15:37-15:42). Turning and counterbalancing my upper half against my lower half, I quickly go to the floor. With the right side of my torso against the ground, I push through my hands in order to rock my whole body. Trying to curve my body like the rockers on a rocking chair, I initially use Binding to facilitate the action. Upon Schuchart’s recommendation, however, I find more release and my upper half – especially my head – becomes more Indulging. I then repattern my movement using yield-push coordination, which makes it easier to rock more fully. With bigger movement, my upper body is more effortful. This is an example of Dream State that is Freeing and Increasing Pressure. Later, I transcribe this movement onto the arm of the rocking chair, where I teeter more than rock (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 17:00-17:08). With the added challenge of balancing, I use Binding and Decreasing Pressure. This is an example of Dream State that is Binding and Decreasing Pressure. I resolve the teetering by Freeing shaping through Enclosing, Sinking and Advancing in order to release from the chair arm.

The third example is a phrase linking about eight arm gestures abstractly related to child-rearing and deliberately choreographed to cause side-to-side swaying in the Vertical Plane – the same Plane in which a caretaker generally rocks an infant. In two different sections, this supports Vision Drive. Certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst and Registered Somatic Movement Therapist Robin Konie writes, “because [Vision Drive] has no Weight, it is very external/environment oriented. It often has a sense of planning, organizing, and fact finding

associated with it. Vision Drive becomes about ‘envisioning’ with clarity in form and design” (*LMA Effort Bank* “Vision Drive”). In *Mrs. Wrights*, the two sections occur in the reverse of the order in which they were created.

The first section I choreograph comes at the end of Kitty’s scenes. Standing on the rocking chair, I execute the gesture phrase twice, the first time more slowly than the second time (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 20:52-21:02). In conceiving this, I am interested in how I can cause the chair to rock from movement initiated in my upper half. Because the gestures are not temporally uniform, however, the timing of my upper half does not match the metronomic precision of the rocking chair. The precariousness of balancing on it further challenges my coordination. I adapt by using my lower half to control the rocking of the chair in the Vertical Plane, and then coordinate the gesture phrase with the rocking guided by my lower half. Accelerating and Indirecting overall, this section manifests Awake State. Dropping the gestures, I simply stand on the chair looking straight ahead and use my lower half to rock. Folding at the hips, I recall the hyperbolized cow udders milking gesture from the Rhythm State example above. Here, however, Time is more important than Weight, and I remain in Awake State. I return to standing, Decelerating and Indirecting, using exaggerated hip movements to slow the rocking. Suddenly Accelerating and Directing, I return to the milking gesture, and then Sinking, I squat into the chair and return to the floor (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 21:02-21:24). Lifting the chair overhead and walking upstage, Time becomes unimportant as I enter Spell Drive.

The second section I choreograph occurs in Kitty’s introduction, during her wedding vows (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 9:16-9:55). Here I deconstruct the gestural material in order to motivate movement through Space. Like the cyclic nature of rocking, the movement

vacillates from one direction to another – stage right to stage left – mostly in the Vertical Plane as with the gesture phrase on the chair. Again, this manifests Awake State with fluctuations in Time and Space, but generally Decelerating and Indirecting overall.

Other variations on rocking occur when I repeatedly push the rocking chair and then pivot away from it (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 14:55-15:01); crawl backwards, sink to my forearms, and then initiate side-to-side rocking by rotating one forearm at a time (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 16:27-16:47); face the rocking chair, hold each handle with one hand, hinge at my hips and rock frantically with the chair (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 19:13-19:16); step forward and backward with my left foot in the Sagittal Plane, undercurve and swing my arms with each step (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 17:36-17:44); sink to a crab pose, rock side-to-side, and then flip over to a squat, continuing to rock (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 20:25-20:32).

Although the aforementioned movements originate from a single concept – rocking – my psychophysical experience is unique within each. Not speaking strictly of Laban States, American-born and European-based choreographer and dancer Meg Stuart nonetheless sheds light on why this is the case. She writes, “In states you work with oblique relations. The body is a field in which certain mental streams, emotions, energies and movements interact, betraying the fact that actions and states are separate” (138). In everyday life, rocking has a range of psychological associations, from calm to anxious. Through my bodymind, I observe that each rocking variation generates a nuanced combination of emotions, States and/or Drives. Framed in the context of Kitty’s life, I filter her narrative through embodiment.

Living mostly in Action, Spell and Vision Drives, Kitty feels trapped in a situation out of her control. Emotions that emerge through rocking include uncertainty, regret, disgust, hope, and

anger. At critical points of decision-making – marriage to Wright and his subsequent infidelity – she enters Vision Drive and Awake State. She weighs her options, indecisively shifting weight and moving side-to-side like the arms of a scale. On the whole, Kitty employs Action Drive to confront a situation that often consumes her in Spell Drive, which feels ongoing and eternal. Konie writes, “Action Drive is task oriented. It is about getting the job done. Because there is no Flow it is not about feelings or progression” (*LMA Effort Bank* “Action Drive”). On the other hand, she writes, “Spell Drive is not concerned with time or knowing when to act... Spell Drive deals with the self in relationship to the environment—feeling one’s impact on the world and the world’s impact on you” (*LMA Effort Bank* “Spell Drive”). As Kitty, I literally feel the weight of the world at moments when I release into the ground, yielding and pushing to rock in Dream State. Some of the emotions that emerge through rocking are uncertainty, regret, and disgust.

With her company Damaged Goods, Stuart uses improvisation to explore physical and emotional states. In an exercise she often uses called “Change,” she writes, “dancers quickly shift from one state to another without any lapse in time, without any space for thought. In this automatic dance exercise you allow a wide range of states, voices, movements and gestures to emerge from your body without censoring them” (136). Hers is the inverse of my “Action Stating” strategy. Whereas I propose to begin with a movement concept and to observe the emotions, States and Drives that emerge from its exploration, Stuart’s exercise encourages performers to focus on states as their first intention. She writes, “You need to fully commit to whatever state you arrive at, trusting your experience before you can name it. A state emerges when you are no longer thinking in technical terms about what you are doing” (137). Because the goal of my exercise is to find variations in a single action, I do not live in the states to the full

extent that Stuart proposes. Using s/States as a primary point of focus offers further possibilities for movement generation, movement clarification, and character development.

The second strategy I use to develop Kitty is embodiment of developmental movement patterns. I use these especially in “Scene 3.1: Catherine (Kitty) Wedding and Children” (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 10:17-12:31). After delivering wedding vows, I use pantomime to represent picking up a baby and cradling it. Following Gillespie’s insight, I look at the audience and sink to the ground, as if to indicate that the mime is insufficient to capture Kitty’s lived experience of motherhood. Rather, I embody what American dance educator, certified teacher of Labanotation, and Registered Movement Therapist (ISMETA) Peggy Hackney calls the “Fundamental Patterns of Total Body Connectivity,” which “form the basis for our patterns of relationship and connection as we live out embodied lives. They provide models for our connectedness” (14). Learned in infancy and childhood, they are Breath, Core-Distal Connectivity, Head-Tail Connectivity, Upper-Lower Connectivity, Body-Half Connectivity, and Cross-Lateral Connectivity.

Developmental movement patterns help me to transition from text and mime in order to fully embody Kitty’s visceral and disorderly transition into domesticity as a wife and mother. Connecting her experience to that of her children, the child-like movement becomes a metaphor for the process of her growth into adulthood. I especially refer to American dance theatre choreographer Alexandra Beller’s *milkdreams*, which, according to her website, “uses the movements of babies and children to access a physicality that gives in to the imbalance of not knowing” (“milkdreams”). Inspired by her research, I explore developmental movement on the floor. Supine, I grab my toe in Core-Distal, and then roll in Body Half. I yield and push myself up to a tabletop position, reaching and pulling into a wobble that then releases to the floor. I

reach and pull as I crawl. Rising and Sinking from and to the floor becomes a metaphor for the non-linear process of growth. Moving from the floor to standing, I rock on all parts of my feet, finding moments of precarious balance. My arms reach curiously and pull my body through space. Intermittently, I contrast these infantile movements with a supine, contracted body on the floor – the pain of a woman in labor. Finally, I explore bipedalism through toddler-like jumping and stomping.

2.3.D1. Mamah: “Free Love”

Martha “Mamah” Bouton Borthwick (b. 1869, Iowa / d. 1914, Wisconsin) was one of three daughters of Marcus S. Borthwick (B. 1828, New York / d. 1900, Illinois), an employee of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. Described by Secrest as “intellectually adventurous and bookish,” Mamah had an M.A. and a B.A. from the University of Michigan, where she met her husband Edwin H. Cheney (b. 1869, Illinois / d. 1942, Missouri), an electrical engineer (193). Secrest writes, “After graduation, [she] seemed in no rush to marry, working as a librarian in Port Huron...Her interests encompassed translations of Goethe and the writings of the Swedish feminist Ellen Key” (193). Finally, at age thirty, she and Cheney married in 1899 and had two children: John (b. 1902 / d. 1914) and Martha (b. 1905 / d. 1914), who they raised in Chicago. Although she was fairly reclusive, she belonged to the Nineteenth Century Women’s Club, where she met Kitty.

Around 1904, Cheney commissioned Wright to build a house for his family, which facilitated the introduction of Mamah and Wright, enabling their subsequent romantic affair. Secrest writes, “Mrs. Cheney was not a very devoted mother (in those days, any woman with intellectual ambitions would have been so judged), and she certainly gave Frank that impression”

(194). Her individualism appealed to Wright. Together, they sojourned in Europe for more than a year beginning in November 1909 (“Wright Studies: Mamah...”). Inspired by Swedish feminist writer Ellen Key, they publicly espoused “free love” (Borthwick and Friedman 142). One of Key’s disciples, Mamah translated several of her books into English.

Returning to the United States from Europe, Wright built his famous settlement Taliesin in Spring Green, Wisconsin for Mamah, in part to shield her from public censure on account of their unmarried status and abandonment of their children. Taliesin was completed in 1911. In August of that year, Cheney secured a divorce from Mamah and custody of their children. Kitty would not divorce Wright until 1922. On August 15, 1914, Mamah and her children were tragically murdered by Julian Carlton, one of the domestic workers at Taliesin while Wright was working in Chicago (“Wright Studies: Mamah...”).

2.3.D2. Mamah: Transforming Text to *Somatext*

Mamah translated Key’s works from German and the original Swedish into English, introducing her European brand of feminism to an American audience. In *Mrs. Wrights*, I embody Mamah by *transforming* key ideological values and narrative events from her life through my semiotic and phenomenal bodymind. Both translation and transformation describe processes of change. Translation is the conversion of one language into another language, both of which are forms of representation. Although I am concerned with communication within performance, the term “translation” falls short of my task to embody. Instead, the word “transformation” better describes my process of moving from representation to experience, pairing one-to-one correspondence with abstraction, in a process I call “*Somatexting*.”

As with the other characters, a range of codes – symbolic systems – comprise my development of Mamah, including text, mime, emotion, and metaphorical use of objects. I interact with all of these in a journey from semiosis to phenomena, ultimately pairing the two. Early on in my research, I associate Mamah with the character Nora Helmer in the play *A Doll's House* by Norwegian playwright, theatre director, and poet Henrik Johan Ibsen (1828-1906). The play is a critique of male-dominated nineteenth-century Norwegian society. Lacking the opportunity for self-fulfillment in her home life, Nora leaves her stifling marriage to husband Torvald Helmer. Comparing the two female characters helped me to understand the intellectually ambitious Mamah's motivation for leaving Cheney – “a prince of a man” by one account – and two young children (qtd. in Secrest 194). In my first showing, I play prerecorded text from *A Doll's House* as I change into Mamah behind a shoji screen. Upon entering, I reveal a large, geometric plastic dollhouse, which I proceed to explore; dissect; move through, with and between; and reconfigure into an abstract building from the original, more conventional house. Intermittently, I dance a brief phrase of doll-like movement by mobilizing a few joints at a time.

A narrative device, the dollhouse metaphorically represents Mamah's entrapment in her home and marriage and subsequent journey to freedom with Wright. Choreographically, the object functions as armature for gesture. As the scene evolves, I deepen my investigation of how my interaction with it affects my body. I increase the duration of different movements to develop them in terms of tempo, rhythm, weight and body shaping, elevating kinesthetic logic in dialogue with the logic of object manipulation. I puzzle myself into and around the structure, finding ways to weave and mold myself within experiences of comfort and discomfort.

Although the dollhouse enacts my semiotic body, it stifles my phenomenal body. Further dissuaded by the burden of transporting the object to different venues, I decide to abandon it

altogether. I also let go of the prerecorded text from *A Doll's House*, recognizing it as an extraneous anomaly in the context of the show's other, more immediately relevant historical content.

Instead, I look to Key's feminist writings on love and marriage for textual source material. Friedman writes, "Key's liberal, individualist philosophy, ... among other things, championed free, loving partnerships between men and women and denounced legal marriage as a repressive and outdated institution" (140). Key uses vivid poetic language obliquely related to movement in describing her central ideal of "free love." In an excerpt from *The Woman Movement*, which Mamah translated, Key writes,

The innumerable new relations which the woman movement has established between woman and the home, between woman and society, and all of the interchanges of new spiritual forces which have been *put in operation* because of these relations, cannot possibly take *fixed form*, at least not so long as the woman movement remains "a *movement*"; in other words, as long as everything is in a *condition of flux*, in a *state of becoming*, all spiritual relationships between individuals must *change their form (organically)*. (Key 212, emphasis added)

The kineticism of Key's language italicized above bridges text and body, providing a conduit for embodying Mamah's lived values. In the transition from Olgivanna to Mamah, and in Mamah's introductory text, I incorporate Key's kinetic images into the script (Reinke, "Mrs. Wrights" 7-8; "Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 27:24-28:36).

Physical exploration of Freeing movement within the Flow Effort Motion Factor is a natural way to begin transforming Key's words into what I call "*somatext*" – the subjective, embodied experiencing of a text. According to Konie, "Flow...is about continuity, ongoingness,

progression, emotions, involvement” (“A Brief Overview...” 3). She describes Freeing Flow as “Outpouring, letting the inside out and the outside in, uncontrollable, can’t be stopped, open hearted, fluid...” and its opposite, Binding Flow, as “Contained, controlled, keeping the inside in and the outside out, can be stopped at any moment, rigid, boundaries, clarity, etc.” (“A Brief Overview...” 3). Through her affair with Wright, Mamah escapes the “bondage of monogamy” and experiences rarified freedom (Reinke, “*Mrs. Wrights*” 8). Yet, negative attention from the press proposes a new kind of oppression that Mamah must confront. The dichotomous qualities of Freeing and Binding, then, provide an appropriate foundation for Mamah’s movement signature.

To embody Mamah’s experience of freedom, I created an improvisation score in which I explore Freeing movement through repetition. With my hands on my hips and arms immobilized, I begin with very subtle, repeated Cross Lateral movement that causes weight to shift in my feet, legs and pelvis. I continue the movement as if there is an engine growing in my pelvis that keeps the movement going and growing. Allowing this impetus to affect my whole body, I observe as the movement begins to emanate through my spine, torso, arms, and head, and as the movements in my lower half became larger. Through repetition, the whole-body movement evolves organically. Cross-Lateral movement of my torso and arms in the Horizontal Plane transforms into circular torso and arm movement in the Vertical Plane, and then cyclical rolling through the spine with arms circling in the Sagittal Plane. Eventually, I became more specific with Mamah’s introductory movement and set a locomotor sequence. The exploratory improvisation of Freeing movement described above informed Mamah’s movement signature and the kinesthetic intention of my choreography and performance (“Thesis Performance: *Mrs. Wrights*,” 28:37-29:27).

Conversely, to embody Mamah's feminist confrontation of oppression, I explore Binding movement. I begin by connecting her public image – articulated by Kitty as that of a “‘vampire’ seductress” – to images of subversive women from her time – nineteenth-century pin-up girls (Lubow, par. 8). American critic, curator and associate professor of Art History Maria-Elena Buszek writes,

The early *carte de visit* pin-ups of bawdy burlesque actresses represented a space in which these transgressive stage performers could control and construct what one 19th-century burlesque actress would call an ideal of sexual ‘awarishness.’ Like the stage identities the images were meant to represent, these photographs not only called into question the legitimacy of defining female sexuality according to a binary structure, but also marked as desirable the spectrum of unstable and taboo identities as imaged between these poles. (142)

In the nineteenth century, women either met the ideals of the bourgeois “true woman” – like Kitty – or were considered low-class prostitutes. As an exception to daily life, the theatre was a liminal space in which women could construct and make visible alternative, transgressive identities. The commodification of pin-up photographs, however, leads Buszek to ask, “Is it possible, then, that representations of female sexuality can be interpreted as a subversion of oppressive cultural mores as readily as they are a subordination to them?” (143). Like the pin-up model, Mamah is both subject and object. Her socially defiant subjectification through sexual self-construction provides the grounds for the press’ objectification and demonization of her.

Just as there is tension between Mamah’s experiences of freedom and oppression, there is tension in the commodified fixed image of the pin-up model paradoxically destabilizing binary female sexuality. Interested in this tension, I use vintage pin-up photographs as inspiration for

generating Binding movement in contrast to Mamah's introductory Freeing choreography. Inhabiting the static poses of pin-up models, I create a mostly Binding sequence with dynamic changes in level and facing ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 29:40-30:18). Contained within and between the relatively controlled shapes, however, there remains a sense of fluidity and freedom emanating especially from the pelvis. Thus, Mamah's movement signature has an overall Indulging sense of Flow.

In addition to working with contrasting Flow Effort Motion Factors, I contrast my facing and use of stage space. Embodying Mamah's private experience of freedom, the preceding Freeing section takes place mostly upstage and facing upstage. Displaying her transgressive act of sexual self-"awarishness" in the face of public scrutiny, I then perform the pin-up-inspired Freeing-within-Binding section closer to the audience and facing downstage.

Another tenant of Mamah's movement signature is sensuality. Early on in developing "Scene 5.3: Mamah Fire," I employ pantomime to describe a sequence of events within a demarcated space. Like text, mime provides expository information rather than a phenomenal experience which invites kinesthetic empathy. In order to fully embody Mamah's horrific experience of the fire, I need to enact my phenomenal body with my semiotic body, which the mime already enacts. As another *somatexting* strategy, I use sensory imagery and impulse to deepen my kinesthetic engagement.

I have encountered different applications of imagery in my physical training – kinesiological images in Ideokinesis, visual images in Butoh, and sensory images in Feldenkrais and Gaga. It is the latter which, through a 2014 intensive with Gaga-based LeeSaar The Company, has had the greatest influence on my creative work. French researcher and lecturer in dance studies Biliana Vassileva reveals the similarity between my intention with *somatext* and

Naharin's Gaga movement language. She writes, "The performative gaga script is a permanent bridging between phenomenological and semiotic approaches to movement and gesture: drawing on personal memory and 'here and now' occurring bodily sensations and mental images and translating them into verbal expression" (84). Whereas Gaga emerges as dialogue between dancers' phenomenal bodies and a facilitator's verbalized words, my *somatexting* work with Mamah is a dialogue between my phenomenal body in the here-and-now and my kinesthetic remembering of choreographed, semiotic pantomime. According to Vassileva, Gaga cultivates the Zen-like state of "being available" – openness to the present moment – through somatic modes of awareness that focus on touch, movement, pressure, tension and temperature (95-96). Through Gaga, dancers find new ways of initiating movement, and gain awareness of the whole body as well as the relationship of the body parts to the whole. They discover new movement qualities informed by a heightened perception of bodily sensations, textures, and the environment.

In developing "Scene 5.3: Mamah Fire," I begin by using the sense memory of heat to inspire my physical imagination. I engage total bodymind awareness to feel sensations and impulses, using active receptivity to allow them to resonate kinesthetically. Instead of merely miming the sense of smelling smoke and consequent coughing, I allow myself to breathe deeply, and then to cough audibly. Miming trying to open a door, I imagine the piercing heat of a metal knob and observe how quickly I remove my hand. I feel the heat travel from my fingers through my hand and up my arm. I shake my arm, feeling the coolness of the surrounding air. Imagining the fire encroaching from below, I swipe my foot against the floor, generating friction. I jump suddenly – as if reacting to being burned – then turn, hit the floor and roll on the ground. This becomes my danced version of "stop, drop and roll." Miming pushing against another door, I

observe increased muscle tonus in my arm. My body instantly becomes firm, and I imagine two hard bodies – a wooden door and my own corpus – colliding in space. After initial impact, I soften my torso so that it can transport reverberations from my arm through my torso, pelvis, and legs into the floor. Facing upstage and miming opening a heavy window, I again observe increased muscle tonus in my arms, and then allow this suddenly to release as if the window is too heavy. The lift and release feels like the emotional experience of hope and disappointment. Examining this movement through repetition and abstraction, I begin pushing energy from my core out of my fingertips, on one side of my body and then the other. It feels as if I am shouting for help with no response.

Duetting phenomenal body with semiotic body, I set choreography that overlaps *somatext* with pantomime. Transformed through impulse, repetition, abstraction, and morphing, this more poetically delineates the scene's expository and experiential meaning ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 34:44-36:20). Through my process of *somatexting*, I generate the real physical experiences of a life-threatening situation – breathlessness, heat, sweat, and exhaustion. At the end of this very mobile section, I reprise the material from the pin-up model section ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 36:21-37:11). It is a brief but necessary recuperative period. This relatively stable sequence of statuesque poses quietly foregrounds the breathlessness of my phenomenal body. I cultivate presence through the tension between internal phenomena – a rapidly beating heart and gasping lungs – and external appearance of relative stasis signifying Mamah's impending death. As part of Mamah's movement signature, I also incorporate motifs from the fire into her introduction: breath ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 28:36 and 28:43-28:47) and foot swiping ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 28:43-28:48). Recognizing Mamah's connection to sensation and sensuality as a kinesthetic through-line, it also feels right

to add moments of self-touching: her dress (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 29:00-29:03), arms (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 29:23-29:35), and hair and dress (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 30:40-30:57).

2.3.E1. Miriam: “I will come into your life for a little while...”

Of wealthy Southern pedigree, Maude “Miriam” Noel (née Hicks, b. 1869, Tennessee / d. 1930, Wisconsin) was born in a suburb of Memphis. In 1886, while still in her teens, she married wealthy businessman Emil Noel (b. 1861 / d. 1912). Together they had three children, Norma, Thomas and Corinne. According to Secrest, she “probably never went to college,” but was “accustomed to a comfortable, if not elegant, life” (238). She had been living in Paris and working as a sculptor for about a decade when the First World War broke out, her husband having died three years before. The onset of the war spurred her return to the United States.

Immediately following Mamah’s tragic murder in 1914, Miriam sent condolence letters to Wright. The two artists became involved within weeks, lived together in Japan between 1916 and 1922 while Wright built the Imperial Hotel, and were married on November 19, 1923, a year after his divorce from Kitty. In his autobiography, Wright explains that he married Miriam to rescue their relationship, but that “Marriage resulted in ruin for both. Instead of improving with marriage, as I had hoped, our relationship became worse” (260). They fought a great deal, she was addicted to morphine, and in less than a year they were separated. In 1924, after the separation but while still married, Wright met his soon-to-be third wife, Olgivanna. On November 27, 1925, Miriam filed for a divorce, spurring a two-year legal battle that was settled on August 26, 1927 (“Wright Studies: Maude Miriam Noel,” par. 1). In her divorce petition, she

claimed that Wright became physically and emotionally abusive shortly after their marriage (Secret 283).

Journalists, historians, and Wright himself have made it all too easy to caricature Miriam as a melodramatic female stereotype. A Milwaukee Journal journalist describes her as “Vivid, colorful, bizarre” (“The Romance of Miriam Wright,” May 8; par. 1). Secret affirms, “she dressed for theatrical effect rather than style” (238). According to the journalist, “Mr. Wright, in his recently published autobiography, wrote of his life with Miriam Noel. His words recalled as a living being this strange woman whose activities made her seem unreal” (“The Romance of Miriam Wright,” May 8; par. 6). Secret notes “an air of tragedy” about her, citing Wright’s observations that “her head shook slightly but continuously” and an unhappy love affair that “had broken her health” (239). Only later would Wright discover Miriam’s addiction to morphine, which is perhaps the most frequently mentioned piece of information about her. Miriam’s autobiographical writing and public persona further betrays such characterization. Secret writes, “she was dangerously self-delusory. She had a hidden script, a fantasy that she had woven around herself; in which she was destined to become the leading lady in a heroic, legendary romance...To judge from her memoir, Miriam Noel had marked out Wright to play such a role in her life...Her mission was to mold the world closer to her own illusion” (238-239). In her memoir and in letters to Wright, she uses hyperbolic poetic language and allusions to Ancient Greek mythology and philosophy.

Such portrayals of Miriam culminate in caricature – imitation of a person that exaggerates striking characteristics to comic or grotesque effect. The complexity of her specific lived experiences within a particular historical context are reduced to parody. In fact, Miriam had considerable talent as a sculptor. Secret indicates that one of her works possibly was accepted

into the collection at the Louvre, and she plausibly tied for first place in a Paris sculpture competition with American sculptor, collector and founder of the Whitney Museum of American Art Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (b. 1875, New York / d. 1942, New York) (238). As a woman of her generation, however, Secrest writes, “her own abilities and accomplishments would not have counted for much in her own estimation. She would have seen herself as, say, another Eleonora Duse, a woman of marked gifts who might only attain immortality if her name had been linked with that of a man of even more unique and remarkable gifts” (239). Miriam’s male-dominated historical context offers a more nuanced and sympathetic explanation for her aggressive pursuit of Wright than does her melodramatic personality.

Further, historical context also sheds light on her drug addiction. Secrest writes, “Throughout the nineteenth century, the United States was the only major Western nation to have no laws restricting narcotics. Opium and morphine were widely used, and in the mid-1800s it was perfectly legal to sniff, smoke, inject, rub, eat or drink cocaine” (240). And, the readily available drugs had particular implications for women. According to *Smithsonian.com* writer Erick Trickey, “Male doctors turned to morphine to relieve many female patients’ menstrual cramps, ‘diseases of a nervous character,’ and even morning sickness. Overuse led to addiction. By the late 1800s, women made up more than 60 percent of opium addicts” (par. 7). Slowly, regulations were introduced to curb the use of opiates. The United States government passed a handful of acts in the early 1900s that surely would have made it more difficult for Miriam to obtain morphine during the time she was involved with Wright.

Inspired by Miriam’s presence in the European art scene, I wrote a monologue for her based on the early twentieth century art manifesto, a genre championed by the modernist avant-garde (Reinke, “*Mrs. Wrights*” 10-11). I borrowed most heavily from French writer and artist

Valentine de Saint Point's (b. 1875, France / d. 1953, Egypt) "The Manifesto of Futurist Woman. The first woman to have written a futurist manifesto, de Saint Point wrote this in 1912 as response to the misogynist ideas in Italian poet, art theorist and founder of the Futurist movement Filippo Tommaso Emilio Marinetti's (b. 1876, Egypt / d. 1944, Italy) "The Futurist Manifesto" (1909). I stage the monologue as a cabaret performance, enacting my semiotic body through Wright's pork pie hat and cane, which symbolically represent key images and ideas in the monologue ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 47:20-50:00).

2.3.E2. Miriam: From Caricature to the Real

My early attempts at embodying Miriam followed the shallow development of the aforementioned caricatures. Inspired primarily by her correspondence with Wright, I created a vignette in which I moved while reciting text from one of her aggrandizing letters. Employing ideational rather than kinesthetic logic, I collaged together movement vocabularies inspired by aspects of Miriam's context and life: jazz-era dancing, morphine addiction, sculpture, Greek mythology, and Japan, where she lived while Wright was building the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. Gillespie commented that in my choreography, I had gone "vocabulary grocery shopping," which happened because I didn't understand what was happening in my body (Thesis Feedback). Ferro indicated that I needed to "put the text in the body" (Thesis Feedback). Certainly, I had developed Miriam from the outside-in – ideational information shaping a semiotic body – rather than from the inside-out – kinesthesia inscribing narrative through a phenomenal body.

Prioritizing the latter, I reframe Miriam's narrative as the experience of an addicted, anesthetized body deeply needing attention and healing. Gillespie recommends, "Do; don't show. [Enact] her attempting to have agency – Giver her power through the velocity and

voraciousness of movement” (Thesis Feedback). The addicted body is in a state of true need, while the anesthetized body lacks sensory awareness. These generally manifest through contrasting Effort Motion Factors – the former as Fighting, and the latter as Indulging. This corresponds to Csordas’ identification of the control/release dichotomy as paradigmatic in North American health and healing systems. He writes,

Control (of one’s feelings, actions, thoughts, life course, health, occupation, relationships) is a pervasive theme in the North American cultural context of [Charismatic Christianity]. Crawford (1984), for example, offers an ideological analysis of ‘health’ as a symbol that condenses metaphors of self-control and release from pressures. (*Body/Meaning/Healing* 67)

Contrasting Effort Motion Factors symbolically analogize Miriam’s bifurcated psyche. Likewise, Miriam’s physical experience of drug addiction is paralleled by her emotional dependence on male attention and love. The envelopes – as objects that I manipulate to produce different semiotic relationships with my body – symbolically tie together her dual addictions.

Peeling away the veil of caricature, in developing Miriam, I explore States and Drives in order to enact, as Stuart proposes, “a window into a different reality.” In her exploration of states, Stuart works with those “physical and emotional states that are involuntary, for instance the states of sickness and of bodies in crisis or out of control” (137). begin with the physical symptoms of morphine use and withdrawal, which provide movement content. I generate movement with an interest in finding extreme contrast in Fighting and Indulging Effort Motion Factors. It becomes clear that States and Drives are the core of Miriam’s movement signature, rather than “dance steps.” Employing duration as a compositional device heightens the intensity of States and Drives. I am interested primarily in the lucidity of Vision Drive and the

intoxication of Passion Drive, and their respective States. Finally, I couple text with movement in a way that lets the body speak above the words.

Among the physical symptoms of morphine addiction, I explore cravings, temperature fluctuations (sweating/goose bumps), shakiness and tremors, restless leg syndrome, and euphoria. While my embodiment of cravings and withdrawal symptoms manifests the addict's psychophysical state of "true need," my embodiment of euphoria, confusion, and decreased sensory perception correlates with the user's psychophysical anesthetization. These moments are enacted primarily through the contrast between Vision Drive and Passion Drive. I already have discussed the former, which has no Weight and is externally oriented (*Konie LMA Effort Bank* "Vision Drive"). For Miriam, Vision Drive is about working with her environment to satisfy the true need she feels on account of her addiction. According to Konie, "Passion Drive is about being present in the emotional moment. Because there is no Space, Passion Drive has an 'all about me' feel--dealing with the senses, feelings, and one's inner listening. It often has a pain or pleasure sensibility about it" (*LMA Effort Bank* "Passion Drive"). Passion Drive thus elicits moments that reflect Miriam's intoxication and delusions.

Following a kinesthetic-choreographic progression similar to "Action Stating," which I previously discussed in relation to developing the action of rocking in "Scene 3.2: Kitty Rocking Chair Dance," for Miriam I develop the action of reaching as an embodied response to craving. I create a brief phrase in which arm movement initiates locomotion and changes in direction ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 53:01-53:15). The phrase is Binding and Directing, using Fighting qualities and Remote State to embody an attitude of self-restraint towards an object of desire (in this case, the envelopes). An excerpt is repeated later at greater speed ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 58:17-58:24). Another poignant reaching moment begins when I

am seated facing upstage (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 53:24-54:05), indulgently shift my head while leaning on my right arm (Freeing-Sustaining, Mobile State), suddenly collapse my right elbow and direct my focus to it (Accelerating-Directing, Awake State), and then slowly reach with my left arm through the negative space between my right side and right elbow (Decreasing Pressure-Sustaining, Rhythm State). Suddenly, I flip onto my back to briefly lie supine (Binding-Accelerating-Sustaining, Mobile State), and then repeatedly reach with my right arm, which pulls my body in a locomotor circle on the floor (Increasing Pressure-Accelerating, Rhythm State). Later, crouching on the floor, my limp arms are crossed like tired antennae, and I inch my way towards the envelopes, alternately pushing with my lower half and pulling with my upper half (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 57:01-57:29). Almost to the envelopes, I roll to my back and begin to rock back and forth, Accelerating and Decreasing Pressure in Rhythm State (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 57:30-57:44). Finally, in a culminating variation on the lower half push and upper half pull relationship, I locomote across the floor with one arm outstretched, contortedly internally rotated, to the envelopes (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 1:00:24-1:00:40).

As with Mamah and the fire, I invoke sense memory to explore the nervous system response to morphine use and withdrawal. Imagining fluctuations in temperature and the subsequent skin sensations of sweat and goose bumps, I rub my hands up and down my body, Freeing and Increasing Pressure in Dream State (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 56:11-56:31). As my hands make their way to my upper body and head, the rubbing slows, and continuing in Dream State but with Decreasing Pressure, I sense and feel my hair (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 56:31-56:41). Feeling the weight of my head, I release it and allow

it to direct the movement of my body, returning to Increasing Pressure within a Freeing Dream State (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 56:45-56:57).

I further use Weight Sensing to explore Miriam’s detachment from reality. According to Konie, Weight Sensing is inner listening that employs “relaxing and releasing into one’s own weight in order to ‘sense it’,” and vacillates between Increasing Pressure and Decreasing Pressure (“Glossary”). I sense Decreasing Pressure as I slowly walk and shape my arms overhead, Sustaining and Binding in Mobile State (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 54:48-55:04). With my eyes closed, I let my arms drop and sense the weight of their descent in my bones, momentarily collapsing as I allow this to ripple through my torso, spine and legs before reaching upward again (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 55:04-55:23). Similarly using Weight Sensing, near the end of Miriam’s choreography, I send energy out of my hands, Directing and Increasing Pressure – Fighting qualities that emerge when she takes a stand against Wright, in Stable State (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 58:14-58:17).

This devolves into a prolonged shaking and trembling sequence in which Weight Sensing again takes over as Passion Drive subverts Space. I explore how tremors in one part of my body induce shakiness in other parts of my body, fluctuating Flow in order to contain and free very quick, repeated movements in Mobile State (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 58:30-59:24). Tremors and shakiness travel from my feet through my whole body, are momentarily contained in my hands, and then ripple again through my whole body, to my legs and feet. I continue shaking as I go to the floor and return to standing, and then contain the movement in my hands and then only fingers as I calmly walk downstage.

At the conclusion of Miriam’s choreography, I drop the envelopes one by one, walking in a line from downstage left to downstage right (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 1:00:56-

1:01:13). In contrast to the abundance of Transformation Drives that preceded, this section takes place in Action Drive. Stable State is especially apparent with Increasing Pressure and Directing in Space as I drop each envelope. This conclusion enacts Miriam’s lucidity and intentionality in filing for divorce and her determination to reach a settlement on her own terms.

In my use of duration to develop my embodiment of Miriam’s physical symptoms, States and Drives, I am particularly inspired by Igbo-Nigerian American performer, choreographer and writer Okwui Okpokwasili’s (1972-) *Bronx Gothic*. According to *The Atlantic* copy editor Tori Latham, in the 90-minute solo show, Okpokwasili embodies “the lives of two young black girls growing up in a world that ‘privileges whiteness’ and leaves them vulnerable” (par. 1).

Describing Okpokwasili’s performance, Latham writes,

Her movements evoke struggle and pain: At various points during her performance, she isolates different limbs, breaking down and slamming her body onto the floor so only the sound of flesh and bone on hardwood is audible...For the first 30 minutes of the performance, she vibrates onstage to the point that her breathing sounds painful. Her body language is at once free—her limbs are loose; her torso is writhing—and contained. It seems as though she’s struggling to break out of the space on the stage she confines herself to. (par. 1, par. 8)

It is the first 30 minutes of her performance that particularly inform my use of durational, “non-dance” movement for Miriam.

Pushing duration, I am able to overcome inertia and disrupt recurring patterns to evoke the unpredictability and gravity of Miriam’s psychophysical states. Prior to employing the lens of duration, Gillespie and Ferro observed that I had defaulted to a pattern of two or three Fighting movements, which then quickly resolved in Indulging movement. Certainly, this is because

Fighting movements require more energy, and the subsequent Indulging movement offered recuperation. However, by prioritizing duration, I am able to push myself physically to sustain Fighting movements. Without dance steps and counted music, it is difficult to have a relative sense of time. In my closed improvisation score, I overcame this problem by setting counts for durational sections, counting silently in my head in order to sustain the movement over time and inform choices about effort and intensity.

Colleague and Quasimondo Physical Theatre Associate Artistic Director Jessi Miller offers some concluding observations on the effectiveness of my embodiment of Miriam. After talking to audience members at my performance at Taliesin on June 1, 2018, she reports,

I got one or two comments at Wright and Like about the Miriam section - not bad - more profound: those Frank followers think of her as a “rebound” wife - they couldn’t believe you spent so much time with her - but you made her more than a footnote or write-off. It was really beautiful and uncomfortable, the way the audience had to sit with her. And it did feel really successful in the tactile sense, of the audience getting roped into physical empathy for her delight delirium and pain. And a part of what made that work was the time spent. (Miller, Personal Correspondence)

My use of duration as a compositional device enabled me to spend time with Miriam in a way that was raw, authentic, and revelatory.

During a talkback after my performance at SC Johnson Golden Rondelle Theatre on September 28, 2018, an astute audience member inquired about my physicality for Miriam, wondering if she had tremors. After the show, he came up close to examine my height because I had looked so tall on stage. I noticed that his hands were shaking unnaturally, perhaps due to Parkinson’s disease. Through our exchange, I recognized the value of having embodied Miriam’s

complex existence in a way that connected her to the larger human experience of disease. By focusing on her lived bodily experience, I enacted the real and rejected caricature, thereby eliciting kinesthetic empathy.

2.3.F. From Object to Thingness

Throughout *Mrs. Wrights*, I use object manipulation to develop semiotic bodies that function narratively as literary tropes. Like figurative language, the objects exist on stage as themselves, but also are transformed to represent something other than their literal signification. With roots in circus arts, object manipulation involves the exploration of an object's physical properties to develop new subject-object relationships. It reveals the "thingness" of objects, defined as "the quality or state of objective existence or reality," and synonymous with corporeality (*Merriam-Webster* "Thingness"). Following the path of the phenomenologists, then, object manipulation takes us from object to phenomenon, or pre-objective, or *thing*.

Thing Theory is a critical theory largely developed by University of Chicago Professor of English Bill Brown in 2001. He articulates the difference between objects and things, writing, "As they circulate through our lives, we look through objects...but we only catch a glimpse of things. We look through objects because there are codes by which our interpretive attention makes them meaningful, because there is a discourse of objectivity that allows us to use them as facts. A thing, in contrast, can hardly function as a window" (4). Things emerge when objects cease to work for us – when we get a papercut, for example. Brown concludes, "The story of objects asserting themselves as things, then, is the story of a changed relation to the human subject and thus the story of how the thing really names less an object than a particular subject-

object relation” (4). Thingness reveals and rests on the particular physical qualities of a thing, which its objectness conceals.

Through object manipulation, I confront the thingness of objects relevant to the historical narratives in *Mrs. Wrights* – a rocking chair, envelopes, a coat rack, and iconic and historical costumes, including dresses for the women and Wright’s overcoat, cane, pork pie hat, and scarf – to create vivid metaphors for the character’s experiences. In order to discover thingness, I explore the objects’ physical properties vis-à-vis my body in space. These include weight, balance, shape, movement, and sound.

Metaphorically, Kitty’s rocking chair becomes at once a baby cradle that I rock, and at other times a confining jail-like cell. I transform envelopes into small origami homes and later snap them near my face to imply Wright’s physical abuse of Miriam. Wright’s iconic overcoat is a synecdoche for the icon himself. Folded, it is an infant Wright, swaddled by Anna; half-folded, it is her growing son, whom she places on her back before he grows up just enough to leave her to marry Kitty. Fixed in a space hold, the overcoat is Wright in courtship with Mamah. It then becomes a metaphor for the objects they encounter in their courtship – a picnic blanket, a dance partner, a suitcoat used to cover a puddle, and a bedsheet for a night of intimacy. Paradoxically, the overcoat makes Wright both visible and invisible, standing in for his presence and serving as a reminder of his absence, decentering his conventionally conspicuous position in popular culture. Paralleling my use of Wright’s overcoat, Mamah’s red dress later plays synecdoche for her corpse. This establishes a motif that culminates in a penultimate moment in which each character’s dress is draped and then dropped from the coatrack one by one. The image memorializes the women’s presence, even in their absence from the living and from history.

2.3.G. Embodying a World: Sensory Research

In order to immerse myself and audiences in the women's lived experiences, I interpreted their world through aural, visual, and environmental research. The PBS documentary *A partner to genius: Olgivanna Lloyd Wright* was particularly illuminating because it had interviews with Olgivanna in her later years. I listened closely, absorbing and imitating her deep, deliberate voice and Montenegrin accent, which to my untrained ears sounded not unlike that of my Italian-American grandmother.

I had contacted Taliesin West archivist Indira Berndtson in hopes of accessing some of Olgivanna's original musical scores. Because they are unpublished, however, I was not given access to them. In addition to her voice, *A partner to genius* allowed me to hear a little of her music, played on the violin by Taliesin Music Director Effie Casey. She observes, "Mrs. Wright conceived music in a very linear way. She thought of melodies and in general they are somewhat haunting...they have definitely a very Slavic touch to it" (*A partner to genius*; 49:23-29:40). Of Olgivanna's music, an unnamed commentator adds, "It was...very much an expression of her soul, her spirit. It's extraordinarily difficult to perform because the notes are not the music...really you have to know the spirit behind it" (*A partner to genius*; 48:55-49:19). I picked up my own violin and learned the thematic material, wrote out the notes, and then improvised on the themes to expand the material. I considered playing violin in the *Mrs. Wrights* in order to highlight Olgivanna's activity as a composer, but ultimately decided against adding another element – my violin – to the stage. Yet, listening to and then incorporating Olgivanna's voice and music into my own body helped me to connect with her. I also studied a Welsh accent for Anna and a Southern accent for Miriam, focusing on the shape of my mouth and movement of my lips and tongue.

The show's soundscape emerges from the women's experiences and historical context (Appendix F: Sound Design). Just as Wright's organic architecture was a marriage of nature and building, environmental sounds set the tone from the outset of *Mrs. Wrights*. Rain, thunderstorm, wind, and fire all are used. Where appropriate, musical compositions either originate from or recall the modernist era during which the characters lived – from around Catherine's marriage to Wright in 1889 until his death in 1959.

The sound of rain bookends the shows and Olgivanna's character arc. Her musical theme is piano music composed in the 1920s by Thomas de Hartmann, who worked extensively with her spiritual teacher Gurdjieff. The specific works – *Adam and Eva* and *Sacred Reading from the Koran* – both have spiritual connotations. The latter features Eastern melodic scales. Also a religious work, Tchaikovsky's *Hymn of the Cherubim* (1878) briefly is quoted to reference her time in Russia.

Because of her Welsh heritage, Anna's musical theme is *The Widow and the Devil*, an Irish folk song. I sing this song live, keeping the melody but adapting the lyrics to describe the dramatic action. Early twentieth-century composer Mary Howe's *Stars* (1927) is an orchestral work that swells to underscore Catherine's introduction. In "Scene: 3.2: Kitty Rocking Chair Dance," her musical theme recalls the classical lullaby, used to lull babies to sleep. Composed by contemporary artist Colleen, however, *I'll Read You a Story* (2005) employs haunting music boxes and electronics to present a distorted lullaby that appropriately mirrors Catherine's psychophysical experience of marriage and motherhood.

Mamah's scenes are set to a range of musical genres united by the use of acoustic strings. A violin arrangement of Erik Satie's *Je te veux* (1902) underscores her European courtship with Wright in "Scene 5.2: Mamah Dating" before shifting into fiery tango (1931) and flamenco

(1991) guitar music during “Scene 5.3: Mamah Fire.” This is followed by a pre-recorded radio broadcast written from excerpts of news stories about Mamah’s untimely murder at Taliesin on August 15, 1914. In order to design the recording with an “old-timey” ambiance, I employ a deep voice and radio static sound effect. Mamah’s suite of scenes concludes with Gabriel Fauré’s *Élégie (Elegy)*, Op. 24 (1883), featuring another acoustic string instrument – the cello – in “Scene 5.4: Frank Grief.”

Like Catherine’s musical theme, Miriam’s also comes from contemporary music that nonetheless recalls her historical context. Nick Zoulek’s *Leafless, Against the Gray Sky* (2016) and *Silhouette of a Storm-bent Tree* (2016) – two pieces that I edited and overlapped – features saxophone, which alludes to the sounds of the Jazz Age and Big Band Era that emerged during Miriam’s courtship with Wright. However, Zoulek’s virtuosic extended technique creates an angsty, moody atmosphere mirroring Miriam’s psychophysical experience of addiction. Another “old-timey” pre-recorded radio broadcast follows, covering the news of Miriam and Wright’s divorce settlement on August 26, 1927.

In addition to my sense of sound, I also employed my sense of sight in researching the women’s lived experiences. I viewed photographs of Wright buildings, especially those affiliated in some way with the women (Appendix G: Visual Research of Wright’s Architecture). In addition to visual research, I engaged my senses more fully by attending architectural site visits and tours at as many Wright buildings as I could (Appendix H: Architectural Site Visits and Tours). I even volunteered as a docent at Wright in Wisconsin’s annual “Wright and Like” event, which took place at various Wright and Wright-inspired buildings within Greater Milwaukee on June 3, 2017.

On these visits, I observed how Wright's appropriation of Japanese aesthetics vitalized space, rendering it viscerally tangible. The English word "space" is represented by the homonymous Japanese character 間, pronounced "*ma*." American scholar of Japanese religion Richard B. Pilgrim writes, "The word *ma* basically means an 'interval' between two (or more) spatial or temporal things and events" (255). In the case of architecture, *ma* exists between the floor, ceiling and walls. Paraphrasing ancient Chinese philosopher and writer Lao Tzu (sixth century), Wright often is quoted as having said, "The reality of the building does not consist of the roof and the walls but the space within to be lived in" ("Wright – Organic Architecture" 1, par. 7). In this, he draws attention to the vital human relationships and experiences that are shaped by space. Pilgrim concludes, "The word, therefore, carries both objective and subjective meaning; that is, *ma* is not only 'something' within objective, descriptive reality but also signifies particular modes of experience. Both the descriptive objective...and experiential subjective...aspects are important" (256). In the West, space often is conceived as an absence, but in the East it offers presence.

In my choreographic process, I did not make any conscious correlation between my experience of Wright-constructed spaces and my use of space. However, in my experience of performing the work, I find that the notion of "presence" creates an overarching connection between my body and space (conceived as *ma*). Through movement and sensory perception, my body engages in a physical and energetic exchange with space. This is especially the case with certain techniques I use to calm performance anxiety and increase concentration. Breathing – especially diaphragmatically – transforms the spaces in my nasal passages, esophagus, lungs, and abdomen. It changes my heartrate, blood oxygenation and circulation, and neural activity. In ways more often sensed than visible, it changes how my body shapes and is shaped by internal

and external space. During my graduate education, I received feedback from Schuchart, Ferro and UWM Senior Lecturer Dawn Springer about needing more breath support for my movement. Schuchart particularly noticed a lack of breath support preceding jumps. I continue to become more aware of my breathing and regularly remind myself to breathe before and during dancing. Framed as an interaction between body and space that enlivens both, breathing becomes all the more meaningful and exiting.

Beyond breath, in practice and performance I use sensory nerves, vision and proprioception to perceive my body moving in and with space. I concentrate on particular sensory input in order to deepen focus and intention. Terminology from Laban Movement Analysis is a conduit for describing this pre-objective experience. For example, distal initiation feels different and has a different relationship to space than proximal initiation. Generally speaking, the former is more external and performative within a large kinesphere, while the latter is more internal and introspective within a small kinesphere. I gauge temperature from stage lighting in order to sense my physical placement within stage space. I use my eyes to absorb my surroundings and connect with individual audience members.

In one instance, I lost my sense of sight and had to rely on heightened proprioceptive orienteering. At Chicago Fringe Festival, I performed at The Gym, a makeshift theatre converted out of the third-floor gymnasium at the Congregational Church of Jefferson Park. It being the beginning of September, the temperature was about 90 degrees Fahrenheit outdoors and the venue had no air conditioning. I was sweating so much – something I normally do not do much of – and the sweat dripped into my eyes, causing a nearly unbearable burning sensation. I allowed myself to close my eyes during certain points of the performance and instinctively shifted my attention to non-visual sensory cues in order to maintain my presence in space.

In addition to Wright's use of "ma," I gained insight into the women's experiences through Wright's manipulation of space. Although impressed by his use of optical illusions – for example, lighter colored paint at the top of walls than at the bottom in order to make a room appear taller and more open – and comprehensive design elements – built-in and freestanding furniture, light fixtures, and color palettes – I generally experienced his spaces with an embodied sense of oppression, like the walls were closing in on me. I imagined that the built-in elements would prohibit freedom of movement and freedom of aesthetic choice. The doorways and ceilings tended to be short, the rooms and hallways narrow. Dim lighting from Wright-designed fixtures created intimacy but also exaggerated the smallness of his spaces. American architectural historian Vincent Scully writes,

Wright hated the word proportion... Wright would say [his] buildings are democratic, because while in a classical system, you have a fixed set of proportions that you have to keep; in [his designs], every building is adjusted to the individual client... He used to say, 'I adjust my buildings to the normal size of man, who is five feet eight and a half inches, which happens to be my own height. ("Oak Park: Interior" 1; par. 1)

Wright's egocentrism is apparent in his comment, which essentially indicates that he put himself – not his clients or family – at the center of fundamental architectural decisions. Certainly, I experienced contrasts – perhaps moments of catharsis – within his designs. These generally occurred where a window or doorway opened to the light and natural beauty of an abundant outdoor vista.

My embodied experience of Wright's spaces provided an analogue for the psychological experience of his egocentric personality – equally oppressive, but not without reprieve. Within *Mrs. Wrights*, a felt sense of oppression and its opposite – freedom – manifests differently in

each woman. Oppression is particularly present in Kitty and Miriam's physicality. Relating Kitty to her experiences with child birthing and child rearing, I use developmental movement patterns and iterations of rocking inspired by a rocking chair, which she no doubt used in order to nurse her babies. Many of these motifs are performed on the floor, which is associated with lower status. Relating Miriam to her bodily experience of morphine addiction – a dramatic metaphor for her need for male attention – I move in and out of contrasting Effort Factors, especially Flow (Binding/Freeing) and Space (Directing/Indirecting). The former reflects a sense of struggle and release from oppression, and the latter reveals awareness of and attitude toward that conflict.

In addition to space, I consumed other sensory information through artifacts and images. Inside Taliesin, I observed the omnipresence of gold-painted walls. Olgivanna often recommended color schemes for Wright's designs, and the presence of gold in her own home likely is inspired by the art and design of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, her religion from birth. I also saw bookshelves filled with books by Russian authors, no doubt belonging to Olgivanna. Looking at prints and photographs of Wright's work in both architecture and graphic design, I learned that American architect Marion Mahony Griffin (1871-1961) created at least half of the Japanese-influenced drawings in his Wasmuth portfolio (1910). For its lasting impact on architectural rendering, Scully deems this document "one of the three most influential architectural treatises of the twentieth century" (qtd. in Birmingham "Career," par. 3). Mahony was not credited for her contribution until long after the portfolio's publication. Although she is not a character in *Mrs. Wrights*, the trope of "the woman behind the man" – the particularly female experience of bolstering a public figure without being credited – guided my vision for my work.

I looked at numerous historical photographs of Wright and the women (Appendix I: Visual Character Research). These images were tangible conduits for imagining the historical characters' emotional experiences and movement signatures. On the one hand, I found myself projecting onto them the characterizations and narratives I already had digested through textual research. On the other hand, it seemed as if the photographs had been so captured and preserved by the media, scholars and biographers in order to support dominant stories. Whatever the case, the images interacted with informational research to deepen my psychophysical connection to the characters.

It seems fitting that the domineering Olgivanna wears her hair pulled back tightly and parted in perfect symmetry. Her attire is at times neat and business-like, and at times elegant, richly colored, and accented with large jewels and long earrings. Occasional ethnic patterning is a reference to her native Montenegro. Her dark features and penetrating eyes fold wisdom, restraint, and doggedness into an air of mystery. Olgivanna is often photographed with Wright, and often in nature, from which her husband took so much inspiration. When the two are together, whether facing front or profile, their uniform gaze shows unity of vision, despite a marked difference in age. Wearing his signature pork pie hat, overcoat (or sometimes even a cape), and walking cane, Wright's upright posture, upward gaze and statuesque poses coalesce in epic portraiture revealing flamboyance and arrogance.

Compared to Olgivanna and Wright, scant photographs exist of the other characters. Wearing spectacles and with curly white hair pulled back, an aged Anna looks cunning and stern, but also weathered, in the only two photographs I could find of her. In long draped Victorian overdresses, Kitty looks young and wistful. Four of nine photographs show her with family and children, confirming my instinct to explore the psychophysical experience of child-rearing within

the domestic sphere. Photographic documentation of Mamah does not corroborate Kitty's public accusation labeling her a "vampire' seductress" (Lubow; par. 8). Wearing dark, formal dresses and with hair gently pulled back into a bun, two portraits reveal her as well-kept and refined. A librarian and translator, she looks demure and thoughtful rather than sexually exploitive. In developing movement and text for Mamah, I capitalize on the contradictory public and private portrayals of her. Miriam's gently wrinkled face is a reminder that she died younger than the others, except for Mamah, who was murdered. Her closed mouth and faraway eyes show worry and sadness. Her fleshy, heavy-set frame and extravagant attire – furs, jewelry, and outsized hats – betray a lifestyle of immoderation and desire. I concentrate my embodiment of Miriam on the psychophysical experience of addiction.

Chapter Three. Dramaturgy

3.1. Defining Dramaturgy

A literal definition of the word “dramaturgy” equates it with the structure of a work. This is confirmed by its historical usage. According to *Merriam-Webster*, dramaturgy is “the art or technique of dramatic composition and theatrical representation” (“Dramaturgy”). From the Greek *dramatourgía*, this definition includes both the written playscript (dramatic composition) and the action on stage (theatrical representation). Profeta uses the metaphor of a skeleton because it honors both the stabilizing and mobilizing capacities of dramaturgy as structure (1).

Before the advent of the professional director in the late nineteenth century, Profeta indicates that the playwright carried the dramaturgical responsibility (3). This is etymologically evident in Romance languages such as French and Spanish that use variations on the word “dramaturg” to connote “playwright.” But, according to Profeta, the English-language “dramaturg” – of German derivation – certainly is not the playwright. Rather than being *responsible for* the dramaturgy, dramaturgs in the traditional theatre “*attend to*” it – they observe, contemplate, discuss, and *write about it*, rather than *write the thing itself* (Profeta 3-4).

Further complicating the concept of dramaturgy, Profeta points out a second usage. She writes, “Dramaturgy is also what the dramaturg does; it can mean ‘the activity of the dramaturg’” (4). The difference between the first and second definitions has to do with dramaturgy’s relationship to structure. In the first usage, dramaturgy-as-structure exists independently of the dramaturg. In the second usage, the dramaturgy is dependent at least in part on the dramaturg. Profeta concludes, “So dramaturgs find themselves sandwiched between two kinds of dramaturgy, one that emerges before them and one that extends from them, attending to the

former and enacting the latter” (4). Moving between receptivity and activity, the dramaturg metaphorically reads as well as writes a work.

As a contemporary choreographer and theatrical deviser, I find an innate connection to the second understanding of “dramaturgy.” Rather than working from a playscript, I shift between *attending to* – witnessing – and *enacting* – affecting – the emergence of a given work, which may or may not include text. Depending upon the project, I work with collaborators who might also serve a dramaturgical role.

Fundamentally, dramaturgy has to do with the legibility of a given work. According to *Online Etymology Dictionary*, “legibility” comes from the Late Latin *legibilis*, meaning, “that can be read, written plainly,” and from Latin *legere*, “to read.” The common denominator is the Proto-Indo-European root, *leg-*, meaning, “to collect, gather,” and having derivatives meaning, “to speak (to ‘pick out words’)” (Harper “legible (adj.)”). The physicality of the root *leg-* provides a conduit from theatrical to embodied dramaturgy. Instead of “reading” text-based language, the dancing bodymind is an archive that collects or gathers sensory and kinesthetic impressions within rehearsal and performance. In the studio, dancers, choreographers, and dramaturgs co-create work through the transmission of embodied knowledge – sensation, kinesthesia, weight, space, and tempo – which is then shared with audiences. It is precisely the tangible sensibility of movement which enables its legibility.

3.2. Case Study: Dramaturgy and *Mrs. Wrights*

I look to *Mrs. Wrights* as a case study in dance and postdramatic dramaturgy. Continuing with Profeta’s research, I begin by discussing the relationship between dramaturg and audience. This leads to an examination of productive tensions within dramaturgical process. A

longstanding tension between text and the body – more generally, representation and embodiment – gives way to Lepecki’s contemporary observation of the tension between knowledge and ownership. Both tensions factor into my process, exemplified by the differing opinions of the dramaturgs with whom I consult. Finally, extending from my genealogical analysis of “embodiment” in light of phenomenology, I offer observations on the intersection of dramaturgy and phenomenology. I conclude by positing a contemporary reconceptualization of choreography as the dramaturgy of embodiment.

3.2.A. Audience

Choreographers and theatrical devisers use dramaturgical thinking when they make decisions about how to structure the content of their work with respect to eventual audiences. In fact, Profeta writes, “A common description of the dramaturg is that she is the work’s first audience” (88). It often follows that the dramaturg is an “advocate for the audience,” although Profeta indicates that this position has been “much refuted and defended, used and abused” (88). The dramaturg’s relationship with the audience is much more nuanced than the reductionistic descriptor “advocate” implies.

First, it is impossible for a dramaturg to predict who their audiences will be. Profeta cites Lepecki, who describes audience members as “invisible ghost[s]” (qtd. in Profeta 99). She explains, “The conjuring task is both necessary, because the audience’s future perceptions will create the performance as performance, and impossible, because of their diversity and present incorporeality” (99). I already have reflected on my assumptions about the audiences I imagined would be interested in attending *Mrs. Wrights* – Wright fans and fanatics, who often are highly educated, wealthy and older. My fears about negative reactions to my presentation of social

taboos and my representation of historicity stagnated my early research. I had fixated on a certain audience demographic, which had distorted my view of future actual audiences. In reality, audience members have been more diverse in terms of age, socio-economic status, education, and interest in Wright than I had predicted. Further, the response of Wright aficionados has been heterogenous, with different individuals reacting positively to different aspects of the work.

Second, the dramaturg might attempt to challenge, provoke, or critique imagined audiences rather than to “advocate” for them. It certainly was my motivation to subvert the popular image of Wright as a self-made man and lone genius by embodying the lesser-known stories and ephemeral experiences of the women closest to him. Taking a feminist position, I wanted audiences to consider the gender politics that support his celebrity and minimize the women’s role. While this might challenge some audiences, such as conservative male Wright fanatics, it might simultaneously advocate for others, such as progressives and women.

Third, through each person’s unique experience and interpretation, audiences co-create a performance along with a dramaturg and other artists. In *The Emancipated Spectator*, French philosopher Jacques Rancière writes,

Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting...The spectator also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares, interprets...She participates in the performance by refashioning it in her own way...They are thus both distant spectators and active interpreters of the spectacle offered to them. (13)

It is futile to project expectations onto audiences because a dramaturg never truly knows the level of intelligence, attention, and empathetic resonance each person will bring to a performance. In her essay *The Ignorant Dramaturg*, Serbian dramaturg and performance theorist

Bojana Cvejić admonishes artists not to confine their work by making assumptions about audiences. She writes,

this turns dramaturgy into pedagogy, where the dramaturg puts herself in the priestly or masterly position of the one who knows better, who can predict what the audience members see, think, feel, like or dislike. We, makers and theorists alike, are all obsessing far too much about spectatorship, instead of wisely relaxing...and trusting that spectators are more active and smart than we allow ourselves to admit. (Cvejić par. 5)

Failing to acknowledge the audience as co-creator generates a hierarchical relationship in which the dramaturg's knowledge is more valuable than that brought by audiences. In turn, a work's form and content are affected by a dramaturg's constructed relationship to audience. A relationship of horizontality creates space for multivalent meaning-making.

I held regular showings throughout the creation of *Mrs. Wrights* in order to facilitate a co-creative process with audiences. The showings existed at various levels of formality. The creation of *Mrs. Wrights* began in spring semester 2017 as coursework for Choreography II. This culminated in an approximately 45-minute showing and question and answer session for approximately 14 colleagues, friends and family from both within and outside the dance and theatre communities. Subsequently, while completing the show as thesis coursework, my parents, other family and their friends also attended further work-in-progress showings. Post-showing conversations with these audiences usually focused more on concept, content, and interpretation than on structure, form, and experience.

Alternately, showing my work at The Field Milwaukee – facilitated by dancer, choreographer and arts administrator Joëlle Worm and writer, performance artist and nonprofit administrator Chad Piechocki – solicited viewer feedback that was highly experiential and

process-oriented. According to *The Field*, “Fieldwork is a place for artists to learn about their work, develop their ability to give feedback, and build a community of artistic peers” (*The Field* “Fieldwork”). The process solicits “honest, immediate, specific feedback” reflecting back to the artist the viewer’s experience. Artists are encouraged to show work “without any preambles or explanations” in order to uphold viewer autonomy. In my case, I did not frame my showings with a title or any other contextual information. In Fieldwork, viewers are encouraged to “state the obvious” and offer “emotional responses and gut reactions” (*The Field* “Fieldwork Basics”).⁸ Showings are strictly limited to ten minutes each.

Fieldwork’s stipulations encouraged me to have a different mindset in relation to audience compared to course showings. Under Fieldwork premises, and in contrast to the final showing for Choreography II, I did not feel the need to deliver a complete and legible product in a one-sided conversation. Instead, I entered into a forum in which I invited audiences to act on my work by offering feedback. Working quickly and making intuitive choices, I would construct a sketch in a couple of hours – far less time than that of my rehearsals geared toward a finished product. Feedback would clue me into movement motifs and spatial choices that were particularly evocative. In the midst of searching for intentions and structures, I could then return to the studio with a new understanding my raw materials, ready to develop them further.

Although Fieldwork showings often felt more vulnerable and risky than coursework showings, they helped me to see possibilities and abandon ideas with an attitude of malleability. I came to realize that the more unfinished a particular excerpt was, the more I got out of the showing because I was better able to absorb audience feedback. This allowed me to gain insights into the various and unexpected ways in which the materials of performance worked on and

⁸ For further details on the Fieldwork feedback process, please visit <https://thefield.org/programs/fieldwork>.

through viewers. Still, more formal coursework showings were essential in developing *Mrs. Wrights* because they allowed me to present the work-in-progress to audiences in the same way I would the finished work.

My experience with Fieldwork was consistent with Canadian dramaturg, director, and scholar Bruce Barton's "dramaturgy of interactivity," which invites "creator-performers and audience members alike to recognise and work with what a performance is *doing* rather than what it is trying to *be*" (qtd. in Hansen 6). Barton's choice of language is informative here. The do/be dichotomy and use of present continuous tense alludes to a non-hierarchical, process-oriented relationship between artists and spectators. Fieldwork allowed me to distance myself from what I wanted my work to be and how I wanted it to be received, thereby opening me to a multiplicity of experiences, meanings and interpretations articulated by Fieldwork participants. I often presented excerpts in their very early stages and walked away with impressions I never had considered, thereby setting the work along a different path. Not only do current audiences apply their own lens to *Mrs. Wrights*, then, the unique perspectives of work-in-progress viewers also affected the show in a co-creative process.

To Profeta's discussion of audience as co-creator, I add one additional insight that the particular experience of creating a solo show illuminates. Never had I spent so many hours alone in the rehearsal studio. When I performed in front of one or more people at showings, my work changed. It never seemed to matter how many people I performed for, only that there was somebody else in the room. Perhaps this is analogous to the notion of reactivity within the field of psychology – the phenomenon that occurs when individuals change their behavior because they are aware that they are being observed (Heppner, Wampold and Kivlighan 331). This also has been termed the Hawthorne effect and observer effect.

When I performed in front of others, my movement became fuller than I felt I could have sustained alone in the studio. I found myself making different choices - finding options and following intuitions I never knew had existed. For example, in performing an in-progress draft of “Scene 4.2: Olgivanna Spiritual Training” for Milwaukee dancer and choreographer Zach Schorsch, I arrived at a new ending without any preconception. Holding a plank position with my left arm while extending my right arm skyward, I released the weight of my right arm and it fell hard on my face. It was a kinesthetic release of the effortful movement that had preceded and a physical metaphor for the character’s emotional catharsis. Schorsch and I both found it to be dramaturgically successful. Thus, the inverse of Profeta’s dramaturg as advocate for audience also works – the audience, by their very presence, may serve as advocate for the dramaturg. This certainly proved to be the case throughout my showing process.

Profeta returns to audience agency in the fourth and final point she makes about audience as “advocate.” In addition to the emancipation of the spectator, the decentralized role of text means that there is no one-to-one correspondence between content and representation in postmodern performance. Without established organizational principles, audiences are productively challenged to enact not only their own interpretations, but also new strategies for interpretation (Profeta 92-93). Influenced by Rancière, Profeta poetically writes, “Performance is not a one-to-one transmission of message or feeling from artist to spectator, but it *is* an offering up of a ‘forest of signs’...The artists throw out breadcrumbs, knowing all the while that they do not trace one true path, but rather a range of potential options they know of, as well as another range they do not” (98). Rather than aiming to communicate precise meanings, postmodern performance problematizes and thereby makes transparent the act of interpretation itself.

Meaning is liberated in Flemish dramaturg Marianne Van Kerkhoven's "new dramaturgies" and by what Gilpin describes as "making the multivalent resonate" (qtd. in Profeta 92-93). According to Kerkhoven and Gilpin, Profeta writes, "the dramaturg-as-advocate argues for, and works to construct the opportunities for, an audience's discovery of novel forms and modes of perception, of nonnormative viewing experiences" (93). As a result of my eclectic influences, *Mrs. Wrights* blends modern and postmodern dance sensibilities with theatre techniques – text, voice, face, clowning and mime – creating opportunities for heterogeneous audiences to find their own entry and pathway, following my "breadcrumbs" through a "forest of signs."

Decentralized text not only empowers and liberates audiences, it does the same to me as creator-performer addressing controversial subject matter. Rather than portraying the women's experiences with text alone, embodiment more effectively supports the dissemination of my viewpoint. Appealing to *logos* – logic – words are easy to question, dissect, and argue against with still more words. But how do audiences deal with visual imagery and kinesthetic experience? These make an impression through affect and *pathos* – feelings and emotions.

Viewers engage empathy when they intuit another's kinesthetic, emotional or mental experience through the perception of that person's physical expression. According to American comparative literature and dance studies scholar Brandon W. Shaw, kinesthetic empathy focuses specifically on another's bodily experience (138). The relatively recent discovery of mirror neurons in the 1980s and 90s helps to explain the neurobiological basis of kinesthetic empathy. Shaw writes, "Contemporary mirror cell theorists hold that kinesthetic empathy is elicited through the process of perception. Mirror cells, it is hypothesized, are a special class of cells that are both perceptual and motor" (par. 6). Rizzolatti, et al. explain this phenomenon in their

ground-breaking 1996 article, writing, “When an external stimulus evokes a neural activity similar to that which, when internally generated, represents a certain action, the meaning of the observed action is recognized because of the similarity between the two representations, the one internally generated during action and that evoked by the stimulus” (137). For example, when a spectator views a dancer stretching one arm, not only do specific neurons in the dancer’s brain fire, neurons in the spectator’s brain associated with stretching her/his own arm also fire.

Dutch choreographer and neuroscience researcher Ivar Hagendoorn explains that mirror neurons “provide a neurophysiological bridge between perception and action” (91). Shaw writes that they “are believed to be responsible for allowing us to feel what we perceive” (3). Whereas sympathy evokes an emotional response based on another’s experience, empathy is a much closer association with that experience, enabling the viewer to feel how the other feels. Mirror neurons explain how empathy necessarily arises on a bodily level. It is thus that Hagendoorn writes, “when watching dance the observer is in a sense virtually dancing along” (95). Existing on a continuum from representation to abstraction, dance owes its fundamental legibility to kinesthetic empathy, which allows the viewer to access the bodily experience of the performer. It is important to note that although kinesthetic empathy exists across humanity, it remains highly individualized. A spectator’s neurological response to perceived stimuli is determined by factors such as culture, socio-economics, bodily experience and training (Foster 168).

My experience with Wright in Wisconsin – the organization that hired me to perform *Mrs. Wrights* at Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin Hillside Theater for its annual “Wright and Like” event – affirmed the liberation I found in decentralizing text. Administrator Sherri Shokler was concerned especially about my work offending older patrons with whom, she explains, “there are just certain things that shouldn’t be discussed” (Personal Correspondence). According to her, a

selling point of the show was its primarily embodied format. She believed dance and embodiment would be more ambiguous than language, allowing for a multiplicity of interpretations and – I surmise – greater defense against potential accusations of slander or insult for the presenting organization. At the time of our discussion, the show was still in development, so I couldn't accurately confirm her assumptions. Yet, I did want to sell the show and so affirmed her underlying metaphysical position that dance and embodiment are less representational than language. Understanding Shokler's position liberated me to address the controversial topics I wanted to include in the show and encouraged me to consider the capacity of dance and embodiment to do so.

The abstract nature of kinetic exploration thus freed me from potential censorship. In *Mrs. Wrights*, "Scene 6.2: Miriam Letters" provides a strong example of the efficacy of embodiment to explore controversial subjects. Implying rather than explicitly stating Miriam's allegation of physical abuse against Wright, I repeatedly snap an envelope near my face to create popping sounds and then react, startled and gasping. Instead of narrating Miriam's experience of addiction, I enact it through my body – trembling, salivating, collapsing, and disorienting. Prioritizing perception over cognition, embodiment allows audiences to draw close to performers and characters through kinesthetic empathy.

Gillespie astutely comments that embodiment and text within *Mrs. Wrights* function as analogues to the women's lives and Wright's architecture. Like much of historical women's experiences – largely undocumented – dance and embodiment are ephemeral. The text, much of it collaged from historic documents, mirrors the permanent record of Wright's architectural footprint. Lepecki writes,

Dance's *ephemerality*, the fact that dance leaves no object behind after its performance, demonstrates the possibility of creating alternative economies of objecthood in the arts, by showing that it is possible to create artworks away from regimes of commodification and the fetishization of tangible objects. ("Introduction//Dance..." 15)

In *Mrs. Wrights*, dance reframes and revalues traditional women's work of child-rearing and homemaking, which have been excluded from the capitalist economic system. At the same time, text and codified physical vocabularies function as Profeta's "breadcrumbs" throughout the work, metaphorically luring and nourishing audiences as embodiment presents them with new opportunities for perception. Likewise, Wright's legacy draws audiences to the show, where they are encounter new information about lesser-known historical figures. The text, codified vocabulary, history and architecture anchor the ineffability of embodiment and female experience. The mobility of the latter destabilizes the former.

3.2.B. Dramaturgs: Owning vs. Knowing

Although *Mrs. Wrights* is comprised of both text and body, I experienced ongoing tension between the two within my dramaturgical process. Here, again, is an instance of form analogizing content – the conflicts between Wright and each woman. I already have discussed the hegemonic legacy of mind-body dualism with regards to my conceptual and movement research. The same legacy pervades dramaturgical practice.

According to Canadian performance studies and dramaturgy scholar Pil Hansen, "Tropes of anxiety have dominated discussions of dance dramaturgy since they were first effectively articulated by the Belgian critic and artist-scholar Myriam van Imschoot in her article 'Anxious Dramaturgy' in 2003" (2). Supporting these observations, Lepecki cites the proposition central to

debates at the 2009 *International Seminar on New Dramaturgies* in Murcia, Spain: “*We can understand dramaturgical practice as an exercise of interrogation and composition that has traditionally mediated the difficult relationship between writing and physical action (excerpt from their open call)*” (“Errancy as Work...” 51). He goes on to propose that the interrogation central to dance dramaturgy is not one between writing and physical action. He argues, “Instead, what fuels dramaturgy as a practice *for* dance and *in* dance is the tension established between multiple *non-written, diffuse, and errant processes of thought* and multiple *corporeal processes of actualising these thoughts*” (“Errancy as Work...” 52). He concludes, “I propose that the fundamental tension in dramaturgy as practice is not one between action and writing but between knowing and owning” (“Errancy as Work...” 53). The simple presence of the dramaturg in the studio calls into question the knowledge and destabilizes the authority of the choreographer and dancers. Not surprisingly, These emerge in part from dramaturgy’s lineage in the institutional theatre. Similar to Lepecki’s epistemological tension, Imschoot’s genealogical anxiety is caused by assumptions about knowledge and power.

Within my process of creating *Mrs. Wrights*, I took the position of owner and worked with four *de facto* dramaturgs. Destabilizing my knowledge, they literally and figuratively set both my bodymind and the work in motion. Approaching the work from the perspective of their own values and lineage, they offered valuable feedback on the experience of viewing it. Certainly, I have appropriated some of these values through my study and work with each. I will continue to grapple with their insights moving forward.

My research and creative process were influenced by my substantial work since 2012 as a founding ensemble member of Milwaukee-based Quasimondo Physical Theatre. My creative collaborator since 2013, Rott served as a dramaturgical consultant and lighting designer. He has

a background in both traditional theatre and European devised physical theatre. He is particularly influenced by clowning and *bouffon* traditions through the Lecoq lineage. Experienced in all aspects of theatrical design, he approached his viewing of *Mrs. Wrights* holistically. As the long-term producer of the show, he had an interest in creating a marketable production that could be toured and net a profit. As such, he biased narrative legibility and historical representation in his viewing.

I was equally influenced by my studies in the Master of Fine Arts in Dance program at UWM's Peck School of the Arts Department of Dance. The program emphasizes somatics and contemporary dance through the postmodern lineage. My thesis committee members Ferro, Gillespie, and Schuchart share this orientation. Both Ferro and Schuchart hold Graduate Laban Certificates in Movement Analysis, and Gillespie is influenced by Ideokinesis. As academics, they had an interest in my creative process as a tool for academic research. Implicitly upholding a phenomenological lens, they prioritized embodiment and experience in their viewing and assessment of *Mrs. Wrights*.

Finally, although joining later in my process and playing a less proximal role, costumer Leslie Vaglica nonetheless deserves mention for the dramaturgical influence she had in creating original costumes to clothe the bodies I performed. Her experience costuming for theatre made her sensitive to narrative and historicity. At the same time, her experience costuming for dance enabled her to consider the needs of and highlight the expressivity of the moving body.

Because Lepecki identifies the fundamental tension in dramaturgy as being between knowledge and ownership, it is worth noting the varying power relations between me and my dramaturgs. My relationships with Rott and Vaglica – both of whom I consider to be artistic peers – primarily were horizontal. Rott is both my artistic and life partner, and I consider Vaglica

a friend. At the same time, however, Rott's role as lighting designer gave him an additional tool by which to wield dramaturgical power. Committee members Schuchart, Gillespie, and especially Ferro as chair wielded power over the course of my matriculation from the program but gave me permission to make autonomous dramaturgical choices. Feedback from the four dramaturgs rarely – if ever – was unanimous. Rather than allowing power dynamics and personal relationships to interfere, I tried to take their knowledge for what it was. Still, destabilizing knowledge from others often felt like it threatened my ownership of the work, resulting in the very tension about which Lepecki writes. I found I had to navigate often conflicting feedback in order to sustain ownership of my artistic vision and voice.

The degree to which Wright himself should be present in the work was one point of contention. Upholding a feminist lens, I was steadfast in my desire to foreground the women's experiences. Always in the background, however, Wright kept encroaching as a unifying force for their individual narratives. And, the cultural import placed on Wright as a notable historical figure in contrast to the women's relative anonymity was undeniable. In kinetic terms, the weight of Wright's legacy created a gravitational pull whose resistance proved challenging but productive.

Concerned with selling the show and pleasing Wright aficionados, Rott advocated for including factual biographical details about the architect throughout. In my first public showing, which also was the final showing for *Choreography II*, prerecorded "Frank Facts" voiceovers covered costume changes. With clowning in my lineage from my work with *Quasimondo Physical Theatre*, I used clowning to expose Wright's humanity and destabilize his historical import.

Gillespie's critique of these strategies helped me to realign the work with my intention. She indicated that the "Frank Facts" and clowning drew an inordinate amount of attention to Wright – attention already bestowed by popular culture and history. Swinging in the opposite direction, Gillespie went so far as to suggest that the work would be complete if I presented the women in a suite of dances – erasing Wright completely, as well as the need for transitions.

While her extreme opinion did help me to refocus the work on the women, I still wanted to take on what I perceived to be the greater challenge of creating an evening-length dance theatre work – not a series of discrete but related dances. I wanted to wrestle with the tension between narrative and experience, text and embodiment, and Wright and the women, in order to accomplish what I believed others had not. And, I wanted to engage viewers through those ineffable, ever-magical liminal events – transitions – as well as challenge myself to conceive and perform these difficult and beautiful transformational moments.

In my first several showings, I made transitional costume changes behind a shoji screen. Rott used different lighting looks for each, sometimes putting me in silhouette, and sometimes using front lighting with one or another gel color. Costume changes in ancient and modern Western theatre take place backstage, apart from the action. For *Mrs. Wrights*, this convention would maintain a fictitious but paradoxically realistic world of six discrete characters. A solo performance, however, the show ran the risk of losing focus and audience interest if I disappeared from sight for too long. Committee feedback indicated that a stronger choice would be to perform the costume changes onstage, in plain sight of the audience.

Such an approach aligns with postmodernism's performative turn, which illuminates the socio-cultural construction of reality by investigating modes of performance. Rather than constructing a fictional "reality," my eventual decision to make costume changes in sight of

audiences is a metatheatrical acknowledgement of my act of performance. That is, behind seemingly different characters there exists a single performer.

As previously mentioned, I had e-mailed Berndtson to inquire about accessing Olgivanna's musical scores. In her response, she writes, "I would love to see a photo of you after reading all those reviews! Mrs. Olgivanna Wright was very beautiful and graceful. I knew her all my life, and therefore am somewhat sensitive as to inaccurate portrayals of her by people who didn't know her" (Personal Correspondence). I chuckled to myself upon receiving her haughty correspondence, but then quickly settled into trepidation. Once again, the strong opinions and expertise of Wright aficionados emerged to derail confidence in my process. More importantly than Berndtson's fondness for Olgivanna, however, her comment exposed a particular bias about what performance is. As with many of my audiences, her understanding of performance as "portrayal" and her concern for accuracy favors representation, realism and historicity over abstraction, interpretation and artistic imagination. I returned to my original chuckle. For me, the creation and performance of *Mrs. Wrights* was never about historically accurate portrayal, which seems an impossible (and impossibly boring) task. I am more interested in using my bodymind to deconstruct popular mythology in order to liberate women's lived experience from the edifice of architectural history.

Repeatedly peeling off and putting on layers through onstage costume changes, the women as well as Wright transform, one into another, in surprising ways. My work is informed by the character transformations of Indian American actor, dancer and choreographer Sheetal Gandhi in her work, *Bahu – Beti – Biwi*. Maintaining audience interest, she utilizes different theatrical devices and executes each transition seamlessly. Like her, I deliberately vary the ways in which I accomplish my transitions by using different parts of the stage space, sometimes

speaking text – Olgivanna into Mamah (Scene 4.2 into Scene 5.1; “Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 27:07-28:01) – and sometimes accompanied by a prerecorded voiceover – Mamah into Wright (Scene 5.3 into Scene 5.4; “Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 37:22-38:22) and Miriam into Olgivanna (Scene 6.2 into Scene 7.1; “Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 1:00:44-1:02:00) – sometimes fully visible and at other times in low lighting or obscured by an object – Anna into Kitty, behind the coat rack (Scene 2 into 3.1; “Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 8:30-8:53) – sometimes slowly – Olgivanna after Spiritual Training shedding her white dress as if molting skin (Scene 4.2, no video documentation exists at time of print) – and sometimes in an instant – Olgivanna into Anna, by tying the scarf on my head and supported by a lighting change (Scene 1 into Scene 2; “Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 5:10-5:15).

Audiences have commented that the transitions are some of the most intriguing parts of *Mrs. Wrights*. The act of transformation establishes unexpected relationships and meanings. Rooted in the body, they add depth and richness to information conveyed through text, code and narrative. Such a strategy transcends historical space and time (for example, Anna died before Olgivanna met Wright, so the two women never met) to highlight the characters’ interconnectedness and shared human experience (surely, Olgivanna was influenced by stories she had heard about Anna, and by Anna’s influence on Wright). Rather than using inconspicuous costume changes to create the illusion of six discrete characters, the candid costume changes become a performance of the real. They make transparent the authorship of my female body, in effect excavating a seventh presence. The act of dressing and undressing thus posits an alternative to Wright as a narrative through-line. The generative fecundity of the female body – birthing, becoming – offers embodied connective tissue for the work, advancing *womanness* as a

transcendent theme capable of moving beyond historicity and individuality to inspire new knowledge through experience.

Another major difference I observed in the way Rott worked compared to me and my dance-based academic committee members was in his insistence on writing a script earlier than I felt necessary. In addition to his experience in theatre, which hinges on a playscript or scene list, Rott made the suggestion based on his awareness of my limited timeline, the needs of my collaborators, and my tendency to procrastinate. For example, in the later stages of the show's development, decisions about costuming were stymied because I had not yet settled on a scene order for the show. At the same time, however, it felt like Rott had asked me to impose a premature structure on my creative output. Movement research had been my primary focus, with text following. I favored investigating through movement over making conceptual decisions. I wanted to birth emergent structures, allowing them to manifest authentically and organically rather than to impose what felt like artificial limitations.

I long held out on implementing Rott's advice in order to preserve the primacy of movement in my process. Eventually, though, I recognized the importance of his strategy. Writing and revising the script (and re-writing and re-revising, again and again) provided a blueprint for the work. It became a way to organize my ideas, to understand where text could be eliminated and inserted, and to work effectively with collaborators who needed to be on the same page as me. Even as I sat down to write the script (mostly in the studio, so that I could get up and move if need be), I continued my movement research. I danced continually between the utterable and ineffable as a means of generating content and making choices.

While Rott was concerned with the script, my committee members brought up considerations relevant to my moving body in space. Gillespie was concerned that much of my

blocking and choreography tended towards center, the part of the stage offering the least dramatic tension and choreographic interest. She encouraged me to consider how each character might relate differently to space. Ferro noted that I initiated much of my movement with my arms. She encouraged me to work against my preferences by accessing full-bodied movement through the torso and at different levels. She also relished moments related to the experience of sensation. Schuchart noted my need for breath support, especially before moments of exertion such as jumps.

Although perceptive and discerning about movement and choreography, by in large Rott left movement coaching up to the committee. His input as dramaturg mostly considered character, narrative and dramatic arc through text and structure. For example, at one point we both were concerned that the show as a whole was overly tragic. In particular, “Scene 4.1: Olgivanna Childhood,” added emotional weight to an already heavy series of scenes. Nestled between my portrayal of Kitty’s challenging domestic life and Mamah’s eventual murder, Olgivanna recalls grappling with her father’s premature blindness as a child. We posited that making this scene lighter could provide a break between the two other scenes.

Rott and I worked together to revise this scene, changing the music and adding comedic elements. For example, I embodied a superhero on the line, “I found in Nietzsche the idea of Superman!” I soon received feedback from Schorsch that this was dramaturgically problematic because Olgivanna’s childhood took place, and Nietzsche had coined the term “Übermensch,” well before the fictional character’s 1938 debut (“The Evolution of Superman”). Further and more importantly, my revised performance of Olgivanna’s childhood intuitively did not *feel* right. The humor fell flat. Gillespie commented that I was performing – representing – a child, rather than embodying childlike experience. Ferro recognized that the scene deserved its original

weight, despite the tragic tone throughout the work. Her advice was to recognize that *Mrs. Wrights* is serious, and that this does not need to be changed. After this, I reverted back to the earlier version of “Scene 4.1: Olgivanna Childhood,” reducing text in order to allow my body to speak. As previously discussed with regard to embodying Olgivanna, rather than portraying a child representationally, I shifted my approach to embodying the childness that adults still carry in their bodies – a capacity to feel deeply, the desire for wholeness and healing, and a resistance to gravity.

As an auteur, Rott values character development and relationships, even when he is not necessarily interested in linear storytelling. Likewise, I felt it was important to perform fully and equally developed historical female characters. Through *Mrs. Wrights*, I hoped to breathe life into a historical void, reinstating each woman’s legacy as different than but equal to Wright’s. At the same time, I felt a moral responsibility to honor their lives through sensitive research and interpretation. My desire to create fully developed character arcs is another reason why I didn’t pursue Gillespie’s suggestion to create a suite of dances whose abstraction might not have provided equal weight against the command of history. After having completed *Mrs. Wrights*, however, this is a secondary project I will now consider in light of performance opportunities with various space and time constraints. Overall, I found that Ferro and Schuchart provided feedback that supported my efforts to fully develop each character while also minimizing Wright’s presence.

Concerned with legibility, I relied on text, mime, and theatrical adaptations of literary tropes to advance my storytelling in addition to embodiment and dancing. As I have previously mentioned, these provided scaffolding for the ephemerality of embodied experience. My

dramaturgs reacted differently to each device depending upon their training and creative paradigm.

Prioritizing the legibility of historical narrative, Rott embraced my use of text and mime. In general, the three dance dramaturgs urged me to reduce my use of text. This then became my strategy: Research (a lot), write (a lot), perform, reduce text, reduce text, reduce text, reduce text...Repeat. Gillespie has an aversion to prerecorded text and noted that it should be used strategically to connote a different time, place, mood or intention than delivered text. In the end, I pared down the prerecorded voiceovers to two old time radio broadcasts about relevant historical events played during my most lengthy costume changes.

In addition to paring down text, Schuchart encouraged me to consider deconstruction – a postmodern strategy rooted in Algerian-French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s (1930-2004) theory for philosophy, literary criticism and textual analysis inspired by the work of Swiss linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). Deconstruction analyzes a text in order to question its implicit ideological basis and hierarchal values. In *Mrs. Wrights*, the most straightforward opportunity for deconstruction appeared to be in “Scene 3.1: Catherine (Kitty) Wedding and Children” with Kitty’s wedding vows (Reinke, “*Mrs. Wrights*” 3-4). A well-known verse, omitting some of the words would not run the risk of illegibility. Rather, deconstruction would transcend legibility in order to add complexity and nuanced shades of meaning.

The script reads, “Do (you), Catherine Lee Tobin, take (Frank Lloyd Wright), for richer (or poorer), better (or worse), so long as you both (shall live)? / Take Frank (Lloyd Wright), to have (and to hold), in health (and in sickness), joy (and sorrow), for now, always, forever?” (Reinke, “*Mrs. Wrights*” 4; parenthetical words added for explication). Retaining the positive conditions of marriage and omitting the negatives shows Kitty’s youthful naivety and

foreshadows the challenges she later faces as wife and mother. I further deconstruct her affirmative response to the vows: “I... / I... / I... DO. / (Sensuously touching self.) Doooooooooooo... / (Looking to ground and miming lifting and then cradling baby.) Do-do. Da-da. Do-do” (Reinke, “*Mrs. Wrights*” 4; parenthetical stage directions added for explication). My deconstruction of the phrase “I do” creates tension (“I... / I... / I...”) and resolution (“DO.”). Transforming the sound “do,” I connect Kitty’s speech act – an utterance that performs action in the world – to her social role resulting directly from the speech act – sexual maturity and motherhood.

The dance faculty’s postmodern and somatic dance paradigms made them sensitive to my use of mime, while Rott perceived mime as an effective communication strategy. British performance maker, writer and teacher Campbell Edinborough analyzes dances of the 1960s and 1970s that, he writes, “attempted to capitalize on theatre’s capacity for promoting the spectator’s empathetic engagement with the dancer while simultaneously avoiding narrative or symbolism” and subverting “theatre’s mimetic qualities” (41). He specifically refers to practitioners from the Grand Union and Judson Dance Theater including Yvonne Rainer, Trisha Brown and Steve Paxton. Disassociating dance from longstanding aesthetic, technical, expressive and narrative traits, experimental choreography posits the body in space and time as dance’s subject (Banes 44). This position in turn results in new dramaturgical considerations. Divorced from specialized training and virtuosity, the dancer’s hierarchical relationship to spectator is deconstructed, inviting empathetic rather than critical response. Instead of viewing the dancer’s body as object, the dancer’s subjective experience is pushed to the fore through somatic expressivity (Edinborough 43). My use of mime had interrupted this process by objectifying my body as a vehicle for cognition. Rather than empathetically absorbing sensory information, the analytical

nature of decoding distances audiences from a performer's somatic experience. My committee members, on the other hand, had been interested in receiving my bodymind as subject and container for experience.

I had commenced this section of research with a discussion about anxiety surrounding dance dramaturgy. Tension between text and action might be traced to dramaturgy's origins in the Western theatre. Lepecki goes further to propose that the "fundamental tension in dramaturgy as practice is...between knowing and owning" (53). This emerges from dramaturgy's origins within hierarchal institutions. Through my discussion about dramaturgical considerations for *Mrs. Wrights* and about the dramaturgs with whom I worked, I illustrated certain points of tension. Listening to their feedback, I gained the perspective of the audience and incorporated this into my own dramaturgical thinking. Maintaining ownership of my vision, I redirected these challenges towards creative productivity – moving both my body and the project along in ways I might not have considered had I worked alone.

3.3. Choreography as the Dramaturgy of Embodiment

Likewise, the points of convergence between contemporary dramaturgy and phenomenology offer an emancipatory framework for embodied performance that might be extended to choreography. Fundamentally, both dramaturgy and phenomenology are descriptive and dialectical methods. They propose a non-hierarchal conversation between body-object and body-subject, performer and spectator, creator and dramaturg, that recognizes performance as both object and process. Csordas writes, "Phenomenology is a descriptive science of existential beginnings, not of already constituted cultural products." Its goal, he continues, is "to capture that moment of transcendence in which perception begins, and, in the midst of arbitrariness and

indeterminacy, constitutes and is constituted by culture” (*Body/Meaning/Healing* 61). Noë likewise writes, “the task of phenomenology, and of experiential art, ought to be not so much to depict or represent or describe experience, but rather to catch experience in the act of making the world available” (176). Contemporary performance breaks with dramatic tradition to invite novel modes of perception, which occurs through a position of pre-reflective openness to phenomena prior to objectification. But humans are storytelling animals, and phenomena framed as performance easily are read through culturally constructed symbols and tropes. Peeling away interpretation and cognitive meaning, phenomenologically informed dramaturgy encourages the experience of performance for what it is – bodies, objects, light, and sound in space and time.

This process is an iteration of Heidegger’s recognition of phenomena as “that which reveals itself,” and of Merleau-Ponty’s subsequent identification of the “pre-objective” (qtd. in Barrett 214; *Phenomenology of Perception* 14). It also is consistent with Buddhist meditation, which teaches a practitioner to “be present for things as they are” through “receptive awareness” (Fronsdal 65, 103). By experiencing a work with this kind of clarity, performance makers are presented with new options and priorities for molding the materials of performance, performers experience the body-subject as a way to break free from limiting technical ideals and faulty sensory awareness, and dramaturgs and spectators participate in new ways of receiving and experiencing a work.

Phenomenological dramaturgy invites non-dualistic awareness akin to that achieved through meditation in which, according to Fronsdal, “the distinctions between self and other, inside and outside, perceiver and perceived disappear” (104). Subjectivity and objectivity are complicated as the body-object – which can be known, but not lived – is animated by the body-subject – which can only be lived. Fraleigh writes, “Dance allows us to speak, and to listen, out

of a pre-reflective wholistic state. We (the audience) envision and affirm our own resounding presence through our direct lived experience of the dancer's present-centered performance" (15). Co-occurrent with embodiment, performers enact presence through pre-reflective, receptive awareness of being in the present moment. Fischer-Lichte writes, "Actors present their phenomenal bodies in a particular manner, so that they are experienced as present and simultaneously as a dramatic character like Hamlet or Medea" (33). In *Mrs. Wrights*, I enact a doubled body for each character. Costuming and a unique movement signature create semiotic bodies that signify the women and Wright. Presence emerges concurrently with my experiencing of each semiotic body. Consistent with McDermott's vision for an embodied theatre, my embodiment facilitates "energetic dialogue" with the space and with spectators, who filter my presence through their own bodyminds (qtd. in Loukes 194).

As such, phenomenology suggests its own priorities for contemporary performer training apart from those of classical dramatic theatre and dance technique. Phenomenological dramaturgy goes beyond the stabilizing legibility of cognitive interpretation to consider the mobilizing embodied exchange of lived experiences between performers, creators, dramaturgs, and audiences. Edinborough writes,

Dance within a somatic paradigm cannot be understood as a purely technical, physical or aesthetic exercise. It must be understood as informed and shaped by the nature of the dancer's subjective experience. In this way, the choreographer's work becomes a process of organizing the dancer's experience for the consideration of the audience as much as it involves the organization of his movement through space. (44)

Dramaturgical *thinking*, then, might be reframed as dramaturgical *being*, emphasizing embodiment, movement, action and becoming grounded in non-dualistic bodymind awareness.

Towards this end, I incorporate mindfulness meditation into my artistic and life practice. The emergent present-centeredness heightens my capacity to experience and respond to events as they unfold in rehearsal and performance.

Likewise, choreography might productively be reframed as the dramaturgy of embodiment. At the very least, this suggests a redefinition and expansion of contemporary choreographic practice and pedagogy. Discussed earlier, Foster's genealogical analysis reveals the shifting meaning of "choreography" over time. According to her research, eighteenth century ballet choreographers catalyzed a legacy of extracting embodiment from dancing through notation, technical standards of virtuosity, and codified movement vocabulary (17, 25). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Foster writes, "choreography began to specify the unique process through which an artist not only arranged and invented movement, but also melded motion and emotion to produce a danced statement of universal significance" (44). Some early pedagogues such as H'Doubler taught improvisation and authentic movement, but this somatic paradigm was overshadowed by methods developed by "master" choreographers such as Graham and Humphrey in order to support their particular aesthetic visions. Since the 1960s, choreographic practice has broadened as a result of collaborative authorship, interdisciplinarity, world dance practices, improvisation, postmodern dance, and somatics.

Of these, it is the last three that particularly inform choreography framed as the dramaturgy of embodiment. This paradigm prioritizes the body-subject as author, achieved through training that values subjective awareness and authentic movement. Rather than representing conceptual information or replicating technical virtuosity, its legibility lies in displaying the experiencing bodymind, which audiences "collect" and "gather" through intersubjective experiencing. It is this approach to choreography that deepened my embodiment

of the characters in *Mrs. Wrights*. Balancing my intention to retain historical content with my desire to fully embody the women's lived experiences, I moved between traditional dramatic dramaturgy and the dramaturgy of embodiment in my writing and choreography. My real experience – effort, weight, impulse, sensation – sweats through the container of historicity, staining it in ways that the written record cannot. Clear examples include Olgivanna's sensate internal landscape of childhood memories ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 22:28-27:07), Kitty's weight sensing as she yields and pushes into gravity through rocking ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 13:57-21:30), Mamah's navigation of Freeing and Binding movement ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 28:07-30:24), and the rhythm and unsteady States of Miriam's addicted body ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 50:27-1:00:44).

Chapter Four. Ethnography

4.1. (Historical) Performance and Sensory Ethnography

Situated within the lineages of both dance and theatre, my performative agenda for *Mrs. Wrights* most closely aligns with the visions of *tanztheater*, postdramatic theatre and postmodern dance. Because of its hybridity, however, the work can be multifariously situated. In terms of narrative content, the show bears similarity to the literary genre of historical fiction and the theatrical genre of history play. A less conventional but perhaps more fruitful proximation compares *Mrs. Wrights* to ethnographic research within the field of anthropology.

Although ethnographic fieldwork privileges the body, ethnographer Lorne Dwight Conquergood writes, “published ethnographies typically have repressed bodily experience in favor of abstracted theory and analysis” in the shift from method to rhetoric (181). The relatively new method of performance ethnography, however, upholds the primacy of the body in its very dissemination of research. Social anthropologist D. S. Farrer writes,

performance ethnography facilitates practical, theoretical and somatic knowledge to be expressed, over time, from within a group, through dialogue, sensory experience and embodied practice...This method stands opposed to fixed, transcendent, positivist approaches where the researcher posits the research questions and outcomes in advance. In philosophical terms, embodied research encourages the phenomenological ‘emergence’ (becoming) of knowledge, a procedure that occurs through ‘immanence,’ or from within experience (Deleuze 1990, 226; Spatz 2015). (138)

Through embodied intersubjectivity, researchers and their subjects generate and disseminate experiential knowledge. The performance ethnographer might participate first-hand in the physical practices, rituals and performances of a living culture. Farrer calls this a “somatic

extension of participant observation where the body may become both subject and object of research” (137). For instance, an ethnographer might conduct interviews with living subjects, and then either perform this research or create the opportunity for subjects to share their lived experiences with audiences through performance.

These options, however, are limited to subjects that are temporally and geographically accessible to the researcher. In relating my research and performance to anthropological methodology, it is necessary to add the qualifier “historical” to “performance ethnography” because of the historical content of *Mrs. Wrights*. Historical performance ethnography, then, addresses the particularities of researching historical subjects and their sociocultural contexts using embodied and performative ethnographic methods.

Intersecting with performance ethnography, I also employed the methodology of sensory ethnography. The two are inextricably related to each other and to a variety of other methodologies, including autoethnography, anthropology of the senses, and embodied ethnography. Of performance ethnography, theatre and performance studies professor Angela J. Latham writes, “To proceed in this method, it is necessary to identify to the fullest possible extent, the sensory experiences represented in the archives of history...The ‘ethnograph[er] of the archives’ must also aim for a virtual kinesthetic understanding of the cultural world explored” (172). In my research, I use embodiment to access *actual* sensory and kinesthetic experiences in order to understand and perform the women’s lives and their historical context.

An intervention into the dominance of the what Australian social scientists Kerryn Drysdale and Karen-Anne Wong call the “the conventional ‘watching and listening’ dynamic often presumed to be at the heart of ethnographic research,” sensory ethnography understands that all of the senses “produce academic knowledge” (3, 9). They summarize, “This

methodological endeavor, then, seeks to capture something of lived experience, recognising that people's lives are lived and interpreted through their full sensorial capacities" (3). Just as postmodern dance and postdramatic theatre deconstructed the primacy of text and code, sensory ethnography likewise deconstructs sensory hierarchies. Drysdale and Wong explain, "Ethnographies that attend to the senses acknowledge the significance and value of all senses, whether they are understood as distinct processes from one another, each conveying unique meaning, or synergistically working together to create meaning" (9). In this, the predominant visual sense is repositioned as one among many forms of perception. Further, sensory ethnography considers sense perception beyond the Western model of the five senses to include non-Western senses such as balance, proprioception, and rhythm (7). Trained as a dancer and physical performer, I am particularly attuned to these and other nuanced sensory experiences, which I drew on in my research. For example, in Kitty's rocking chair dance, I examined the psychosomatic implications of rocking, a rhythmic movement particular to motherhood.

In *Mrs. Wrights*, then, my body becomes a living archive that resists established historical canons, interrogates historical authorship, projects marginalized voices and stories, and destabilizes notions of history as terminal, fixed and unchanging. Latham writes, "When we interrogate the remnants of history we upset false presumptions, implied by the silence of women's voices in many writings of and about history, that women were merely passive objects of determinative cultural forces" (179). Historical performance ethnography, then, proposes an alternative method of excavating history in the face of limited historical documentation. Advocating for a phenomenological approach to history such as this, Sheets-Johnston writes, "Phenomenology is...the way of coming to grips with lived experiences, our own, and in a hermeneutical sense, those of others" (143). Although these "others" may be separated from us

temporally and geographically, the common human experience of embodiment and theories of embodied memory form a basis for bringing their lived experiences into the here-and-now.

4.2. Cultural Memory

More than getting at historicity, my research excavates cultural memory. British social anthropologist Paul Connerton describes this as an “act of transfer” (39). Considering his definition, Hirsch and Smith understand cultural memory as “an act in the present by which individuals and groups constitute their identities by recalling a shared past on the basis of common, and therefore often contested, norms, conventions and practices” (5). They write, “What a culture remembers and what it chooses to forget are intricately bound up with issues of power and hegemony,” including “the cultural tropes and codes through which a culture represents its past” (6). Socially constructed, cultural memory is necessarily about power relations and marked by gender, race and class.

Movement-based performance artist mayfield brooks’ ongoing dance practice and project "Improvising While Black/IWB" enacts cultural memory. Interviewed by dancer/choreographer, performer, teacher and organizer Karen Nelson for *Contact Quarterly*, they position themselves in relation to the past, reflecting, “the body remembers. the body retains ancestral memory. improvisational dances can be a conduit for these ancestral memories and can move beyond the inwardly sensing body to projecting that sensation to others” (34). In this, brooks posits the dancing body as a conduit for bringing the past into the present.

Through their own movement research employing practices including but not limited to voice, somatics, contemporary dance, and contact improvisation, they recall and revive African experience. They conclude, “I cannot escape the warped ontology of blackness but I can

shapeshift in and out of the warp. I can transform my own expectation of myself and live in the immersion of a beautifully improvised dance. When this happens I am truly transcendent and the bones of my ancestors become legible” (38). It is through embodiment that Brooks enacts cultural memory, transforming their present bodymind to share in the lived experiences of ancestors.

Hirsch and Smith explain that “Acts of memory are thus acts of performance, representation, and interpretation. They require agents and specific contexts” (5). Cultural memory includes both the event, story or experience, and the mode of transmission, which involves both a witness and addressee/co-witness. For Schechner, these always are “twice-behaved behaviors” (*Between Theater and Anthropology* 36). Cultural memory is acts of retelling that, according to Hirsch and Smith, “acknowledges the unavailability of the original experience and the fragmentary and mediated nature of the reconstruction” (9). Forever incomplete, cultural memory makes us aware that what we call history is paradoxically both fact and fiction. Limited in our knowledge, it is only through re-presentation that we come to know the past. In turn, the varieties of representation may be analyzed as cultural products that reveal how social power structures determine authorship and consequentially ownership of the past.

Although Brooks is not literally their ancestors, their performance puts the history of blackness on display. They say, “Simply put, in the context of the ‘afterlife of slavery,’ blackness cannot exist without being profiled, and as a black performing blackness, I am irrevocably subject to being racially profiled by the audience, society, and myself” (36). Their task-oriented, impulse-driven, African diaspora-infused improvisation defies expectations of European-American modern dance. In so doing, it offers both performer (witness) and addressee (co-witness), in the words of Noë, “opportunities to do phenomenology – to catch ourselves in the

act of experiencing” (qtd. in Profeta 93). brooks’ dancing elicits self-awareness of what I call “racing” – the activity of constructing race through perception and cultural practices enacting Csordas’ “somatic modes of attention” (“Somatic Modes...” 137).

Analogous to brooks’ “warped ontology of blackness,” my project cannot escape a sexist ontology of womanness shaped by cultural amnesia, or collective forgetting. Unlike Wright, who penned his own autobiography and scrupulously managed his public image, the women lacked self-authorship. What is known and remembered about them comes from sensationalist media stories that would not pass the Bechdel test.⁹ Newspaper articles determine Catherine and Mamah’s legacy, proclaiming, “Her Spiritual Hegira Ends in His Divorce;” “Cheney Divorces Wife Who Eloped;” “Oak Park Man Given Custody of Children She Deserted to Flee Abroad;” “Frank L. Wright Received by Spouse After ‘Spiritual Hegira’” (Chicago Daily Tribune, August 6, 1911); and “Negro Fires ‘Love Bungalow.’ Slays Architect’s Soul Mate and Cuts Down Eight Others” (The Detroit Tribune, August 16, 1914). Miriam’s memoirs, published in the *Milwaukee Journal Sunday Magazine*, center around her relationship with Wright. Olgivanna’s authorial activity was stifled by a jealous Wright (Olgivanna Lloyd Wright 199). Although she had documented her own life story, it was only published posthumously in 2017.

Further, the artifacts left by traditional women’s work differ from those left by men’s traditional labor. Sanctioned by institutions such as universities, corporations, and societies, men’s work often is documented for posterity through text, image, or object. Wright’s buildings, blueprints, and writings portray his architectural legacy. Women’s domestic labor, on the other

⁹ According to *Merriam-Webster*, the Bechdel test is “a set of criteria used as a test to evaluate a work of fiction (such as a film) on the basis of its inclusion and representation of female characters. NOTE: The usual criteria of the Bechdel Test are (1) that at least two women are featured, (2) that these women talk to each other, and (3) that they discuss something other than a man” (“Bechdel Test”).

hand, is largely ephemeral. This includes, for example, the birth and growth of children, the management of a household, and the sharing and teaching of skills from one generation to the next. In general, then, “male” output yields an artifact that is *representative* of – or, in the sense that I am not using the term, *embodies* – “male” work, whereas “female” work *is experienced* in the here-and-now, and through being embodied. It is easier for a culture to forget these uncoded, idiosyncratic, intangible artifacts of womanness.

Through my female body, I nonetheless engage cultural memory by enacting women’s lived experiences, connecting the past and present in embodied performance. In post-show discussions, female audiences often remark about how much they relate to the character’s domestic experiences. Audiences as a whole often come to question how my research methods might further address cultural amnesia, excavating other underrepresented historical figures. Thus, just as Brooks’ dancing enables audiences to examine their complicity in racial construction, my performance invites audiences to consider their role in cultural forgetting and remembering.

Similarly, scholar Jill Bennett identifies the body as the source of cultural memory transmission. According to Hirsch and Smith, “[Bennett] argues that women’s bodies are more likely than men’s to be assigned the cultural work of mourning and pain that is located in the body” (11). She cites cultural anthropologist Veena Das’ “genre of lamentation,” in which “women have control both through their bodies and through their language” (“Art, Affect...” 337; Das 68). Through privileged access to mourning traditions, women define grief for their societies.

Specifically, Bennett’s research focuses on the gendered embodiment of trauma in the work of contemporary artists Sandra Johnston (Belfast) and Doris Salcedo (Colombia). Just as

brooks' improvisational performance presents the black body, Johnston and Salcedo's performance art presents the female body. Both from countries facing political violence, Johnston and Salcedo make work addressing unwitnessed deaths by injecting affect into contexts where it seemingly is absent. By presenting that which society deems invisible, they enact Das' insistence that pain is relational and non-referential. Indeed, the statement, "I am in pain," is more than indicative – it is a call for acknowledgement that beseeches a response from another (Bennett, "The Force of Trauma" 48). Das writes, "In the work of mourning in many societies it is the transactions between language and body, especially in the gendered division of labor, by which the antiphony of language and silence recreates the world in the face of tragic loss" (68). The lived experience of pain is not private; it is shaped by an affective and linguistic social response – or lack thereof.

It is fruitful to experience *Mrs. Wrights* through the lens of Das' genre of lamentation. Conceiving of pain as essentially experiential and empathic, she writes,

we begin to think of pain as asking for acknowledgment and recognition; detail of the other's pain is not about the failings of the intellect but the failings of the spirit. In the register of the imaginary, the pain of the other not only asks for a home in language but also seeks a home in the body. (88)

Like the work of Johnston and Salcedo, my performance transfers different experiences of pain from the past to the present in order to confront the silence – censure, absence, erasure – surrounding the experience of the women in Wright's life. Grief provides a thematic through-line in the show, which is narrated by a mourning Olgivanna at the funeral of her husband. In fact, no character is left untouched by loss. For Olgivanna, it is Wright's death; for Anna, it is Wright's marriage to Kitty; for Kitty, it is Wright's affair with Mamah; for Mamah, it is the loss of an

imagined ideal with Wright forged at the expense of her previous domestic life; for Miriam, it is the loss of her body and self to addiction and infatuation with Wright.

Wright too grieves. But as performer, his grief feels different to me than that of the women. They fully share their experiences with the audience, while he continually cuts off connection. Speaking to the audience from her first lines and continuing this relationship throughout the performance, Olgivanna establishes the strongest connection. Anna, Mamah and Miriam also directly address the audience through language. Kitty looks at the audience after she mimes picking up a child, then changes her mode of communication to embody the labor of birthing and raising children. Of this moment, Gillespie comments that it is as if Kitty says, “Let’s not deal with abstract signs. I’ll show you what my experience really was” (Assignment Feedback). Through my full embodiment, the women’s bodies are exposed and vulnerable. Wright’s grief does not beseech like the women’s. Covered in his hat and overcoat, at the moment of pain, he finds a distraction – a gesture or an object – and ultimately turns away from the source of grief and from the audience.

4.3. Sense Memory

Bennett draws on the work of Holocaust survivor Charlotte Delbo, who, she writes, “distinguishes the memory of the processes of trauma and its affective impact – sense memory – from ordinary memory, in which events are interpreted and placed within a temporal or narrative framework” (Bennett, “Art, Affect...” 334-335). This dichotomy mirrors the division between embodiment and cognition I negotiated in the creation of *Mrs. Wrights*. A kind of cultural memory, sense memory honors the idiosyncratic and unintelligible nature of embodied experiences, such as trauma. On the other hand, ordinary memory becomes legible through

codified and universalizing semiotic systems such as language and dance technique. Western theatre and dance from antiquity through the modern era have prioritized ordinary memory over sense memory. In my research and performance, I prioritize sense memory in order to enact cultural memory and make visible the women's lesser-known experiences.

According to Bennett, trauma research pioneer Pierre Janet revealed that traumatic memory “was not remembered within the framework of a narrative of past but was simply retriggered and felt as ‘realtime’ experience” (“Art, Affect...” 339). Referring to Delbo, she points out that what makes sense memory valuable is its resistance to historicizing and preservation of affective experience. From Janet and Delbo, Bennett infers, “an art form that seeks to bear the imprint of sense memory must operate in these terms...rather than removing the experience to the field of analysis, it should confront that experience within the realm of the senses’ (“Art, Affect...” 339). Das affirms, “pain...seeks a home in the body” as well as in language (88). The tension I encountered in my research between historicity and cultural memory also was a tension between narrative and experience, ordinary memory and sense memory, cognition and embodiment – all of which arise from the legacy of mind-body dualism.

The hegemony of ordinary memory over cultural memory – of mind over body – aligns with hegemonic social power structures. Hirsch and Smith write, developments in feminism and work on cultural memory demonstrate that the content, sources, and experiences that are recalled, forgotten, or suppressed are of profound political significance. What we know about the past, and thus our understanding of the present, is shaped by the voices that speak to us out of history; relative degrees of power and powerlessness, privilege and disenfranchisement, determine the spaces where witnesses and testimony may be heard or ignored. (Hirsch and Smith 12)

My discoveries about the limitations of historical documentation in light of the problem of cultural memory point to a need for alternative ways to access the past. Offering an alternative praxis for the doing of history, (historical) performance and sensory ethnography propose a solution that remakes the past in the present moment. Sense memory, then, offers a way to repair the breach between cultural memory and ordinary memory. Through Connerton's "acts of transfer" and Schechner's "twice-behaved behaviors," comparative literature and women's studies scholar Julia Watson writes, "the process of remembering culturally reworks the past in the moving target of the present" (409). Cultural memory not only is a noun but also a verb, at once being made and making. In the process, epistemological and social power structures are reworked.

With Wright's disproportionately large historical legacy, I was challenged to create a show about the women rather than the larger-than-life architect. Through movement research, I supplanted ordinary memory with sense memory in order to excavate the women's lived experiences. Resisting hegemonic historicity, through each performance not only do I re-make history, but I also propose new methods for the making of history.

Chapter Five. **Final Analysis of *Mrs. Wrights***

5.1. Revisions and Reception

After premiering *Mrs. Wrights* at UWM on May 5, 2018, I toured the show to five different venues from June 2018 through September 2018. Two Wright-related organizations hired me to perform at two different Wright-related buildings. For their annual Wright and Like fundraising event on June 1st, Wright in Wisconsin hired me to perform at the Taliesin Hillside Theater in Spring Green, Wisconsin. Based in Racine, Wisconsin, SC Johnson included *Mrs. Wrights* in the company foundation's free public Community Programs series at the Golden Rondelle Theatre on September 28th. I additionally took the show to two fringe festivals: Minnesota Fringe (August 4th-12th), where I performed at the University of Minnesota Rarig Center Nolte Xperimental and Chicago Fringe Festival (September 1st-3rd), where I performed at The Gym in the Congregational Church of Jefferson Park. Finally, friend and colleague Tracy Martin, artistic director of Phantom Theatre in Warren, Vermont, included *Mrs. Wrights* in her company's season; I performed at Edgcomb Barn on August 17th and 18th.

In remounting *Mrs. Wrights*, I took into consideration feedback from Ferro and Rott, as well as the strict sixty-minute time limit enforced by the fringe festivals. Ferro had recommended that I find more opportunities to eliminate text. As such, I deleted the textual transition between "Scene 3.2: Kitty (Catherine) Rocking Chair Dance" and "Scene 4.1: Olgivanna Childhood," and reduced some of the text leading into "Scene 4.2: Olgivanna Training" ("Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights," 22:08-22:40, 42:00-42:49). With Rott, I strategized how to eliminate approximately ten minutes from the show by re-ordering scenes to reduce costume changes and transition time. In my thesis presentation, Olgivanna Childhood and Olgivanna Training had been separated by Mamah's scenes, which ended with "Scene 5.4: FLW Grief." Placing

Olgivanna Childhood and Olgivanna Training next to one another and Mamah's scenes after, I eliminated not one but two costume changes – Wright (from “Scene 5.4: FLW Grief”) into Olgivanna Training and Olgivanna Training into Miriam (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 41:45-42:15, 46:46-47:18). With Olgivanna's white dress scenes now ordered sequentially, I eliminate one full costume change. After Mamah's death in “Scene 5.3: Mamah Fire,” I change from Mamah's red dress into Miriam's green dress and wear this under Wright's overcoat for FLW Grief, thereby shortening my eventual transition into Miriam.

Rott also felt that several movement-heavy scenes could be reduced by shortening the sound tracks and condensing the choreography. He primarily was concerned with “Scene 6.2: Miriam Letters,” for which he recommended some deletion of repetitive movement (“Thesis Performance: Mrs. Wrights,” 51:51-1:01:00). Because the choreography for this scene is somewhat improvisational within a set structure, I edited and reduced the sound design by approximately two minutes. The audio cues then served as a container for my condensation of movement. Following Rott's recommendation, I eliminated a few motivic repetitions. Eventually, however, I also added new movement ideas, which I gleaned from performing in graduate student choreographer Morgan Mackay Teel's “Stricture” for Dancemakers 2018 at UWM. Movement generated by myself and undergraduate student Katelyn Altmann seemed particularly relevant to Miriam's psychophysical experience and I added it into this scene without adding extra time (“Mrs. Wrights,” 44:10-51:01). Rott and I recognized that Olgivanna Childhood and Olgivanna Training also could be condensed simply by speeding up the movement (“Mrs. Wrights,” 19:02-22:14, 22:15-25:16). I additionally shortened the ending of Olgivanna Training, but unfortunately did not document the abbreviated version on video. After rubbing the floor with my dress and going into a rotating shoulder plank, I roll with the dress

over my face towards the coatrack and then simply lay on the floor for about three breaths, inviting the audience to see the kinetic results of my efforts (“Mrs. Wrights,” beginning at 25:16). Sitting up, I unzip the dress and peel out of it as if shedding old skin.

On the whole, *Mrs. Wrights* was well-received by audiences along the tour (Appendices J: Chicago Fringe Audience Response; K: Minnesota Fringe Audience Reviews; L: Golden Rondelle Audience Survey; M: Minnesota Fringe Critical Review). Here are some selected comments:

“The richly talented Jenni Reinke effectively blends dance, song, and spoken word in unexpected ways to explore the lives and psyches of the women in the famous architect’s life. I was really taken by it.” - Mark Larson, author, *Ensemble: An Oral History of Chicago Theater*, forthcoming in 2019

“Behind every famous man, there’s not just one woman, but several. In *Mrs. Wrights*, thanks to the artistry of Jenni Reinke, we get to meet them...All of these people are embodied by Reinke in a really impressive show of character work, distinguishing each from the other in movement, as well as music and costume...Ms. Reinke’s choreography and performance are so effective...The performance kept me riveted the whole time” - Matthew Everett, Minnesota Fringe Blogger

“4.5 out of 5 stars” - Minnesota Fringe Audience Rating

“This is a beautiful, impressive, and important piece of work...Through constant, shifting choreography underscored by well-crafted soundscapes, Reinke embodies different accents, philosophies, and moods. It’s rare to see such a thoughtfully crafted show actually follow through on its thesis statement. This is the real deal, folks.” - Joe Allen, MN Fringe Audience Review

“A beautiful one woman show that explores precious moments and powerful feelings inside the lives of the women around Frank Lloyd Wright. The movement is profound and executed with exquisite technique. The design and storytelling are masterfully crafted.” - Timothy Zaitzeff, MN Fringe Audience Review

“The dancing was exquisite, and I was captivated from the start...But the dancing told an intriguing story above all else.” - Alex Ramsey, MN Fringe Audience Review

“First class in every way...Dancing, story, costumes, acting were all creative and mesmerizing...Loved it.” - Corrie Fiedler, MN Fringe Audience Review

“Lovely and Artful...moving and visually creative...Support this impressive movement artist.” - Robert Hubbard, MN Fringe Audience Review

“Best...This was the best show I’ve seen at the fringe in many years (700 shows). Seriously, it was so creative, so beautiful, so deep...Thank you for presenting beauty so intensely.” - John Wilson, MN Fringe Audience Review

“Loved this show. A fine example of physical theatre. I was dazzled.” - K Larsen, MN Fringe Audience Review

“The dancing is beautiful, and with the addition of exceptional use of facial expressions, the dancer conveys emotion wonderfully throughout.” - Kathy Ahlers, MN Fringe Audience Review

“I wasn’t sure what to expect and was impressed by the interplay of movement, monologue and miming. I did not know that FLW’s personal life was so complicated. Extremely well done.” - Michelle Blaeser, MN Fringe Audience Review

Of particular note is a critical comment from veteran MN Fringe blogger Matthew

Everett:

Ms. Reinke’s choreography and performance are so effective, my only advice would be to lean harder on those and let the other details go. There were a couple of points in the middle of the piece where [sic] extended sound cues were trying to give us headlines or other details of the lives of Wright and the women who loved him. Maybe it’s because I was processing most of the story visually or through performance, but I found the scripted sound cues in the third person a lot harder to take in. And my lack of that knowledge didn’t impact my understanding or appreciation of what came after. So, as juicy as some of those details might have been, I found myself more interested in the women in front of me, and less in their context for others. And I think that’s the point the whole production is driving at anyway. (Everett, par. 6)

Everett’s astute observation gets at the heart of the challenges I navigated in working towards my intention to foreground the women. I used the “extended sound cues” to cover longer costume changes while bolstering the show’s historical appeal. Certainly, these moments were advocated

by Rott, whose vision extended beyond my thesis project to the long-term niche marketability of *Mrs. Wrights*. Artistically, however, I might in the future consider Everett's suggestion to omit the narrative voiceovers. Instead, I would use environmental sounds consistent with the show's overall sound design, which commences with the sound of rain and then moves on to wind. This would draw focus to my costume changes, which are metatheatrical events that serve to highlight theatrical conventions – in this case, that behind seemingly discrete characters there exists a single performer. The presence of my solo female body foregrounds the characters' common experience of *womanness* as being prior to and more fundamental than their collective affiliation with Wright.

In contrast, audience feedback from my performance at the SC Johnson Golden Rondelle Theatre indicates a preference for historical content. Of 132 attendees, twenty-five percent completed a survey form administered by Michelle Sweetman, senior associate - Rondelle Programs, Community Affairs at SC Johnson. She reports that fifteen percent of respondents shared, "The voiceover dialogue volume was hard to hear many times, wish it would have been louder." Further, she suggests, "It would have been helpful to have the back story before" seeing the show (Personal Correspondence). She reports hearing the same feedback from the Wright in Wisconsin organization after my performance at Taliesin. She acknowledges, however, "I don't know how we could have shared the program ahead of time, but some felt receiving it on their way in didn't give them enough time to read – or maybe they were just busy socializing at that time" (Personal Correspondence). In advance of future performances, I might consider providing patrons access to the program posted online and using social media to post biographies of the characters. At least one patron commented positively about the post-show talkback, which helps

to educate audiences about historical content as well as my creative process. I plan to continue facilitating talkbacks whenever possible.

5.2. Embodiment as a Dramaturgical and Choreographic Paradigm

The larger topic that both Everett's critical review and so much audience feedback touches on is central to my research – embodiment as a dramaturgical and choreographic paradigm for contemporary performance. If I were to listen only to external commentary, however, I would deny myself the clarity of following my curiosity and values as an artist. First, there is no consensus from audiences – where some appreciate my “unusual approach to telling history,” others want more historical content, yet Everett speaks for those who need less of this (Sweetman, Personal Correspondence; Everett par. 6). Second, as an embodied artist, I believe I have the responsibility to prioritize the bodymind in the creation of multivalent work that resonates viscerally with audiences.

Although I navigated tension between conceptual and embodied research in creating *Mrs. Wrights*, I struggled to research and develop a theoretical lens for my praxis during this time. As such, I held off on constructing my primary theoretical lenses – embodiment and dramaturgy – until after the show's premiere. Now equipped with the perspective of embodiment as a dramaturgical and choreographic paradigm for contemporary performance, I have a basis for evaluating my work.

Of primary importance is the legibility of the show's dramaturgical through-line, which I believe rests on both semiosis and experience. The former clarifies the historical context that many audiences appreciate and that bolsters the show's marketability. As Everett implies, however, it also complicates the legibility of the latter.

After having developed my theoretical lens, I am inspired by phenomenology to shift my dramaturgical priorities towards the body and away from representation. This lens helps me to recognize the alternative performances that *Mrs. Wrights* could have been or could become. I might increase the voracity of my phenomenal body and deliberately suppress my mimetic, emotive, semiotic body. I further explore postmodern deconstruction to critique popular cultural representations of Wright. Employing the concept of the women behind Wright as a container for movement, I could work with any number of female performers to embody the women. Setting the work in a Wright-related building adds another semiotic and phenomenal layer that would serve as container for movement. I might further reduce text in order to distance myself and audiences from dramatic narrative, or I might abandon narrative as a structural device altogether. Instead, I could follow Gillespie's suggestion to structure my creative research as a suite of four dances for the women, omitting Wright, his mother Anna, and much historical context. Although I plan to retain the current version of *Mrs. Wrights*, I apply my theoretical lens above as a thought project that reveals possibilities for future work, whether thematically related or wholly different.

Likewise, I am inspired to use embodiment as a paradigm for choreography, performer pedagogy and personal physical practice. Through graduate coursework in dance, I gained a broad foundation in somatics. Beginning with these methods, I am interested in continuing to deepen trust in my bodymind not only for movement invention, but also for dramaturgical insight into choreographic and theatrical work. I desire to honor my subjective experiencing, increase my kinesthetic and sensory awareness, and value my creative process as much as the product. I wish to make work that begins and ends with corporeality, releasing my tight grasp on the sometimes-crutch of cognition. I further aim to transfer this perspective from my bodymind

to the performing artists with whom I work as choreographer, director or pedagogue. I will look to somatic methods as a point of origin and develop my own methodologies through reflective and dialogic praxis with self and others.

I should note that I plan to continue working as an interdisciplinary performing artist across the fields of dance, theatre, and music. Given an eclectic range of projects and collaborators, my creative practice must remain flexible. Yet, the paradigm of embodiment clarifies my values, focuses my long-term vision, and articulates my brand as I consider future work. In order to remain viable and vital, the way in which I enact this perspective will vary from project to project and over time. Certainly, it will influence the projects I conceive and initiate.

Finally, as ethnography, *Mrs. Wrights* demonstrates embodiment as a catalyst for discourse. By performing the ephemeral and the ineffable, my body-archive grants access to information unavailable in the archives of history. This information is processed, generated and conveyed through my sensing and performative body. Further, my female body re-presents the historical female characters in an act of retelling that puts the ontology of womanness on display. As such, embodied performance enacts cultural memory that would otherwise be lost to the limits of recorded history. Moving forward, I continue to be interested in the application of embodiment to the performance of underrepresented (historical) ethnographic experiences and stories. I am additionally interested in understanding myself as embodied artist by excavating my own embodied memory through autoethnographic performance practices.

5.3. Moving Forward

My theoretical research into embodiment as a dramaturgical paradigm has solidified my values and expanded my artistic vision. Yet, I remain committed to performing and touring *Mrs. Wrights* much as it stands. Rather than the aforementioned big-picture concerns related to the dramaturgy of embodiment, future artistic development of the show rests largely on subtler considerations.

Like the re-presentation of history, my artistic “product” is continually made and remade each time it is restaged and received by new audiences. I already have experienced that different venues require spatial and acoustic changes. Energetically, each space and audience interacts differently with my performance. Further, I am certainly interested in adapting the show to various Wright-related buildings, which may require choreographic reworking.

As I continue my research into embodiment and work with other dancers and choreographers, my bodymind necessarily will evolve. In order to continue growing myself and the show, and to keep things sharp and avoid boredom, I will continue to rework choreography, much like I did with “Scene 6.2: Miriam Letters” after dancing for Mackay Teel in *Dancemakers* 2018. Over time, I will need to adapt the movement in order to honor the needs of my aging body. I have considered resetting the show on another solo performer or even on an ensemble of female performers.

Even more than these performance-related issues, I am now focused on the administrative tasks needed to support *Mrs. Wrights*. These include networking, marketing, financial management, and logistics. I also am working to support the organizational growth of Quasimondo Physical Theatre, the producer of the show.

Conclusion. **The Dramaturgy of Embodiment**

Reflections on Methodology

The creative concept for *Mrs. Wrights* came easy compared to my struggle to articulate a theoretical framework for analyzing my process and the work. A discussion with Gillespie pinpointed “embodiment” and “dramaturgy” as central organizing principles, and “embodied performance” emerged, considering each. As method, embodied performance uses the body as the primary site for making and dissemination of information, asserting the validity of subjective epistemologies. As methodology, embodied performance subverts the primacy of text and codified physical vocabularies, dismantling hierarchies of knowledge, equalizing the materials of performance, and opening up access to underrepresented subjects.

Throughout my graduate education, I found the term “embodiment” to be ubiquitous in dance discourse, yet its definition remained elusive. Taking inspiration from Foster’s genealogy of “choreography,” I genealogized “embodiment,” tracing its development from the Enlightenment through today. I compared its evolution to two critical shifts that occurred concurrently in the early twentieth century. First, existential phenomenology moved Western philosophy away from mind-body dualism towards bodymind integration, asserting the epistemic validity of subjective experience. Second, the avant-garde spurred analogous ruptures within dance, theatre, and performance. Postdramaticism, postmodernism, and the performative turn subverted the primacy of the playscript and codified physical vocabularies that had underpinned earlier dramatic works. Finally, I clarified my definition of “embodiment” as stemming from these critical historical shifts, embracing the integration of body and mind, and resisting a dualist worldview and Enlightenment-era connotations. Late in my revising process, medical anthropologist Katinka Hooyer suggested I consider the semantic difference between “being

embodied” and “embodiment” (Personal Correspondence). While I do briefly address her query in Chapter Two, her comment points to an area for future discussion.

As with “embodiment,” I also genealogized “dramaturgy,” demonstrating its semantic evolution from dramatic to postdramatic performance. Fundamentally, dramaturgy has to do with the legibility of a given work, even in the case of non-text-based embodied performance. To illustrate an audience’s relationship to body-based works, I looked to the relatively recent scientific discoveries of kinesthetic empathy and mirror neurons. It is precisely the tangible sensibility of movement – “read” through the intersubjective experiencing of sensation, kinesthesia, weight, space, and time – that makes its legibility possible. From my interactions with different audiences, I demonstrated how embodied performance liberates viewers to encounter the multivalent and discover new forms and modes of perception.

Mrs. Wrights as Case Study

Looking to *Mrs. Wrights* as a case study, my embodied dramaturgical process was enacted as a dialectic between cognition and embodiment that animated certain productive tensions. Fundamentally, the opposition between text and body, and between related analogous opposites – the semiotic and the phenomenal, representation and experience, the relatively permanent and the ephemeral, the tangible and the ineffable – permeated my process and the show itself. Early on, I felt conflicted about which side to favor because of the forms and content with which I was working.

Although physical theatre downplays text, it might still retain code – for example, facial expression, pantomime, and the metaphorical use of objects, all of which I employed in *Mrs. Wrights*. On the other hand, contemporary somatic and postmodern dance does away with

dramatic storytelling in order to display the body qua body. Although framed by a character-driven premise, I found opportunities for the phenomenal body to share the stage with the semiotic body in *Mrs. Wrights*, such as when I allowed Miriam's addicted body to take over.

Analogous to male and female historical representation, the dichotomy between text and embodiment in *Mrs. Wrights* supports my larger agenda to address cultural amnesia by considering who and what makes history. Relative to the architectural artifacts and written documentation buttressing Wright's legacy, the women's experiences and domestic contributions are largely ephemeral. Faced with limited historical documentation, I employed my physical imagination and kinesthetic empathy to re-present the women's lived experiences. Yet, I did not abandon a concern for historicity altogether. Recognizing Frank Lloyd Wright as a brand, the interests of many audiences to learn more about that brand, and my desire to create a highly marketable product, I present both cognitive and embodied information.

The work's four *de facto* dramaturgs heightened the tension between cognition and embodiment, representation and experience, within my process. More than this, however, the tension they introduced between ownership and knowledge animated my process. Although I claimed sole ownership of the work, they proposed different ways of reading and understanding it. Multifariously destabilizing my knowledge according to their different values and lineages, they literally and figuratively set both my bodymind and the work in motion.

Ultimately, the legibility of the dramaturgical through-line in *Mrs. Wrights* rests on a productive dialectic between cognition and embodiment. What initially posed a challenge became a generative opportunity to explore my training and values. It resulted in a rich,

multilayered performance work, offering different points of access to diverse audiences.¹⁰ Also noteworthy is the broad marketability of the show despite its avant-garde influences.

Interdisciplinarity

In creating *Mrs. Wrights*, I primarily set out to make a great performance work with and through my body. Embodied performance was a fitting research method because it provided a common foundation for my eclectic artistic practices in dance and physical theatre, as well as for my disparate professional interests in academic scholarship and performance-making. I never intended to traipse into another disciplinary method altogether – ethnography. Because of its hybridity, however, the work can be multifariously situated.

This diversion into the social sciences turned out to be intellectually and artistically fruitful, highlighting my values, affinities, and opportunities for growth. First, it affirmed my intention to create work that is socially consequential – critiquing systems of power and inspiring change – in addition to being entertaining, artistically innovative, aesthetically satisfying, and to challenging my virtuosity as performer. Second, it pointed to my predisposition for interdisciplinary research and making. Not only does *Mrs. Wrights* employ myriad dance and theatre forms and convey content relevant to several disciplines – namely, American history, women’s history, and architecture – it also serves as a case study for both creative and ethnographic research. Finally, it opened up new possibilities for future artistic and scholarly collaboration, research, creation, and activism.

¹⁰ As critic Jeff Grygny wrote of my performance at the Charles Allis Art Museum in November 2019, “Despite it’s being as semiotically rich as a Christmas fruitcake, with its surreal imagery, tremendous visual flair, emotional authenticity and welcome touches of humor, *Mrs. Wrights* is a very accessible *tour de force* of the highest artistic integrity” (Grygny, par. 5).

As case study in ethnography, *Mrs. Wrights* affirms the value of embodiment to excavate underrepresented historical subjects through performance and sensory ethnography. This might also extend to marginalized living subjects. In contrast to mind-body dualism, I maintain that my process demonstrates embodiment as an epistemically legitimate way of knowing. Confronting a sexist ontology of womanness, my performance invites audiences to consider their role in cultural amnesia and recollection. My body becomes a living archive that resists established historical canons, interrogates historical authorship, projects marginalized voices and stories, and destabilizes notions of history as terminal, fixed and unchanging. As such, my project proposes embodiment as a catalyst for discourse.

Viewed in this way, *Mrs. Wrights* serves as a model for an expansive exchange between dance, performance and the social sciences. I demonstrated how dance training and somatic practices are uniquely suited to prepare ethnographic researchers for being embodied. They increase sensory and kinesthetic awareness, attuning the bodymind to movement within an environment. Moreover, dance and theatre performance explores the dramaturgical relationship between performer and audience. At the same time, I demonstrated how ethnographic theory provides a framework and vocabulary for dance and performance-makers to articulate the value of what it is they do, especially to academic audiences.

Within my discussion of ethnographic research, I focused on (historical) performance and sensory ethnography – two of many ethnographic methods. Initially, performance ethnography seemed like an obvious choice and natural fit. Only later, upon the recommendation of Hooyer, did I add sensory ethnography. This paradigm helps to fill the gap between ethnographic methodology and my dance training and subjective experiencing as researcher, creator, and performer. As it was a late addition, the methodological intersection between sensory

ethnography and dance/performance warrants further consideration. Other ethnographic frameworks also should be explored in future studies, opening up opportunities for academic cross-pollination, creative collaboration, and new ways to generate and articulate knowledge.

Dramaturgy of Embodiment

I conclude by offering the dramaturgy of embodiment as an emancipatory framework for contemporary choreographic, performance, and ethnographic praxis. Despite existential phenomenology's proposed ontological and epistemological shift, much of Western society is predicated on Cartesian mind-body dualism, including arts funding (and consequently art-making) and academic institutions. Peeling away the hegemony of cognition, we have much to gain by being embodied. In deepening into our subjective bodyminds, experiencing and displaying the body qua body, receiving others' processes of embodiment, and collectively remembering the ephemeral, we are liberated into being fully human.

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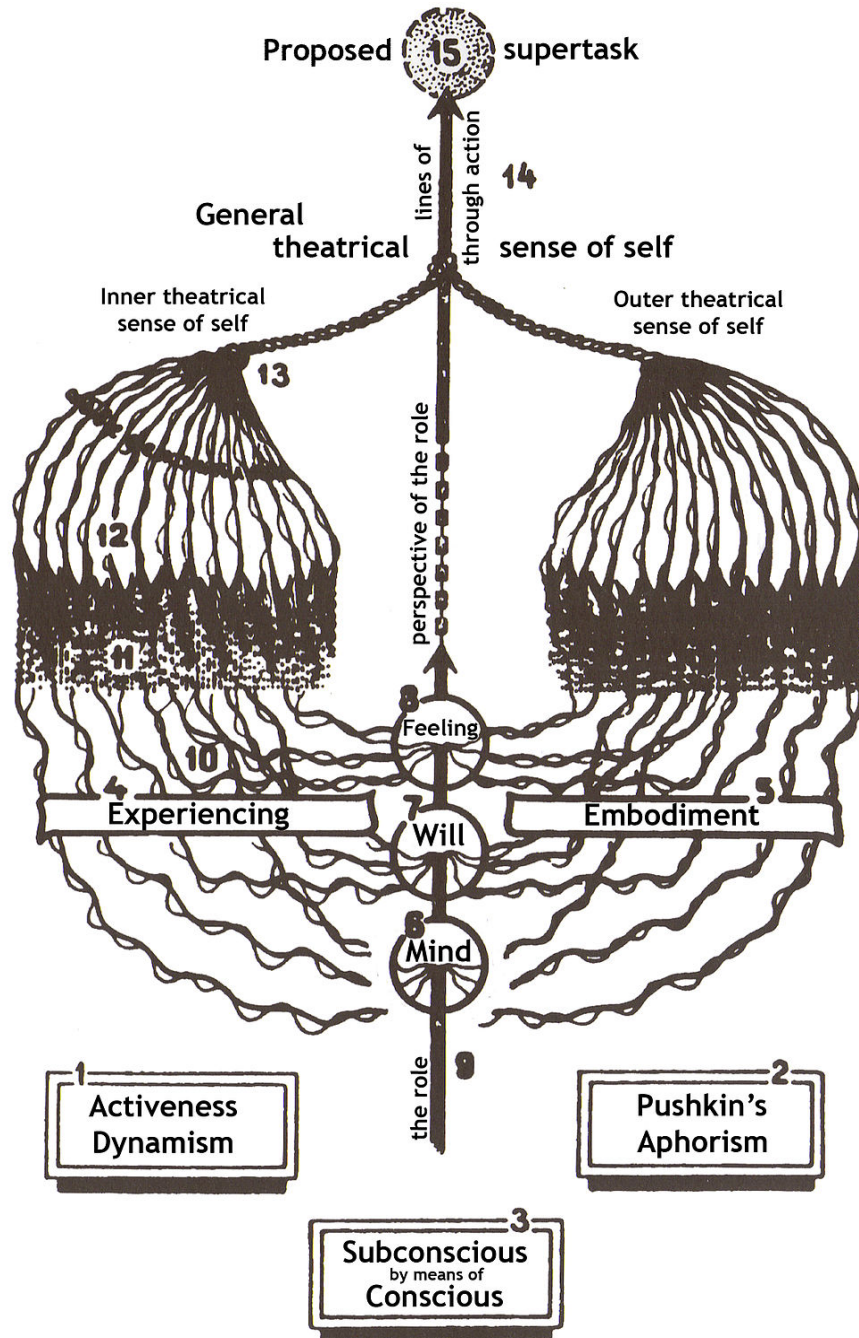
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Appendix A:
Stanislavski's System



Source

Carnicke, Sharon Marie. *Stanislavsky in Focus*. 2nd ed., New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 99.

Appendix B:

Google Books Ngram Viewer for “Embody” and Related Words



Source

Google Books Ngram Viewer.

“embody,embodiment,corporeality,phenomenology,somatic,kinesthesia,kinesthetic,”
between 1500-2008 from the corpus English with a smoothing of 30,
<https://books.google.com/ngrams>. Accessed 8 Sept. 2018.

Appendix C:
Source Material

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[Designated as Primary Source, Secondary Source, Historical Fiction Novel]

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Appendix D:

Historical Characters

Brief biographical summaries of historical characters in *Mrs. Wrights*, listed in order of appearance:

Olgivanna (Lazovich Miljanov) Lloyd Wright (b. 1898, Montenegro / d. 1985, Arizona) - Third and final wife of Frank Lloyd Wright (m. 1928). Composer, dancer, writer, teacher. Originator and organizer of the Taliesin Fellowship with her husband. Mother of Iovanna (b. 1925 / d. 2015) with Wright, and Svetlana (b. 1917 / d. 1946) with first husband Vladimir Hinzenberg (m. 1917 / d. 1925).

Anna Lloyd Jones (b. 1838, Wales / d. 1923, Wisconsin) - Mother of Frank Lloyd Wright. Educator. Marriage (1866) to William C. Wright (b. 1825 / d. 1904), with whom she had three children before their divorce (1885).

Catherine (“Kitty”) Lee Tobin (b. 1871, Nebraska / d. 1959, California) - First wife of Frank Lloyd Wright (m. 1889 / separated 1909 / d. 1922), with whom she had six children, from oldest to youngest: Frank Lloyd Wright, Jr. (b. 1890), John, Catherine, David, Frances, and Robert Llewellyn (b. 1903). Socialite and social worker involved in women’s clubs and causes.

“Mamah” (Martha) Bouton Borthwick (b. 1869, Iowa / d. 1914, Wisconsin) - Frank Lloyd Wright’s mistress (1909-1914). Translator of Swedish feminist writer Ellen Key. Marriage to Edwin H. Cheney (m. 1899 / d. 1911), with whom she had two children – John (b. 1902 / d. 1914) and Martha (b. 1905 / d. 1914). Tragically murdered along with her children on August 15, 1914 by Julian Carlton, one of the workers at Taliesin Estate.

Frank (Lincoln) Lloyd Wright (b. 1867, Wisconsin / d. 1959, Arizona) - American architect. Notable buildings: Taliesin (Wisconsin), Imperial Hotel (Japan), Fallingwater (Pennsylvania), Guggenheim (New York).

Maude Miriam Noel (née Hicks) (b. 1869, Tennessee / d. 1930, Wisconsin) - Second wife of Frank Lloyd Wright (affair 1914 / m. 1923 / separated 1924 / d. 1927). First marriage (1886) to Emil Noel (b. 1861 / d. 1912) with whom she had three children. Sculptor. Lived and worked in Paris until France entered World War I in 1914. Her addiction to morphine is well documented.

Appendix E: Historic Timeline

DATE	WHO AND WHAT	PLACE
1825	William Carey Wright (Frank's father) BIRTH	
1838	Anna Lloyd Jones (Frank's mother) BIRTH	Wales
1861	Emil Noel (Miriam's husband) BIRTH	
1866	Anna and William MARRIAGE	
June 8, 1867	Frank Lloyd Wright BIRTH (though he later changes his birth year to 1869)	Richland Center, WI
June 19, 1869	Mamah Borthwick Cheney BIRTH	
May 9, 1869	Maude (Miriam) Hicks BIRTH	
March 25, 1871	Catherine Lee Tobin BIRTH	
February 1883	Anna stops sharing a bed with William	
1884	William files for DIVORCE	
1885	Anna and William DIVORCE	
1886	Maude Miriam Hicks and Emil Noel MARRIAGE	
June 1, 1889	Kitty and Frank MARRIAGE	Chicago, IL
December 27, 1898	Olgivanna Lazovich BIRTH	Cetinje, Montenegro
1899	Mamah and Edwin Cheney MARRIAGE	
1902	Mamah's son John BIRTH	
1903	Edwin Cheney commissions Wright	
1904	William Carey Wright DEATH	Lone Rock, Arkansas
1905	Mamah's daughter Martha BIRTH	
1907	Olgivanna (age 9) moves to St. Petersburg and Batum to live with married sister (Julia) to receive benefits of living in Czarist Russia	St. Petersburg and Batum, Russia
1907	Mamah and Wright meet and fall in love (? Or 1909)	
1909	Frank leaves his family; Mamah and Frank to EUROPE	Europe
1912	Olgivanna (age 15/16) and Father - shadow story	
1912	Emil Noel DEATH	
1913	Olgivanna (age 14) and Vladimir Hinzenberg (age 31?) MEET	Tiblis/Moscow, Russia
15-Aug-14	Taliesin Murders, Mamah DEATH, children John and Marth DEATH	Spring Green, WI
1914	Miriam condolences almost immediately after fire I, dating, move to Taliesin	Spring Green, WI
31-Jan-17	Olgivanna (age 18) and Vladimir Hinzenberg (age 35?) MARRIAGE	Tiblis/Moscow, Russia
1917	RUSSIAN REVOLUTION	Russia
27-Sep-17	Svetlana Hinzenberg BIRTH	Tiblis/Moscow, Russia
1919 (winter)	Olgivanna (age 20?) and Gurdjieff MEET	
7-Jun-20	Gurdjieff moves to Constantinople	Constantinople
1-Aug-21	Olgivanna secretary to Gurdjieff	Berlin
14-Jul-22	Gurdjieff relocates with pupils to Paris	Paris
1922	Kitty and Frank DIVORCE (FLW has to wait 1 year to re-marry)	
9-Jan-23	Olgivanna witnesses Katherine Mansfield DEATH	Paris
1-Feb-23	Anna Lloyd Jones DEATH	
19-Nov-23	Miriam and Frank MARRIAGE	Spring Green, WI
May-24	Miriam walks out of Taliesin	
1924?	Olgivanna leaves Gurdjieff at his suggestion	Paris > USA
30-Nov-24	Frank and Olgivanna MEET at Petrograd Ballet	Chicago, IL
1-Jan-25	Olgivanna asks for DIVORCE from Vladimir Hinzenberg	
20-Apr-25	Taliesin Fire II - living quarters destroyed	
27-Nov-25	Miriam files for DIVORCE from FLW	
2-Dec-25	Iovanna Lazovich Lloyd Wright BIRTH	Chicago, IL
20-May-26	Miriam in Madison court in an effort to settle divorce, effort failed	
3-Jun-26	Miriam attempts to take Taliesin by storm but fails to get beyond the front gate	
Aug-26	Miriam refuses to grant divorce, demands right to live at Taliesin, sues Olgivanna	
Sep-26	Bank forecloses on Taliesin mortgage	
21-Oct-26	Wright arrested at kitchen door of a Lake Minnetonka cottage he had been renting since September 7, 1926	
7-Mar-27	Miriam says she's going to battle for her rights, which she claims have been usurped by a pretty Russian dancer.	
26-Aug-27	Miriam and Frank DIVORCE	
1927	Miriam arrested in dining room of Madison's Lorain Hotel for mailing Wright an obscene letter.	Madison, WI
Mar-28	Olga and Frank move to cottage in La Jolla, CA	La Jolla, CA
Jul-28	Miriam trashes Wrights cottage in La Jolla, CA and is arrested	La Jolla, CA
25-Aug-28	Olga and Frank were MARRIAGE at midnight in Rancho Santa Fe near La Jolla. They honeymooned in Phoenix, Arizona at the Arizona	La Jolla, CA
Oct-28	Olgivanna, Frank, children move back in to Taliesin	Spring Green, WI
3-Jan-30	Miriam Noel DEATH (age 61)	
nineteen thirty-two	Taliesin Fellowship commences	Spring Green, WI
1934 (summer)	Gurdjieff extended visit to Taliesin	Spring Green, WI
1937	Taliesin West	
1946	Svetlana Peters (nee Hinzenberg) DEATH in car accident	
9-Apr-59	Frank Lloyd Wright DEATH	
1-Mar-85	Olgivanna DEATH (from tuberculosis)	Scottsdale, AZ
7-Sep-15	Iovanna Lloyd Wright DEATH	

KEY
BIRTH
MARRIAGE
DIVORCE
DEATH
INTERMEDIATE EVENTS

Appendix F:
Sound Design

Composed music (in order of show soundtrack):

Irish Folk Song. *The Widow and the Devil (adapted for Mrs. Wrights by Jenni Reinke)*. 2018.

Howe, Mary. *Stars*. 1927.

Colleen. *I'll Read You a Story*. 23 May 2005.

Gurdjieff, G. I. and Thomas de Hartmann. *Adam and Eva*. Channel Classics. Released 1999.

Gurdjieff, G. I. and Thomas de Hartmann. *Sacred Reading from the Koran*. Performed 1923.
Released 13 Jan. 1971.

Tchaikovsky, Pyotr Ilyich. *Hymn of the Cherubim*. 1878.

Peña, Paco. *Palmas y Guitarra*. 1991.

Bright, Gerald Walcan. *'Neath The Spell Of Monte Carlo*. Geraldo and his Gaucho Tango
Orchestra. 1931.

Satie, Erik. *Je te veux (I Want You)*. Composed 1902. Arranged by Yanghee Do and played by
Jenny Yun, MUSICPRESSO, 2014.

Fauré, Gabriel. *Élégie (Elegy)*, Op. 24. 1883.

Zoulek, Nick. *Leafless, Against the Gray Sky*. INNOVA Records. Released 26 Aug. 2016.
(Edited by Jenni Reinke)

Zoulek, Nick. *Silhouette of a Storm-bent Tree*. INNOVA Records. Released 26 Aug. 2016.
(Edited by Jenni Reinke)

Environmental sounds (in order of show soundtrack):

Rain

Thunderstorm

Wind

Audience applause

Radio voiceover of news stories (script writing and voice credit: Jenni Reinke):

Mamah's murder at Taliesin, August 15, 1914

Miriam and Frank divorce settlement, August 26, 1927

Appendix G:

Visual Research of Wright's Architecture

Buildings affiliated with Olgivanna Lloyd Wright

Taliesin West (Scottsdale, Arizona, designed and built 1937)



Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church
(Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, designed 1956, built 1956-1961)



Building affiliated with Catherine “Kitty” Lee Tobin

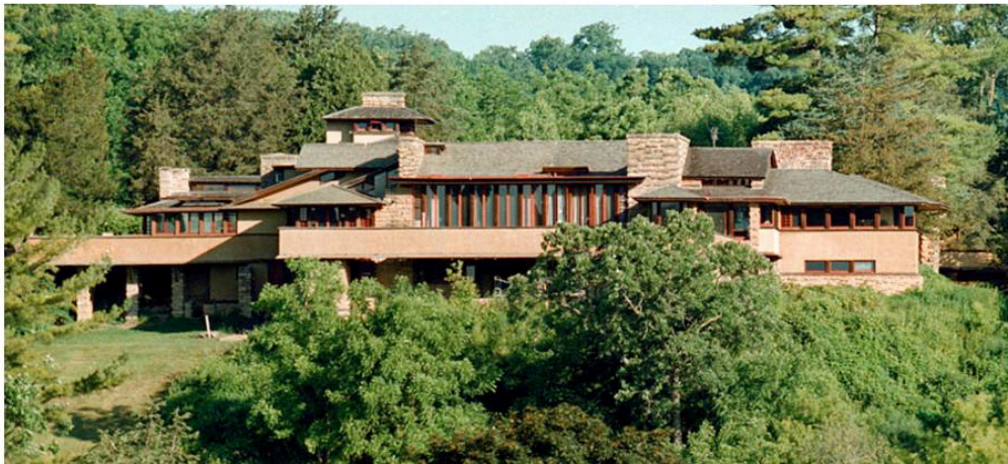
Frank Lloyd Wright Home (Oak Park, Illinois, designed and built 1889)



Buildings affiliated with “Mamah” (Martha) Bouton Borthwick
Edwin H. Cheney House (Oak Park, Illinois, designed and built 1903)



Taliesin (Spring Green, Wisconsin, designed and built 1911, partially destroyed by fires, rebuilt 1914, 1925)



Taliesin fire damage, 2014



Building affiliated with Maude Miriam Noel

Imperial Hotel (Tokyo, Japan, designed 1915, completed 1923)



The Imperial Hotel sustained substantial damage in 1923 earthquake, but was among the few buildings left standing after the quake and ensuing fire.



The Imperial Hotel was demolished in 1968. The lobby and pool were reconstructed in 1976 at Meiji Mura, an open-air architectural museum/theme park in Inuyama, Japan.



Appendix H:

Architectural Site Visits and Tours

A.D. German Warehouse, Richland Center, WI. Tour, June 2017.

American System-Built Home Model B1 home on West Burnham Street, Wright in Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI. Tour, 27 May 2017.

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church, Wauwatosa, WI. Visit, March 2018.

Fallingwater, Mill Run, PA. Tour, August 2018.

Frederick C. Bogk House, 2420 N. Terrace Ave., Milwaukee, WI. Tour, July 2017.

Imperial Hotel, The Museum Meiji-mura, Inuyama, Japan. Visit, August 2017.

Jiyu Gakuen Girls' School Myonichikan, Tokyo, Japan. Visit, August 2017.

Taliesin Preservation, Inc., Spring Green, WI. Estate Tour, 6 October 2017.

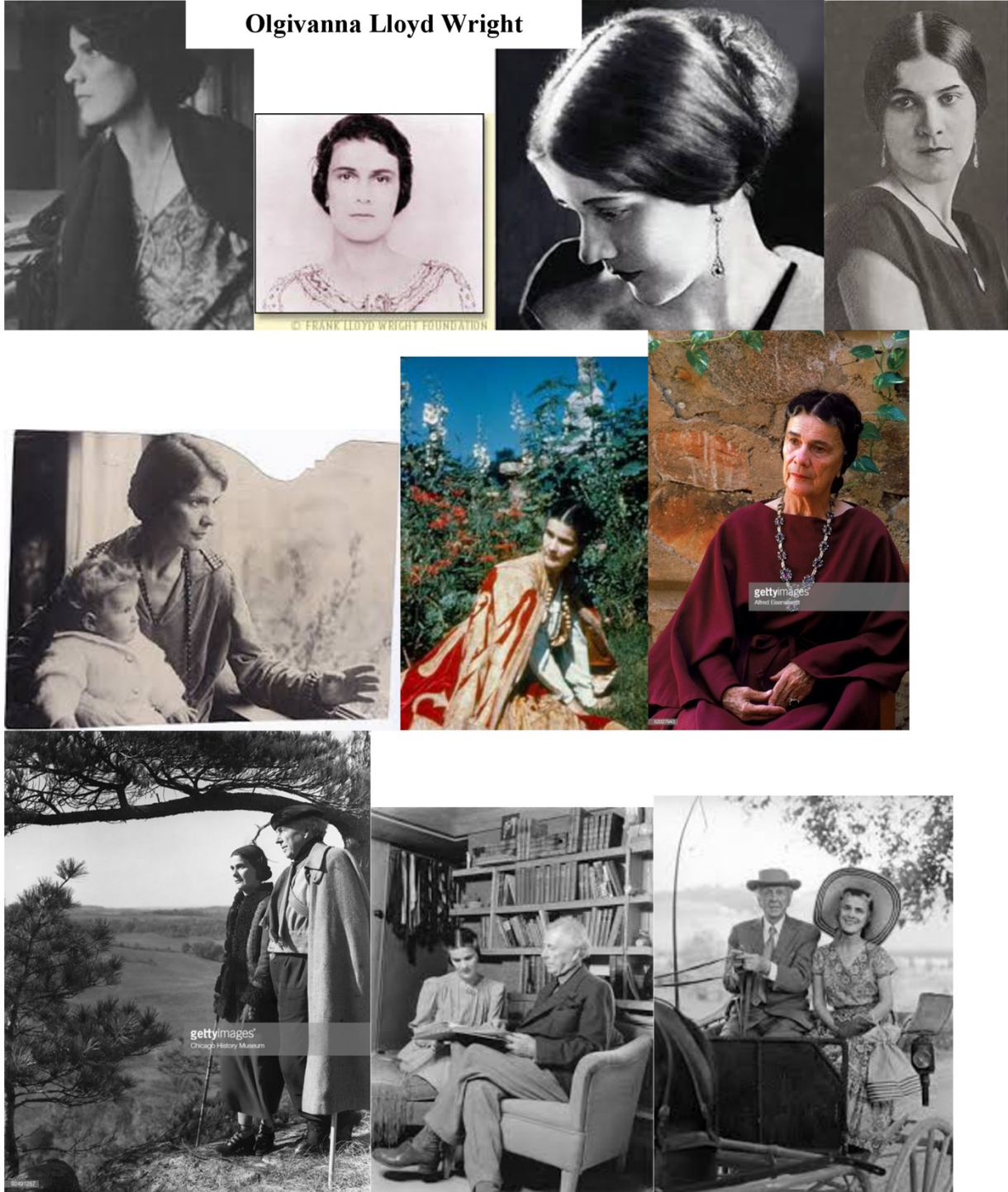
Wright and Like 2017, Wright in Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI. Tour, 3 June 2017.

- Albert B. and Edith Adelman House, Fox Point, WI.
- Elizabeth Murphy House, Shorewood, WI.

Wyoming Valley School Cultural Arts Center, Spring Green, WI. Tour, June 2017.

Appendix I:
Visual Character Research

Olgivanna Lloyd Wright



Olgivanna Lloyd Wright (continued)



Anna Lloyd Jones



Catherine ("Kitty") Lee Tobin



Catherine “Kitty” Lee Tobin (continued)



“Mamah” (Martha) Bouton Borthwick



Frank (Lincoln) Lloyd Wright



Maude Miriam Noel (née Hicks)



Maude Miriam Noel (continued)



Appendix J:

Chicago Fringe Audience Response

Chicago Fringe Festival

“The richly talented Jenni Reinke effectively blends dance, song, and spoken word in unexpected ways to explore the lives and psyches of the women in the famous architect’s life. I was really taken by it.” – Mark Larson, author, *Ensemble: An Oral History of Chicago Theater*, forthcoming in 2019

Source

Larson, Mark. Personal Correspondence. 20 Sept. 2018.

Appendix K:

Minnesota Fringe Audience Reviews

Minnesota
fringe

HOME 2018 FESTIVALS YEAR ROUND GET INVOLVED

♥ DONATE

← ■■ →

Mrs. Wrights

By Quasimondo Physical Theatre

Created by Jenni Reinke

MRS. WRIGHTS

"Jenni Reinke...dominates the stage."
-examiner.com

"ravishingly beautiful"... "riveting"
-Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

quasimondo.org

MRS. WRIGHTS

"Jenni Reinke...dominates the stage."
-examiner.com

"ravishingly beautiful"... "riveting"
-Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY JENNI REINKE

Inspired by the women closest to architect Frank Lloyd Wright, dance and theatre construct untold stories of house and home

SAT, Aug. 4th @ 1:00 pm
SUN, Aug. 5th @ 10:00 pm
FRI, Aug. 10th @ 5:30 pm
SAT, Aug. 11th @ 8:30 pm
SUN, Aug. 12th @ 8:30 pm

University of MN - Rarig Center Xperimental
330 - 21st Avenue South, Minneapolis

quasimondo.org
minnesotafringe.org
fringe

<https://www.minnesotafringe.org/2018-show-information/mrs-wrights>

<https://www.minnesotafringe.org/2018-show-information/mrs-wrights#panel2>



Playing at

Rarig Center Xperimental

Show Description

Frank Lloyd Wright has just died. In grief and anger, his wife becomes a medium for the women closest to him. Dance and theater construct untold stories of house and home in this tour de force solo performance.

Genre and Content

- DANCE
- DANCE - MODERN
- DRAMA
- PHYSICAL THEATER
- HISTORICAL CONTENT

The creators say this show is appropriate for ages 16 and up

- TICKET OPTIONS
- REVIEWS
- VIDEO
- CAST AND CREW
- MORE INFORMATION

Reviews

Overall Rating:



Reviews for: Mrs. Wrights

Alex Ramsey



Flag Inappropriate Review

Stellar Dancing

I mean, she knows how to move. The dancing was exquisite, and I was captivated from the start. The dancing was impressive! But the dancing told an intriguing story above all else. One where the plot didn't matter as much, but more how it made you feel.

Charlotte Sebastian



Flag Inappropriate Review

A little disappointing

I loved about 10' of this show. The rest, not so much. The acoustics of the venue were a problem for me.

Corrie Fiedler



Flag Inappropriate Review

First class in every way

Corrie Fiedler



Flag Inappropriate Review

First class in every way

Dancing, story, costumes, acting were all creative and mesmerizing. Though, as others have noted, read the program beforehand to understand the 5 woman in Wright's life that Jeni is channeling. Loved it.

Gene bard



Flag Inappropriate Review

Dance and a story

Though not very familiar with the right Mrs. Wright I was able to follow quite a bit of this dance story and encouraged to learn more. Performer seemed very professional, worked hard, involved me.

James B



Flag Inappropriate Review

Beautiful!

Amazing technique, communicating, in a somewhat complicated way, the very complicated relationships FLW had with women. I loved it!

Joe Allen



Flag Inappropriate Review

Changing, it rests.

	<p>Joe Allen ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>Changing, it rests.</p> <p>This is a beautiful, impressive, and important piece of work - just what I hope to find at Fringe. Through constant, shifting choreography underscored by well-crafted soundscapes, Reinke embodies different accents, philosophies, and moods. It's rare to see such a thoughtfully crafted show actually follow through on its thesis statement. This is the real deal, folks. "You can become godlike, provided you struggle with yourself to overcome your weakness."</p>
	<p>John Wilson ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>Best</p> <p>This was the best show I've seen at the fringe in many years (700 shows). Seriously, it was so creative, so beautiful, so deep. It blows away all the meaningless, poorly scripted, mindlessness that tries to pass for fringiness. Thank you for presenting beauty so intensely.</p>
	<p>K Larsen ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>Dazzling</p> <p>Loved this show. A fine example of physical theatre. I was dazzled.</p>
	<p>Kathy Ahlers ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>modification to account for echoey venue needed</p>
	<p>Kathy Ahlers ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>modification to account for echoey venue needed</p> <p>The dancing is beautiful, and with the addition of exceptional use of facial expressions, the dancer conveys emotion wonderfully throughout. The creative use of costumes also works most of the time. (Coat dance a definite win!) What sometimes got in the way for me was the echoey venue combined with the characters' accents + not quite enough crisp articulation (i.e., pls include a bit more space between words) for the lines always to be intelligible. I do not have hearing loss, yet I missed maybe a fifth of the lines sitting in the second row, even more so as the play progressed, so that by the last part of the show, the work of attending so fiercely to try to discern the monologue tired me out. (For the next run, perhaps it would be better to cut some of the monologue than to rush; the audience does not already know what she's saying—we have to hear and understand it to know.) Also, a small detail: as another patron mentioned to me, by the third time the chair is hoisted, it's at least one time too many. So a little consolidation and tightening up might be useful. Overall, though, skillful portrayals enjoyable as is. If you're on the fence, see it!</p>
	<p>Michelle Blaeser ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>Impressive</p> <p>I wasn't sure what to expect and was impressed by the interplay of movement, monologue and miming. I did not know that FLW's personal life was so complicated. Extremely well done.</p>

	<p>Robert Hubbard ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>Lovely and Artful</p> <p>Through dance interspersed with monologues, Reinke shares details and sensibilities of women in Frank Lloyd Wright's complicated life: his three wives, his mistress, and his mother. Wright also makes an appearance in a moving scene of mourning. The conventions of the show might be a little difficult to follow (the program helps), but the results are moving and visually creative. The scene in which Reinke dances with Wright's overcoat is particularly playful and inventive. The Fringe was made for this kind of work. Support this impressive movement artist.</p>
	<p>Timothy Zaitzeff ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>A Masterful Dance Performance</p> <p>A beautiful one woman show that explores precious moments and powerful feelings inside the lives of the women around Frank Lloyd Wright. The movement is profound and executed with exquisite technique. The design and storytelling are masterfully crafted.</p>
	<p>Walter Furtney ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>Frank's love life</p> <p>I was confused for the first half of this show even with a knowledge of frank Lloyd Wright's women but the coat dance and the remainder of the show were engaging.</p>
	<p>Zoey C ★★★★★ Flag Inappropriate Review</p> <p>Beautiful</p> <p>A really excellent dance/movement piece with a well researched historical angle. Creative and strategic use of the props and movement styles to distinguish between the different characters and time periods was executed quite well- I feel a lot of interpretive pieces like this tend to melt together, but overall this was a great example of providing enough 'tell' to supplement the 'show'. It definitely made me more curious about the history of these women's lives, so be prepared to hit up the internet after the show to find out more! The accents seemed a little comically exaggerated at times, especially at first, but my only real complaint was that some of the movement on the floor was too far downstage and difficult to see from further back, so I'd recommend sitting in the front row if possible. Overall, it was really a beautiful experience and I'd recommend it to anyone who would like to see high-quality dance and physical theater at this year's Fringe!</p> <hr/> <p>Submit your rating for this Show</p> <p>Choose your rating between 1-10</p> <p>10 = 5 Stars, 0 = No Stars</p> <p><input type="range" value="5"/></p> <p>5</p>

Source

Audience Reviews. "Mrs. Wrights." *Minnesota Fringe*, Aug. 2018.
<https://www.minnesotafringe.org/2018-show-information/mrs-wrights>.
 Accessed 7 Dec. 2018.

Appendix L:

Golden Rondelle Audience Survey

Feedback from audience surveys collected by Michelle Sweetman, Senior Associate - Rondelle Programs, Community Affairs at SC Johnson

Program Summary

- There were 165 reservations, 33 no shows and 132 in attendance.
- 25% completed a survey form.
- On a scale of 5 (being the highest) to 1 (the lowest), 68% rated the program a “5”.

Summary of the feedback

A couple constructive thoughts:

- The voiceover dialogue volume was hard to hear many times, wish it would have been louder. (15% of the respondents shared this thought.)
- It would have been helpful to have the back story before. (I heard this same feedback from the Wright in Wisconsin organization after the program you did at Taliesin on June 1. I don't know how we could have shared the program ahead of time, but some felt receiving it on their way in didn't give them enough time to read – or maybe they were just busy socializing at that time J).

The audience (even those who didn't know what to expect or admitted this concept was new to them), loved you and the program!

- *Jenni is an amazing dancer with a lot of passion – she really did her research!*
- *Choreography was awesome!*
- *A very talented woman!*
- *Jenni is an amazing dancer and interpreter of the various women's personalities!*
- *We really appreciated an unusual approach to telling history!*
- *Brilliant!*
- *Creative!*
- *Extraordinary!*
- *Fabulous interpretive dance!*
- *Loved the talk back!*
- *WOW!*
- *Superb!*
- *Amazing talent!*

Source

Sweetman, Michelle T. Personal Correspondence. 30 Nov. 2018.

Appendix M:

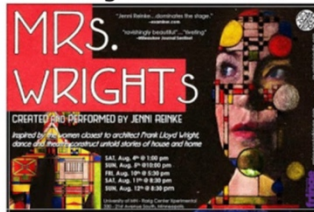
Minnesota Fringe Critical Review

single white fringe geek

PLAYWRIGHT. THEATER JUNKIE. FRINGE BLOGGER (16 YEARS AND COUNTING). TWITTER WOULD BE [HERE](#), AND INSTAGRAM WOULD BE [HERE](#). FOR MORE, [VISIT MY WEBSITE](#).

Friday, August 10, 2018 Fringe 2018 – Review – Mrs. Wrights – 4.5 Stars

[tweet review – #mnfringe show 20 – Mrs. Wrights – 2 biographical dance pieces in 1 day: here, a graceful, athletic dancer channeling 3 wives, 1 mom, 1 mistress and Frank Lloyd Wright himself; visually sharp, factually a bit top-heavy, overall a success – 4.5 stars](#)



The only thing I knew about Frank Lloyd Wright prior to seeing Jenni Reinke's solo dance performance *Mrs. Wrights* is probably what most people know – he was a famous American architect. That's probably all you need to know, and perhaps you don't even need to know that, in order to enjoy this Fringe show. Because it's the women in Frank Lloyd Wright's life who are the focus of Reinke's choreography and dancing, and women, as we know, are frequently left out of history. So we're all starting from zero, with plenty of room to play. (I also have to say up front, a 10pm solo dance show at the end of a long first weekend of Fringing? If there was ever a scenario when I'd be in danger of drifting off, it might be this – and yet, the performance kept me riveted the whole time, so there's an additional endorsement of the power of this Fringe show to hold an audience.)

additional endorsement of the power of this Fringe show to hold an audience.)

"He's too good for her, and she's too good for him."

Frank Lloyd Wright apparently went through three wives and a mistress in between before his life was over. Only one of them outlived him. The implication here is that he didn't treat them very well. But though we do get a brief interlude of Mr. Wright himself in the proceedings, he is in mourning for one of his past loves. Each of the women gets to take the stage alone. All of these people are embodied by Reinke in a really impressive show of character work, distinguishing each from the other in movement, as well as music and costume.

"The loneliness of an empty home."

Our primary narrator who opens and closes the show is the third Mrs. Wright, his widow – and the woman who keeps his name alive and defends and preserves his buildings after his death, to ensure that his reputation outlives him. Frank Lloyd Wright, it seems, owes Olgivanna (Lazovich Miljanov) Lloyd Wright quite a debt. We are also introduced to Wright's mother, Anna Lloyd Jones – the sound effect of a leaky roof perhaps inspiring the child to build better homes for the ones he cares about to live in. That doesn't seem to have applied to his first wife Catherine Lee Tobin, a socialite and social worker, whose dance implies that she was largely left alone to fend for herself, raising their six children and wrangling with her mother-in-law.

"I left my children. I made a choice."

Wright's mistress, Mamah Bouton Borthwick, a translator of feminist works, enjoys a playful dance with a trenchcoat representing Mr. Wright being flirty and naughty at a picnic. But the sound effect of a house fire implies she doesn't meet a very happy end. After Wright's mourning dance, around a set of clothes laid out on the floor to represent the departed, mirroring an opening dance around his own clothes by his widow, Wright's second wife appears, Maude Miriam Noel, a sculptor, and a nurturing presence who brings him back into the world of the living.

"She'd be nobody without him, and he'd be nobody without her."

blog archive

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appears, Maude Miriam Noel, a sculptor, and a nurturing presence who brings him back into the world of the living.

"She'd be nobody without him, and he'd be nobody without her."

In a final nod to all who have come and gone before her, the widow Wright pulls a coat rack around the space after her, dropping the clothes of the other characters as it goes. It's a fitting image around Mrs. Wright's final dance for us.

"Architecture is frozen music. Then dance is melting architecture."

Ms. Reinke's choreography and performance are so effective, my only advice would be to lean harder on those and let the other details go. There were a couple of points in the middle of the piece where extended sound cues were trying to give us headlines or other details of the lives of Wright and the women who loved him. Maybe it's because I was processing most of the story visually or through performance, but I found the scripted sound cues in the third person a lot harder to take in. And my lack of that knowledge didn't impact my understanding or appreciation of what came after. So, as juicy as some of those details might have been, I found myself more interested in the women in front of me, and less in their context for others. And I think that's the point the whole production is driving at anyway.

Behind every famous man, there's not just one woman, but several. In [Mrs. Wrights](#), thanks to the artistry of Jenni Reinke, we get to meet them.

4.5 stars – Very Highly Recommended

Here's some handy links to reviews of [5 Star Shows](#), [4.5 Star Shows](#), [4 Star Shows](#), [3 Star Shows](#), and my full [Top 10](#), [Top 11-20](#) and [Returning Favorites](#) lists.

Posted by Matthew at 8/10/2018 10:04:00 AM

Labels: 4-1/2 Stars Damn Near Perfect, Fringe Archives 2018, Fringe blogging, Theater reviews

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Monday, August 06, 2018

Fringe 2018 – Day 4 – Sunday 8/5 – Tweet Overview



[1pm – Night Sets Her Foot In Morocco – Minnesota SkyVault Theater – Rarig Arena](#)

tweet review – #mnfringe show 14 – Night Sets Her Foot In Morocco – less music/more wacky antics in the audience than I was expecting, but still a heck of a lot of fun – 4 stars

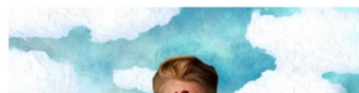
[2:30pm – Saint Ex – Spaceheater](#)

[– Rarig Arena](#)

tweet review – #mnfringe show 15 – Saint Ex – (still noodling over this one) – physical poem where dancer channels both an author/pilot and his wife – compelling visual images, puzzling out what it adds up to – 4 stars

[4pm – Dangerous When Wet: Booze, Sex and My Mother – Jamie Brickhouse – Augsburg Studio](#)

tweet review – #mnfringe show 16 – Dangerous When Wet: Booze, Sex and My Mother – @jamierrickhouse weaves a tale



blog archive

- ▼ 2018 (97)
- ▼ August (50)
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[4pm – Dangerous When Wet: Booze, Sex and My Mother – Jamie Brickhouse – Augsburg Studio](#)

tweet review – #mnfringe show 16 – Dangerous When Wet: Booze, Sex and My Mother – @jamiebrickhouse weaves a tale you couldn't tell just anybody's mother, but my Mom and I both liked it a lot; Brickhouse spares neither his mother nor himself but it's a hell of a story – 5 stars



[5:30pm – A Gertrude Stein Christmas – Theatre Unbound – Augsburg Mainstage](#)

tweet review – #mnfringe show 17 – A Gertrude Stein Christmas – @TheatreUnbound's got a weird one here, but bless Stein's oddball little heart; strange dialogue interpreted as all-female holiday family tale dealing with dementia and introducing a new girlfriend to the clan – 5 stars

[Link to full "Gertrude Stein Christmas" review](#)

[7pm – Kaboom – Sheep Theater – Rarig Thrust](#)



tweet review – #mnfringe show 18 – Kaboom – hats off to Sheep Theater for their latest lunatic farcical Fringe hit; allowed me to laugh (a lot) at something involving a president and nuclear war in a way I didn't think possible right now – 4.5 stars

[8:30pm – The Flashlight Zone: 20 Science Fiction Plays In One Hour – Flash Grenade](#)

[Productions – TRP](#)

tweet review – #mnfringe show 19 – The Flashlight Zone: 20 Sci-Fi Plays in One Hour (order chosen at random by audience) – figured I'd like it, pleasantly surprised by how much I loved it; someone asked Twilight Zone/Dark Mirror? I replied more Bradbury/Douglas Adams sci-fi – 5 stars

[Link to full "Flashlight Zone" review](#)

[10pm – Mrs. Wrights – Quasimondo Physical Theatre – Rarig X](#)

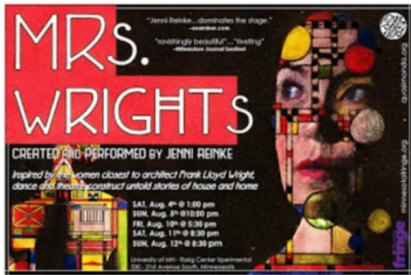
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- [Writing Group Fringe Shout-Out –](#)



Posted by Matthew at 8/06/2018 07:47:00 AM
 Labels: 4 Stars - Excellent, 4-1/2 Stars Damn Near Perfect, 5 Stars - Life-Altering Experience, Fringe Archives 2018, Fringe blogging

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about me

Matthew

Minneapolis, Minnesota, United States
 Playwright, arts writer for Twin Cities

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- ▶ July (41)
- ▶ June (3)
- ▶ April (2)
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- ▶ 2003 (123)

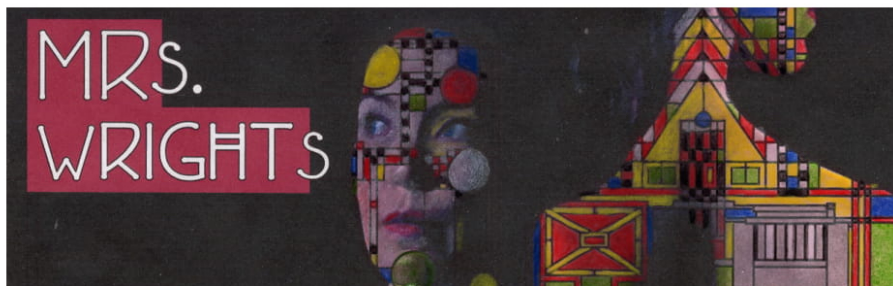
Source

Everett, Matthew. "Fringe 2018 - Review - Mrs. Wrights - 4.5 Stars." *single white fringe geek*, 10 Aug. 2018. <https://swfringegeek.blogspot.com/search?q=mrs.+wrights>. Accessed 7 Dec. 2018.

Appendix N:

Program from Thesis Performance (May 5, 2018)

Program – Front:



UW-Milwaukee MFA in Dance/Choreography Thesis Concert
Partial financial support provided by UWM's Peck School of the Arts Department of Dance

Saturday, May 5, 2018, 7:30 pm ~ UW-Milwaukee Mitchell Hall Studio 254

Jenni Reinke – Creator and Performer

Brian Rott – Dramaturg, Lighting Design, Poster Art

Leslie Vaglica – Costume Design

If nothing else, this project has taught me that a “solo show” is a myth – both Wright’s “self-made” image, and my own work.

I am deeply grateful for the following people who helped make the work a reality:

MFA Thesis Committee, who along with Brian Rott, functioned as generous and sensitive witnesses and dramaturgs to my process:

Simone Ferro (Chair), Maria Gillespie, Dan Schuchart
Thank you for pushing me to embody more and more.

Production Team: Sarah Elizabeth Larson (Photography); Keith Knox (Videography); Jessi Miller (Sound Board Operator); Brian Rott; Leslie Vaglica, who patiently and diligently handcrafted costumes that honored historicity while supporting the show; and support from UWM staff Kayla Premeau, Jess Berlin, and Mischa Premeau

Friends and colleagues who came out to see showings: Zach Schorsch, Joelle Worm and Fieldwork Milwaukee, Alex Cain, Emily Coronado, Christal Wagner, Annette Grefig, Tom Hjelmgren, Julia Teeguarden, Jessi Miller, and others...

Quasimondo Physical Theatre (quasimondo.org)

All my teachers and comrades in dance and theatre: Daniel and Andrea Burkholder, Kim Johnson, Melissa Anderson, Danceworks, Deb Loewen, Dawn Springer, Kristina Fluty, Dani Kuepper, Rebecca Holderness, my MFA Cohort

My family, mother Rita Reinke, my first example of feminism; father Fred Reinke, whose lifelong love of moving inspires; and brother Andrew Reinke.

And most of all, Brian Rott, who lovingly supported me through grad school.

Program – Back:

MRS. WRIGHTS

Olgivanna's husband, famed American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, has just died. In grief and anger, she summons her deep spirituality to become a medium for the women closest to him. The stories she sees offer a meditation on relationship, independence, and immortality.

An original solo dance theatre work, creator and performer Jenni Reinke embodies the industrious and colorful women. Intimate spaces are choreographed through the architecture of the body. Dance, text and drama converge to construct untold stories of house and home.

CHARACTERS – IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Olgivanna (Lazovich Miljanov) Lloyd Wright (b. 1898, Montenegro / d. 1985, Arizona) - Third and final wife of Frank Lloyd Wright. Composer, dancer, writer, teacher. Originator and organizer of the Taliesin Fellowship with her husband. Mother of Lovanna (with Wright) and Svetlana (with first husband Vladimir Hinzenburg).

Anna Lloyd Jones (b. 1838, Wales / d. 1923, Wisconsin) - Mother of Frank Lloyd Wright. Married and divorced William C. Wright, with whom she had three children. Educator.

Catherine Lee Tobin (b. 1871, Nebraska / d. 1959, California) - First wife of Frank Lloyd Wright, with whom she had six children. Socialite and social worker.

Mamah (Martha) Bouton Borthwick (b. 1869, Iowa / d. 1914, Wisconsin) - Frank Lloyd Wright's mistress. Marriage to Edwin H. Cheney (divorced), with whom she had two children. Translator of Swedish feminist writer Ellen Key.

Frank (Lincoln) Lloyd Wright (b. 1867, Wisconsin / d. 1959, Arizona) - American architect. Notable buildings include Taliesin (Wisconsin), Imperial Hotel (Tokyo, Japan), Fallingwater (Pennsylvania), Guggenheim (New York).

Maude Miriam Noel (b. 1869, Tennessee / d. 1930, Wisconsin) - Second wife of Frank Lloyd Wright. First marriage to Ewel Noel (divorced), with whom she had three children. Sculptor.

Appendix O:

Publicity Image for Thesis Performance (May 5, 2018)

Artwork and Design by Brian Rott

MRS. WRIGHTS

CREATED AND PERFORMED BY JENNI REINKE

Saturday, May 5th @ 7:30pm
UWM Mitchell Hall, Studio 254

Tickets - \$10 Available at UWM Box Office
MFA in Dance Thesis Concert

Inspired by the women closest to architect Frank Lloyd Wright, dance and theatre construct untold stories of house and home

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
UWMILWAUKEE

Peck School of the Arts

Partial financial support provided by University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Peck School of the Arts Department of Dance

Appendix P:

Selected Publicity and Press (Presented Chronologically)

Thesis Performance – University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Mitchell Hall Studio 254
(Milwaukee, WI / May 5, 2018)

Peck School OF THE Arts POWERFUL IDEAS | PROVEN RESULTS | UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN **UWMILWAUKEE**

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This event has passed.

Mrs. Wrights

May 5, 2018 @ 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm



MRS. WRIGHTS
Created & Performed
by Jenni Reinke

Olgivanna is furious. Her husband, famed American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, has just died. In grief and anger, she summons her deep spirituality to become a medium for the women closest to him. The stories she sees offer a meditation on relationship, independence, and immortality.

An original solo dance theatre work, creator and performer Jenni Reinke embodies the industrious and colorful women. Intimate spaces are choreographed through the architecture of the body. Dance, text and drama converge to construct untold stories of house and home.

General Admission - \$10

[Visit the Box Office](#)

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[+ GOOGLE CALENDAR](#) [+ ICAL EXPORT](#)

Details	Venue
Date: May 5, 2018	Mitchell Hall (Studio 254)
Time: 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Mitchell Hall (Studio 254) 3203 N. Downer Ave. Milwaukee, WI 53211 United States + Google Map
Event Categories: Arts and Culture, Dance, Public, Students, UWM Campus Events	
Website: https://www.facebook.com/events/1866714733362865/	

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Peck School of the Arts. "Mrs. Wrights." *Event Calendar*, <https://uwm.edu/arts/event/mrs-wrights/>.

Wright in Wisconsin “Wright and Like” – Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin Hillside Theatre
(Spring Green, WI / June 1, 2018)

← → ↻ Not Secure www.quasimondo.org/mrs-wrights.html ☆



MRS. WRIGHTS

Created and Performed by Jenni Reinke

CASA At the Hillside Theater at Taliesin
TICKETS Presented by Wright in Wisconsin

SUPPORT PROJECTS Olgiivanna's husband, famed American architect Frank Lloyd Wright, has just died. In grief and anger, she summons her deep spirituality to become a medium for the women closest to him. The stories she sees offer a meditation on relationship, independence, and immortality.

PHOTOS

VIDEO

PRESS An original solo dance theatre work, creator and performer Jenni Reinke embodies the industrious and colorful women. Intimate spaces are choreographed through the architecture of the body. Dance and theater construct untold stories of house and home.

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ARTHAUS **"JENNI REINKE DOMINATES THE STAGE."**
EXAMINER.COM

"RAVISHINGLY BEAUTIFUL...RIVETING"
MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL



WRIGHT IN WISCONSIN **PHANTOM THEATER** **fringe** **Minnesota Peck School of Arts** **UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN UWMILWAUKEE**



PRESS **PHOTOS** **VIDEO** **INFO**

Reinke, Jenni and Brian Rott. “Mrs. Wrights.” *Quasimondo*,
<https://www.quasimondo.org/mrs-wrights.html>.

Minnesota Fringe Festival – Rarig Center Xperimental Theater
(Minneapolis, MN / August 4-12, 2018)

The image is a screenshot of a Facebook event page. At the top, the Facebook logo and a 'Sign Up' button are visible. Below the navigation bar (Events, Watch, Groups, Marketplace), the 'Events' section is active. The event title is 'Mrs. Wrights at Minnesota Fringe', hosted by Quasimondo Physical Theatre. The event is public and has 9 people interested. The dates are August 4, 2018, to August 12, 2018, in CDT. The location is Rarig Center, 330 21st Ave S Ste 580, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455. The event details section includes the text: 'Now Touring!', '"Mrs. Wrights" Created and Performed by Jenni Reinke Produced by Quasimondo Physical Theatre', 'MN Fringe - August 4th-12th Phantom Theater (Warren, Vt.) - August 17th-18th Chicago Fringe - September 1st-3rd', and a paragraph about the artist and philosopher Olgivanna. The 'About Quasimondo Physical Theatre' section features their logo and website. The 'About the Venue' section shows a photo of the Rarig Center and its name.

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Events

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MRS. WRIGHTS
CREATED AND PERFORMED BY JENNI REINKE
Inspired by the women closest to architect Frank Lloyd Wright, dance and theater construct untold stories of house and home.

SAT. Aug. 4th @ 1:00 pm
SUN. Aug. 5th @ 6:00 pm
FRI. Aug. 10th @ 8:30 pm
SAT. Aug. 11th @ 8:30 pm
SUN. Aug. 12th @ 8:30 pm

AUG 12 Mrs. Wrights at Minnesota Fringe
Public · Hosted by Quasimondo Physical Theatre

★ Interested

5 Dates · Aug 4, 2018 - Aug 12, 2018 · CDT
Event ended about 12 months ago

Rarig Center
330 21st Ave S Ste 580, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455 Show Map

9 Interested
Share this event with your friends

Details

Now Touring!

"Mrs. Wrights"
Created and Performed by Jenni Reinke
Produced by Quasimondo Physical Theatre

MN Fringe - August 4th-12th
Phantom Theater (Warren, Vt.) - August 17th-18th
Chicago Fringe - September 1st-3rd

Artist and philosopher Olgivanna has just lost her husband, Frank Lloyd Wright. Grief stricken, she channels the renowned architect and the four colorful women closest to him in a meditation on relationship, independence and immortality. Dance and theater construct untold

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Theater Modern dance Drama (theater) +1

About Quasimondo Physical Theatre

Quasimondo Physical Theatre
Theatrical Productions
www.quasimondo.org

About the Venue

Rarig Center
Performance Art Theatre · 6 likes

Reinke, Jenni. "Mrs. Wrights at Minnesota Fringe." *Facebook*,
<https://www.facebook.com/events/rarig-center/mrs-wrights-at-minnesota-fringe/674812509562847/>.

Phantom Theater
(Warren, VT / August 17-18, 2018)



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August 2-18
Fri. & Sat. 7:30 p.m. & Sun. 2 p.m.
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ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT August 16, 2018

The women who loved Frank Lloyd Wright



Photo courtesy of Phantom Theater. Mrs. Wrights

We're Protective.

The logo for 'Bourne's Energy' features a stylized 'b' icon followed by the text 'bourne's energy' and the tagline 'Fueling the future'.

Propane & Bioheat with Price Protection.

An image of a black Hefty Strong Multipurpose bag with a blue handle and the text '#1 VALUE' and 'Large Trash Drawing Bag'.

RIP AND LEAK RESISTANT

The legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright comes into sharp focus at Phantom Theater this Friday and Saturday night, August 17 and 18, at 8 p.m., in “Mrs. Wrights,” a tour-de-force one-woman show by Wisconsin-based performance artist Jenni Reinke.

While the name of the iconic American architect is almost universally recognized, few people remember the women who loved and were loved by Wright. Still their influence on his work and life is profound. Through dance and physical theater, Reinke reveals five dynamic women – his mother, three wives and longtime mistress – whose colorful personal stories provide a window into an important shift in American culture.

“Collectively, their lives span the years 1869 to 1985 and mirror 19th- and 20th-century women’s history in America. I want my performance to give voice to their experience,” said Reinke.

The piece centers on Wright’s third and last wife, Olgivanna, a devotee of the internationally famous spiritualist, GI Gurdijeff. Olgivanna introduced theosophical concepts to Wright and founded the Taliesin Fellowship with him. In Reinke’s rendition, upon Lloyd’s death Olgivanna turns her grief into a dramatic channeling of the women who flowed through her husband’s life. “With Wright as the common denominator, my biggest challenge has been creating a show that is ultimately about the women rather than the larger-than-life architect. Of course, the show will necessarily be about him to some extent. This has been a productive tension in my creative process,” noted Reinke.

Exploring intimate spaces through “the architecture of the body,” Reinke’s own art seems particularly suited to the material. Olgivanna herself was a master of sacred dance and a composer, so “it feels appropriate to tell these stories using the modes she practiced,” according to Reinke.

Though “Mrs. Wrights” is a one-woman show, its success relies on other creative collaborators. “Costuming plays an important role in distinguishing one character from another and in highlighting the span of history the women inhabited,” Reinke explained. She worked with Milwaukee-based costumier Leslie Vaglica on the logistics of on-stage costume changes for six characters – five women as well as Frank Lloyd Wright. “The costumes she built are gorgeous,” said Reinke. Her creative and life partner, Brian Rott, serves as dramaturg and lighting designer.

Phantom Theater’s artistic director, Tracy Martin, believes “Mrs. Wrights” is a perfect match for the Mad River audience. She met Reinke while the two were in graduate school together at the University of Wisconsin. “This is her thesis performance (for an MFA in dance and choreography),” said Martin. She added that Reinke “is an outstanding performance artist. When I heard her thesis was regarding Frank Lloyd Wright, well, given this community of architects, it was a natural.”

For reservations call 496-5997.

“The women who loved Frank Lloyd Wright.” *The Valley Reporter*,
<https://www.valleyreporter.com/index.php/news/artsent/12747-the-women-who-loved-frank-lloyd-wright>.

Chicago Fringe Festival – The Gym, Congregational Church of Jefferson Park
(Chicago, IL / September 1-3, 2018)

https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/chicago-fringe-festival-jefferson-park/Content?oid=56682720

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ARTS & CULTURE | PERFORMING ARTS FEATURE August 29, 2018

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The Chicago Fringe Festival pares back to one week—what does it mean?

Ultimately it means less shows, but several of this year's still look promising.
By Justin Hayford

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Mark Toland at last year's Fringe Fest
ARI CRAVEN

In its ninth year, the Chicago Fringe Festival shrinks from two weeks to one. Time will tell if this is a meaningful return to its roots (the first ran for only five days), a temporary aberration, or a harbinger of its imminent demise.

Chicago Fringe Festival Thu 8/30–Mon 9/3, times vary, Jefferson Park locations vary; see website, chicagofringe.org, \$10 per show plus \$5 admission button; ticket packages \$36-\$100 plus \$5 button.

The fest has always been a crapshoot, largely because artists earn slots by lottery. Organizers trumpet this approach as “an absolute democracy,” but it means the performers got on stage not by skill or artistry but pure luck. In addition, past lineups have favored wacky and oddball over progressive and challenging, making the whole affair feel relatively insubstantial.

Still, walking around Jefferson Park on a summer evening is pleasant, the shows are short, and several look promising:

Mrs. Wrights Jenni Reinke, cofounder of Milwaukee's Quasimondo Physical Theatre, performs her solo dance-theater piece about the women left behind after Frank Lloyd Wright's death. Reinke is precise, captivating, and unafraid of humor.

Hildegard of Bingen Musical Glenview's With a Machete Productions debuts its tuneful take on the 12th-century mystic, composer, and natural scientist, written by the duo behind the company's catchy Church of Modern Love.

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Hayford, Justin. “The Chicago Fringe Festival pares back to one week – what does it mean?”
Chicago Reader, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/chicago-fringe-festival-jefferson-park/Content?oid=56682720>.

SC Johnson Community Programs – SC Johnson Golden Rondelle Theater
(Racine, WI / September 28, 2018)

← → ↻ <https://reservations.scjohnson.com/MoreInfo.aspx?ActID=287>

"Mrs. Wrights"



Duration: 1 1/2 hours

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 28; program begins at 6:30 p.m.

Following the program, a [Wright@Night SC Johnson Campus Tour](#) will be available from 8:00-9:30 p.m. – a [separate reservation is required](#).

Inspired by the women closest to architect Frank Lloyd Wright, dance and theater construct are used to express untold stories of house and home. An original solo dance theatre work, creator and performer Jenni Reinke embodies these industrious and colorful women in this performance.

"Mrs. Wrights" begins with Olgivanna (Lazovich Miljanov) Lloyd Wright, third and final wife of Wright. Olgivanna is a composer, dancer and writer, and was the originator and organizer of the Taliesin Fellowship with her husband. Olgivanna's husband, the famed American architect, has just died. In grief and anger, she summons her deep spirituality to become a medium for the women closest to him. The stories she sees offer a meditation on relationship, independence and immortality.

The women Reinke portrays are Olgivanna, his mother Anna, his lover Mamah, and his ex-wives Kitty and Miriam. Reinke will host a talkback with the audience following the performance.

Reinke, a founding member of Quasimondo Physical Theatre, has worked with the company to devise more than 15 original productions since 2012. Quasimondo Physical Theatre creates theatre that enriches the community with diverse perspectives, communicates through a common sensory language and reveals our shared humanity. Through devising, performance and education, the interdisciplinary ensemble makes innovative theatre that moves bodies, hearts and minds. Based in Milwaukee, WI, and founded in 2012, the critically acclaimed, award-winning company has created more than 30 original productions over six seasons.

"Mrs. Wrights." *SC Johnson Community Programs,*
<https://reservations.scjohnson.com/MoreInfo.aspx?ActID=287>.

Appendix Q:

Photos from Thesis Performance

Photography by Sarah Larson



Olgivanna Lloyd Wright



Olgivanna in her youth





Anna Lloyd Jones

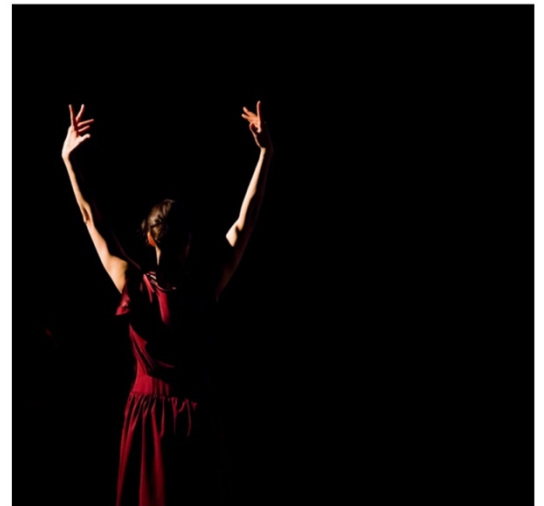


Catherine (“Kitty”) Lee Tobin





“Mamah” (Martha) Bouton Borthwick



Frank (Lincoln) Lloyd Wright





Maude Miriam Noel (née Hicks)



Appendix R:

Mrs. Wrights Script

SCENE 1 – PROLOGUE: MORTALITY (OLGIVANNA)

(FLW suit set downstage as if corpse in coffin. Rocking chair USR; coat rack SL)

*CUE 1.1 – Rain - (Starting before House Open, continuing on after performer enters in darkness, continuing through first scene)

(Performer enters in darkness. Lights up. Performer dances.)

Did you read my husband's obituary in the New York Times? PHOENIX, Ariz., April 9, 1959—
Frank Lloyd Wright Dies;

*CUE 1.2 – DistantThunder - (go after “Frank Lloyd Wright Dies”)

Famed Architect Was 89.

This headline is not right. He changed his age to make him look two years less.

But for me, age is nothing.

(dance)

The papers say he condemn the great cities, the skyscraper and the box house. He say, “a box is a coffin for the human spirit.” And, I agree. But then, what do I know about architecture?
(laughing) One time, he ask me that. “What do you know about architecture?” Everything. I have been with you for nearly 30 years.

(dance)

He is survive by his buildings and his books. And by his wife, Olgivanna Lazovich Milanoff
Lloyd Wright. I too write, and compose music.

(dance)

I remember when I make my first dance. I was 12 years old.

I went to see a fortuneteller. “I see circles, triangles, squares,” she said.

You have a choice of two lives.

But first (standing on FLW suit) you must struggle with yourself to overcome something.

(arm reaches; melt down to FLW suit)

(tie scarf overhead)

*FADE – DistantThunder - (go after she ties scarf)

*FADE – Rain - (go right away)

*CUE 2.1 – Wind - (go right away)

SCENE 2: ANNA

(singing, “The Widow and the Devil”)

High atop a lonely moor, a Widow lived alone.

Well, in she kept, and as she slept,
her pillow heard her moan:

"Oh, many's the lonely traveller
has spent the night with me,
but there's no a man in all creation
gives content to me!"

So boldly ran the Widow,

*If I were Catholic, I'd confess, my husband didn't really die. It's just what I tell my children.
Frank, Mary Jane, and Maginel. And, it's what I tell everyone.*

(walking to DSR with baby FLW)

and as she did, a tall and handsome
stranger stepped inside.

Well, she gave him bread and brandy,
and then they went to bed,

So, I'm not technically a widow. But he's as good as dead!

*CUE 2.2 – WaterDrop - (go on “He's as good as dead”)

Divorce is as good as -

(walking to DSC with baby FLW)

And the wind blew cold and lonely
across that Widow's moor,
and she never, ever turned away
a traveller from the door.

(kneeling down DSC with child FLW)

*You're goin' ta be a good little lad, aren't ya? Make your mammy proud? Build her a big house?
Not leave her with leaky roofs like your daddy.*

(catching drips of water in hat, goes to DSR)

"For I've heard your plea
right down the lane,
and I've come to see you right.
But you must come to Hell with me
if I can last the night."
Well, she said, "You randy Devil!
Yeah, that's what he was.

(talking to an adolescent FLW)

Promise me ya won't be like your daddy. Running around the country. Always preaching with nothing to show for it. Leave your wife and children penniless.

(put coat over back, pick up cane, walk SL towards coat rack)

To this bargain I'll agree,
for Hell on Earth, or Hell in Hell,
it's all the same to me!"

At twenty-two the Devil
felt compelled to take a rest,

*FADE – WaterDrop - (go after “At twenty-two the Devil felt compelled to take a rest”)

He's twenty-two now. My son Frank. My second deserter. He's marrying this little spitfire of a thing. Catherine. Nineteen. Couldn't cook if her life depended on it. If you ask me, he's too good for her. And she's too good for him.

And the wind blew cold and lonely
across that Widow's moor,
and she never, ever turned away
a traveler from the door.

(costume change behind coat rack)

And the wind blew cold and lonely
across that Widow's moor,
and she never, ever turned away
a traveler from the door.

(hangs scarf on coat rack)

*CUE 3.1 – WeddingBell - (go after she hangs scarf on coat rack OR after repeated verse ending in “turned away a traveler from the door”)

*FADE – Wind - (go right away)

SCENE 3.1: CATHERINE (KITTY) WEDDING AND CHILDREN

(singing, to the tune of “Here Comes the Bride”)

And she never, ever. Ev-er; forever.
Forever, forever, forever, forever.
Forever and ever; forever and ever...

(standing as if at altar)

I...

Do, Catherine Lee Tobin take...for richer...for better...so long as you both...?

I...

Take Frank...to have...in health...joy...for now, always...?

I...

DO.

*FADE – WeddingBell - (get ready third “I” + go after “DO.”)

Doooooooooooo....

*CUE 3.2 – MaryHoweSymphony - (go after long “Doooooooooooo...”)

Do, do. Da, da. Do-do.

(Dance/movement – Kitty baby/mother birthing)

(Stomps feet to DSL. Slaps hands.)

*FADE – MaryHoweSymphony - (Get ready foot stomping to DSL. Go after slaps hands.)

Junior!

John – David

Junior – Francis – John – Robert Llewellyn

Junior – Catherine – David – John

Junior – John – David – Francis – Robert Llewellyn – Catherine – Junior

Fraaaaank!

*CUE 3.3 – Doorbell - (go after “Fraaaaaank!”)

Anna. My mother in law.

(Kitty walks SL, noticing messy house. Check hair. Wipe apron. Big smile to audience. Mime door knob.)

*CUE 3.4 – DoorOPEN - (get ready on: check hair, skirt, big smile; go on mime door knob)

Anna: Where is me Frank? Out again, eh? Always runnin around the country with nothing to show for it. Well, you’re lookin healthy. Look like ya put on a pound or two. Where are me children.? Come to mammy! I mean grandmammy. Ya know what you ought to do? Ya ought to consider getting a maid. This place is lookin like a pigst-.

*CUE 3.5 – DoorCLOSE (CUT OFF: get ready on left arm out; go on "place is looking like a pigst-")

(Kitty shuts door on Anna. Walks to rocking chair. Sits in rocking chair. Relaxes indulgently.)

SCENE 3.2: KITTY ROCKING CHAIR DANCE

(dance)

*CUE 3.6 – Kitty_RockingChair - (get ready pushes chair, shoulder shimmy; go on foot grab dragging leg)

What makes a house a home?

A homemaker. Mistress, mother, nurse and maid.

(dance)

No, it’s the togetherness.

Shared memories, shared grievances.

(dance)

I’ll wait for him. I know he’s coming home.

He’s just been influenced by a vamp, a seductress.

I’ll wait for him. I know he’s coming home.

(Take off apron. Fluff. Put apron on arm of rocking chair.)

*FADE – Kitty_RockingChair - (get ready takes apron off; go on puts apron on chair arm)

*CUE 4.1 – Olgi_Childhood - (go right away)

SCENE 4.1: OLGIVANNA CHILDHOOD

(dance)

Did you notice any change? Did you see my shadow?

(dance)

Tragedy touched my father early in life.

(dance)

I found in Nietzsche the idea of a superman.

(dance)

At only the age of 35, my father became completely blind.

(dance)

I could never accept his blindness.

(dance)

The blind receive sight. The... Do you see? The dead are raised.

(dance)

Pythagoras speaks of the immortal soul. I wanted this: Permanency, continuity.

(dance)

Still, at the young age of 14, I pray everyday for my father to see.

(dance)

Moving in the sunlight, I would ask: “Do you notice any change? Did you see my...?”

(dance)

I had so wanted him to see.

(dance)

And I wanted, for me. I wanted...

*FADE – Olgi_Childhood - (go after “And I wanted, for me. I wanted...”)

(dance)

SCENE 4.2: OLGIVANNA TRAINING

(militant arm gestures and marching)

I found a teacher, George Ivanovich Gurdjieff. He taught me spiritual dances.

*CUE 4.2 – Olgi_Training - (go after “He taught me spiritual dances.”)

He assured me, “You can become anything you want to be; you can be God-like; provided you struggle with yourself to overcome your weakness.”

(dance)

(Ending – scrubbing floor with skirt SL, roll on floor, with skirt over head)

*CUE 4.3 – TchaikovskyHymn - (go on scrub floor with skirt)

*FADE – Olgi_Training - (go right away)

(Lay on floor for five breaths, slowly sit up and unzip dress, come out of it as if shedding skin.)

TRANSITION: OLGIVANNA TO MAMAH TEXT

I continued my reading and philosophical study.

(take Mamah red dress from coat rack)

Everything is flux. Heraclitus. Indeed, everything is becoming, organic evolution.

(put arms in Mamah dress, prepare to put it on)

For example, the innumerable new relations which the woman movement has established between women and home, women and society,

(put on Mamah dress overhead)

and all of the new spiritual forces which have been put in motion because of these new relations, cannot take fixed form.

Ellen Key, The Woman Movement.

*FADE – Tchaikovsky Hymn - (get ready "spiritual forces...fixed form;" go on "Ellen Key")

(turn to face upstage) Translated by Mamah Bouton Borthwick.

*CUE 5.1 – Mamah_Tango - (go after "Mamah Bouton Borthwick")

SCENE 5.1: MAMAH INTRO

(dance and speak)

The woman movement is just that – movement. Freedom rests on motion. Love must free itself from the bondage of monogamy. Marriage without love is immoral.

(dance)

But, the very legitimate right of a free love can never be acceptable if it is enjoyed at the expense of maternal love.

(dance)

(dance to floor)

(on floor) Freedom rests...in motion.

*FADE – Mamah_Tango - (get ready sits on floor + go after "Freedom rests...in motion.")

SCENE 5.2: MAMAH DATING

(Rolls, stands up and walks towards coat rack. Reaches and grabs suitcoat arm.)

*CUE 5.2 – Mamah_Dating - (get ready stands, goes to coat rack; go on grabs suitcoat arm)

(Physical acting: Picnic. Waltz. Puddle. Making out.)

(Sex on floor. Sits up.)

*FADE – Mamah_Dating - (get ready sex on floor; go on sits up after sex)

(Walk DSL with coat. Walk DSR with coat.)

I left my children.

(Walk DSL with coat. Hug coat.)

I made a choice in harmony with my soul.

*CUE 5.3 – RadioStatic - (go after "In harmony with my soul")

(Coat falls. Look out in distance. Look to coat. Bring coat to coat rack.)

SCENE 5.3: MAMAH FIRE

(Go to pick up red dress. Walk DS with red dress. Begin to put leg in dress. Drop dress on floor.)

(Smell something DSR – gesture with hands. Then turn around and pose in center.)

*FADE – RadioStatic - (get ready drops dress on floor; go on first smell)

*CUE 5.4 – Mamah_Flamenco - (go right away)

(Dance)

*CUE 5.5 – BambooCracking - (go on first big jump facing downstage)

(Dance)

*CUE 5.6 – Fire - (get ready second jump; go third time she lays on floor)

*FADE – BambooCracking - (go right away - right after Fire cue)

(Try to put out flames with dress, roll up dress and put under “door.”)

*FADE – Mamah_Flamenco - (go after rolls dress and lays it on floor as if under a door)

(Five statuesque poses, ending with her on the floor. Leg up = she dies.)

*FADE – Fire - (go when she lays on floor with leg up)

*CUE 5.7 – Radio_Mamah - (go right away – right after Fire fade)

TRANSITION: RADIO VOICEOVER

(costume change)

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It is August 16, 1914, and we are covering what is being called the crime of the century, and in small town America at that.

This just in from The Detroit Tribune, the paper reads:

Servant Fires Love Bungalow, Slays Architect's Soul Mate, and Cuts Down Eight Others.

Puts Torch to Wisconsin Cottage of Frank Lloyd Wright of Chicago, and Kills Six and Injures Three as They Crawl Out of Window.

SPRING GREEN, Wisconsin, August 15 - A mad servant, armed with a hand ax, today ended the romance of Mamah Bouton Borthwick, formerly Mrs. Edwin H. Cheney, of Oak Park, Ill., and Frank Lloyd Wright, wealthy Chicago Architect, with whom she lived with as wife since 1911.

Mrs. Borthwick, it will be remembered, eloped with Frank Lloyd Wright, architect, in October 1909. Wright deserted his wife and babies. Mrs. Borthwick left her husband and family. The two departed for Europe on what they called a quote, Spiritual hegira, unquote.

Believing her husband to be under the influence of, quote, a vampire, a seductress, unquote, Mrs. Catherine Wright waited patiently for her husband's return. She said she loved him and her love would bring him back. Meanwhile, Edwin Cheney divorced Mrs. Borthwick under charges of desertion, and obtained custody of their two children, which she left when she fled abroad.

Today, setting fire to Taliesin, the elaborate bungalow built by Wright for Mrs. Borthwick in Spring Green, Wisconsin, the servant stood outside and attempted to brain Mrs. Borthwick and eight other occupants of the building, members of the family and employees, as they fled from the flames. He succeeded in ending her life, the lives of her two children aged 10 and 13 – and the lives of three others, probably fatally injuring a seventh and seriously wounding the remainder.

Mrs. Borthwick is said to have reprimanded the man, Julian Carlton, a chef in her kitchen. He brooded over this. It is thought, and became insane.

Carlton disappeared after the killing, but after a search of several hours had been made for him, reappeared. He was hurried into an automobile and rushed to the Iowa county jail, 18 miles away.

Meanwhile, in Chicago, Frank Lloyd Wright was in his office when he received a long distance telephone message informing him of the tragedy. He was prostrated and declined to discuss it. Later he left for Spring Green.

SCENE 5.4: FLW GRIEF

(Tap cane on floor. Enter walking with cane as Frank.)

*FADE – Radio_Mamah - (go after she taps cane on floor)

*CUE 5.8 – Frank_Grief - (go right away)

(Frank picks up Mamah dress, moves it DSC. Mourning scene: Dance/movement with suitcoat, scarf, hat.)

(costume change – *Frank_Grief MUSIC continues over change)

SCENE 6.1: MIRIAM CABARET

(Performer in place: Standing, holding cane, hat covering face. Cane taps steady beat.)

*FADE – Frank_Grief - (get ready hat covers face; go after first cane tap)

*CUE 6.1 – PublicBar - (go right away)

(Hat and cane performance with text.)

futurist, feminist / sculpturist, artist

vorticist, purist / moralist, suprematist

psychoist, analyst / scientist, relativist

space and time / single viewpoint realigned

God is dead and we have killed him / Sense is nonsense and mind is blind

Vanish, varnish, vanquished, c'est la vie

construction, destruction / Cubist dissection

Isn't it all just misdirection?

a rose is a rose is a rouse is a ruse is a

rosist a rouseist a rusist, I re-sist

A manifesto? I man-i-fist!

An instant cure for biological

Polite-astronomical / artistic, parliamentary

Domestic-agronmical / and literary syphilis

I insist! (sniff) Futurist, feminist, sculpturist, artist.

Women are furies, Cleopatras, Joans of Arc,

Combatents, destroyers, lovers who arouse

Destroy the myth of purity / Void all virginity

Women, long diverted / Into morals and frivolity

Go back to instinct, to violence, to cruelty.

I make, I mold / Like Caterina The Bold.

Her city sacked, her son kidnapped / death threat, don't fret

Facing her enemy / said take what you want from me:

Standing in the walls of the fortress, she exposed her genitals and said:

"Fatelo, se volete: impiccateli pure davanti a me... qui ho quanto basta per farne altri!"
"Do it, if you want to: hang them even in front of me. (hold hat over genitals/womb) I still have the mold to make some more!"

*FADE – PublicBar - (get ready hat over genitals, go after "I still have the mold to make some more")

*CUE 6.2 – AudienceApplause - (go right away)

(Tiny bow. Walk towards coat rack.)

*FADE – AudienceApplause - (go after tiny bow)

*CUE 6.3 – FountainPen - (go right away)

SCENE 6.2: MIRIAM LETTERS

(seated, making origami houses with envelopes)

My Dear, Mister Frank Lloyd Wright. I'm writing to express my deepest condolences on the loss of your love, Miss Mamah Bouton Borthwick. Now I write not as any ordinary individual. I write as Maude Miriam Noel, sculpturist, artist. Believe me I know the depth of your loss. The loneliness of an empty home.

(body shape with arm reaching up)

*FADE – FountainPen - (get ready "believe me I know;" go on body shape w/ arm reaching up)

*CUE 6.5 – Miriam_Letters - (go right away)

(dance)

(reach for an envelope, lay on floor rubbing envelope on body)

Let me crown your head with a wreath of violets. Let me bind your hair with fillet of gold. Like Alcibiades at the Feast of Agathon.

(dance)

(reach for envelope, open it, it on mouth, run to SL)

I will come into your life or a little while, and then I will leave. Because you will not understand.

(dance)

(reach for envelope, hold it to chest, quickly snap it to create sound of being beaten)

(dance)

(Go to floor, collect remaining envelopes. Lay out envelopes in a row downstage.)

*FADE – Miriam_ Letters (go near end of placing envelopes in a row downstage)

*CUE 6.6 – Radio_MiriamDivorce - (go right away)

TRANSITION: RADIO VOICEOVER

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. It is August 26, 1927 and we have breaking news from the small town of Spring Green, Wisconsin. After a nearly three year legal battle, Mrs. Miriam Noel, famous sculptress, and Frank Wright, world renowned architect, have reached a divorce settlement.

Mrs. Noel charges desertion and cruelty against Wright. She speaks of a Mrs. Olgivanna Lazovich Milanoff, young dark haired Russian, pretty Montenegrin dancer, who claims quote entered the famous love nest as a servant but has remained as a sweetheart unquote.

Mrs. Noel sued Mrs. Milanoff and sought to have her deported, had Wright arrested for violating the Mann Act, and attempted to take Taliesin by storm. After refusing to grant divorce, she quote battled for her rights unquote and today a settlement was reached.

(costume change to Olgivanna black dress)

*FADE – Radio_MiriamDivorce - (Go when Olgi (black dress) enters...or let run until end)

CUE 7.1 – Rain - (go right away – before or on Olgi (black dress) entrance)

SCENE 7.1: OLGIVANNA FINAL SCENE

(Entering from coat rack, FLW coat over shoulders)

Olgivanna: Mrs. Wright met Mr. Wright at the Russian ballet in Chicago. They were married in 1928.

(coat dance > coat on > FLW coat gesture phrase from funeral)

Olgivanna: She was the matriarchal ruler of the Taliesin Fellowship, an architecture school she envisioned and founded with Wright.

(moving rocking chair, picking up Kitty dress)

Kitty: What makes a house a home? It's the togetherness. The House of Olgivanna was anything but. She at the top, the apprentices below.

(taking off coat)

(putting coat on rocking chair, buttoning coat)

Olgivanna: She controlled everything but the architectural work. Her organizational skills allowed Wright the freedom to engage himself fully without distraction. She directed the center's social program and served as counselor to its members.

(picking up Mamah dress from Center R, walking, putting it down USL)

Mamah: She didn't marry him for love. She married him for business. To gain access to his idolaters for her own cult of spirituality.

(grab scarf, put it on FLW coat, rock chair)

Olgivanna: An architect of the human spirit, she developed the apprentices' mind, body and character through music, art, literature, dance and philosophy.

(pick up Mamah dress, hang on coatrack)

Mamah: But it wasn't a real partnership – he was too jealous to take interest in her spiritual teaching. A marriage without love is immoral.

(rock chair)

Olgivanna: She compose more than 40 works of music, write five books, and direct the dance programs at Taliesin.

(pick up Miriam dress)

Miriam: I'm writing to express my deepest condolences for the loss at Taliesin following my divorce from Mr. Wright.

(drop dress, pick up hat, rock chair)

In the midst of the Great Depression, she sparked a renaissance in his career.

(Miriam dress to coat rack, rock chair)

Miriam: In my opinion, as an artist, a majority of the apprentices are second-rate clones, mimicking his style without the substance.

(rock chair)

Olgivanna: More than half of his building took place after they met, including masterpieces such as Fallingwater and the Guggenheim.

(pick up Anna dress, carry to coat rack, pick up cane, rock chair)

Anna: She'd be nobody without him. And he'd be nobody without her!

Olgivanna: She was the outspoken defender of all her husband's work, protecting it from wrecking balls and owners bent on changing his facades and interiors.

Truly, she kept her husband's name alive until the last.

(look at chair, Frank dies)

SCENE 7.2: EPILOGUE – IMMORTALITY

Olgivanna: My husband always said, "Architecture is frozen music. The building is the sound, the space..."

(dance)

To him, I say, if architecture is frozen music, then dance is melting architecture.

(dance)

We live like this for more than 30 years. Freezing and melting. Dancing and building.

(dance – Nietzsche, feel arms and turn > training, arms through lift skirt)

Flesh and concrete

(dance – Mamah leg swipe > hot door knob, push walls)

Breath and steel

(dance – Swipe lap, grief side jump to forward jump > fists to grief walk, L arm pulls back)

Heart and stone

(dance – Nietzsche Superman > end of Superman)

Brick and bone.

(improvise dance, lights fade, maybe utter a few more lines, improvised)

(lighting image: shadow)

*FADE – Rain - (go with lights down)

BOW

***BOW – CurtainCall_Mamah_Tango(NoEdits) - (go with lights up)**