

GATEWAY PERFORMANCE PRODUCTIONS, INC.
Positioning Statement
Sandra Hughes
April 1, 1991

HISTORICAL NOTES

The Great American Mime Experiment was founded in 1974 in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1975 G.A.M.E. relocated to Cleveland, Ohio to provide the inaugural performance at the newly built Greenbriar Commons Theatre in Parma Hts. The Company incorporated as a not for profit arts organization in Ohio, returned to Atlanta in 1978 and obtained Georgia non-profit status. In 1991 G.A.M.E.'s expanded artistic vision and activities made it necessary to change the corporate name to Gateway Performance Productions. Gateway began functioning as a production company producing and presenting original works for the live stage, video, film and radio with related visual art, photography and literary projects. The Company's function and structure were articulated by Artistic Director Sandra Hughes during a one year consultation with Nello McDaniel and George Thorn of FEDAPT – a New York-based arts consulting firm. The result – the following Positioning Paper – was written by Sandra with input from G.A.M.E./ Gateway's board of directors during 1991. This process was made possible by the Atlanta Theatre Coalition.

From 1975-1989 Company co-founders – writer, choreographer, director, performer, educator, flutist Sandra Hughes and mask maker, performer, set designer, visual artist, educator Michael Hickey – explored mythic and mimetic manifestations in America through primary research and development. A semester of study with Israeli mime artist Juki Arkin at Ohio University as part of their theatre studies connected Sandra and Michael with the elements of white-face , illusionary mime. Consistent study with French Mime Marcel Marceau by Sandra (1984-1989) and Michael (1985-1989) deeply connected these artists with mime's classic European and Asian roots. This experience contributed to a synthesis that led to a further evolution of the group's performing style.

Written 1991 SH
Corrections/Revisions 2024 SH

MISSION

Gateway Performance Productions exists to produce work that transcends cultural and socio-economic barriers in content and/or form through the cultivation of a wide variety of public performance venues local to international and traditional to non-traditional. The body of work is created for live performance, video, film and radio and includes related visual art, photography and literary projects. There is an emphasis on creating new work, exploring new forms and combining artistic elements in new ways. Projects are identified by Artistic Director Sandra Hughes and brought to fruition through the skills of Gateway's producing associates. Producing associates are artists, technicians, administrators, co-producers, producers and board members associated with any designated Gateway Project.

PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS

The perspective on the work is that we live in a time of enormous transition locally, nationally and internationally and out of this creative chaos will emerge new forms of government, cultural-economic structures and art. Part of this process includes the manifestation of new cultural myths or the re-emergence of old myths of current significance. Myth in this context means a cultural image that contains a meaning and a teaching for our time. David Adams Leeming addresses the mythic perspective in his book *THE WORLD OF MYTH*. "A myth expresses a marvelous world of metaphor that breathes life into the essential human story: the story of the relationship between the known and unknown, both around and within us, the story of the search for identity in the context of the universal struggle between order and chaos. ... Myths are not only worth teaching, but are essential to our education. Mythic tales of particular cultures are masks for a larger, less tangible mythic substructure that we all share."

One of the functions of the work is to serve as a vessel for the synthesis of imagistic fragments and the distillation of meaning. We recognize humankind's search for meaning as a primary motivational thrust on the planet. Inherent in our process is the exploration of form and a receptivity to as yet unrecognized and unrealized forms, themes and images. The rediscovery of forgotten forms, themes and images that resonate with our time is also of interest. The goal is an evolving body of work that explores the nature of human consciousness on our planet during this time of historical, governmental, social and economic transition.

GATEWAY GOALS

- To identify and work with a variety of producing associates in diverse geographic locations for the purpose of creating new work.
- To celebrate and explore a diversity of cultures and peoples.
- To develop a body of original work.
- To expand the art of performance
- To identify financial support for this work.

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

We measure success by answering the following questions:

- What was the quality of the creative/human interaction
- among the Producing Associates?
- Did we devote enough developmental time to the project to
- share it ripe from the vine?
- Were the venues for the project appropriate?
- Did we meet our financial goals for the project?
- What kind of experience did our audience have?
- Did the project expand the body of work?
- What was the quality of relationship with those presenting
- and/or funding the project?

AESTHETIC FRAMEWORK

The human body and its expression remain a central element in our work. Philosophically and technically, we owe much to the art of mime - especially as it manifested in the 20th century as a movement towards world theatre as exemplified in the early efforts of Etienne Decroux, Jean Louis Barrault and Marcel Marceau. There is also inspiration from the theories of Antonin Artaud, especially in the area of breath as a vital force for the projection of image and emotion in live performance. The alchemical correlations of image, sound and geometrical form play their part in the work, as do the biological basis for dance and movement in native cultures. In its role as a teaching, the work strives to stimulate and attune that part of the human psyche which maintains a creative reverie on the part of the observer, creating fertile ground for new connections and solutions in this time of cultural/historical transition.

Techniques utilized to achieve this include strong visual images as well as sound/text based imagery. The use of non-linear development is also common in the work and the engaging of the biological, kinesthetic response in the body of the observer and stimulating these rhythms through the use of visual/sound rhythms, repetitions and configurations is also key.

Creating new work often involves primary research. It has been our experience that each production takes on a life of its own and in this regard each has its own distinct style and form. The premise is that form and style are powerful forces in communicating content.

The elements used in the work vary from production to production, but to date (1991) have included:

- classic and contemporary mime styles clowning
- modern dance
- ethnic dance
- masked theatre
- text
- scripted dialogue
- visual art elements
- photography
- video
- puppetry
- film
- slide projections
- music/sound design
- architecture
- costume, set and lighting design.

GATEWAY PROGRAMMING CONTEXT

Gateway projects are presented locally, statewide, nationally and internationally. To date, programming has been presented in 30 states in the United States and in Belgium, Holland, Italy, Spain, Germany, Slovenia in the former Yugoslavia, Hungary, Canada and Mexico.

Gateway functions as –

- A developmental laboratory
- A primary producer for local, statewide, regional, national and international touring
- An umbrella for the work of individual artists.
- A co-producer
- A fiscal agent for the works of individual artists and artistic collaborators

Types of Programming

- General Audience
- New works for Adult Audiences
- School Programs
- Workshops
- Lecture/Demonstrations
- Programs for Special Audiences
- Commissioned Works

AUDIENCE PERSONALITY

Our work is performed locally to internationally and our audiences vary greatly. We also search out diverse and non-traditional performance venues. This causes our audience profile to go beyond what would normally be expected in a wide range of geographical touring.

For example, we performed at an International Arts Festival in Oaxaca, Mexico for festival participants from 25 countries. Festival organizers after viewing our initial performance decided that the nature of our work would be enjoyed and appreciated by the local population. Once the 600 official festival participants were seated in the German style opera house, the doors were opened for free. The local Zapotec Indians filed in and we performed for a capacity crowd.

While performing for 1,100 high school students in Goldsboro, North Carolina, a huge roar went up from the crowd. One of our performers was in the audience performing as a masked clown. This particular piece has been presented many times to enthusiastic response, but never had such an overwhelming response been heard from an audience. A young African-American man - a special education student - stood to his full 6' 4" height, took the masked performer by both hands and danced through the aisles with him. What made this so astounding to the audience was that the young man was autistic.

We have a core audience in Atlanta, Georgia whose support is a vital force in the evolution of our work. They can be characterized as having resonance with the following statement:

"For there is, in fact, in quiet places, a great deal of deep spiritual quest and finding now in progress in this world...in small groups here and there, and more often, more typically (as anyone who looks about may learn), by ones and twos, there entering the forest at those points they themselves have chosen, where they see it to be most dark and there is no beaten way or path."

Joseph Campbell

"The Flight of the Wild Gander"

PERSONALITY OF THE ARTISTIC CORE

SANDRA HUGHES

Artistic Director

Sandra Hughes made her stage debut at age 5. At age 11, she wrote, directed and produced her first play. During her formative years Sandra participated in nearly every type of Western theatre from new play development to staging night club reviews due to her close association with her producer-director father. She credits the development of her artistic sensibilities to the influence of her paternal grandmother, born and raised in the north of Ireland, and her Canadian father.

In college Sandra studied journalism, theatre and mime. She continued her mime training with world-famous mime artist Marcel Marceau, eventually teaching workshops in mask performing at his Advanced Mime Seminar. Sandra also studied at Stella Adler Acting Studio in New York City and was an acting and directing apprentice at the Cleveland Playhouse in Cleveland, Ohio. She has created 23 new works for the company for the live stage and video. Productions have been performed in theatres, universities, schools and festivals in 30 states in the United States and in Belgium, Holland, Italy, Spain, Germany, Slovenia (the former Yugoslavia), Hungary, Mexico and Canada and broadcast on television locally to nationally. Sandra also choreographed 12 member mime ensembles for performances with the Cleveland Orchestra and the Akron Symphony.

Sandra is a produced playwright and her radio dramas have been broadcast on Public Radio. Sandra's video BRING ME YELLOW FLOWERS, inspired by the life and art of Mexican visual Frida Kahlo, was shown at the American Film Institute Video Festival in Los Angeles where it was nominated for the Robert Bennett Award. Sandra also produced and directed the video PAST RAPPORT/FOUR ATLANTA WOMEN which was selected for inclusion in the 8th International Women's Video Festival in Boston, Massachusetts. She was director of choreography for the ground-breaking computer animated short, ROSE FROM THE DEAD, which showcased at an annual international SIGGRAPH conference in Las Vegas, Nevada for 25,000 computer animation professionals.

Sandra has deep personal interest in theatre in education and dedicates a significant part of her creative efforts to designing, directing and performing in programs for young people. This work has been presented in the United States, Western and Eastern Europe, Canada and Mexico. Sandra has served on the theatre faculties of Lake Erie College, Antioch College and the University of Akron. In the area of leadership she has been a panelist for the National Endowment for the Arts, on the executive board of the Atlanta Theatre Coalition and on the board of directors of the Atlanta New Play Project and the Santa Fe Theatre Alliance.