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elements of my style

theatre poetics



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SEP 05, 2026



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This is an essay for people that encounter my work for theatre and performance for first time, or maybe are becoming re-acquainted with it. Or maybe for those that are simply reading this now.

(Note: Each subheading below is from a title of one of my plays, but the subheading do not refer directly to those plays - think of them merely as ways in to a poetics.)



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any place but here

the plays are sometimes in a here that is recognizable from geography and sometimes invented/made-up/a mash-up of places. the characters and figures in my pieces are sometimes from the here of the play, but they are nearly always wanting/longing to somewhere else. the here is a portal, a way station and sometimes simply open space where anything can happen. the here doesn't always have exact coordinates unless I tell you so. if I don't, enjoy making up your own. define the space of play as you will use the words as a map/guide.

alchemy of desire

nearly all the plays are about desire for something or someone. the desire may be abstract or concrete but it pulses underneath the text and sometimes on top of it. there's alchemy here. cheap metal may turn into gold. healing may occur. there is transformation and change, not always easily discerned, but present. someone once said that there is something "ineffable" in my work - something that goes beyond the words, even when there are many words. embrace this. and be simple and unfussy about it. let the desire lines carry you. they will.

fugitive pieces/fugitive dreams

the characters and figures in my pieces are often the fugitive kind. passing through transient, are often escaping a bad situation, running to and/or seeking shelter, or simply fugitive in mind - born out of a retreat from oppressive societies and structures they exist or want to exist outside the boundaries put upon them, outside the confines of assigned roles and identities, but they know about the class struggle and realize it too well the slow violence enacted by the capitalist economies that mark them as surplus. some characters in my work are the oppressors or side with them. these figures are also caught/trapped in a system that seeks to define them. sometimes they all break free. even in the land of the unfree, and sometimes they escape through the screen (the portal of dreams).

steal back light from the virtual

my plays exist in space, by which I mean they exist in virtuality, by which I mean they exist in the intangible, even when they are rooted to the ground. be open to the dance between embodiment and disembodiment, to the interplay between absence and presence, to the shifts between I am Here to I am Also There. there is liquidity in the work sometimes from line to line, sometimes from scene to scene, sometimes imperceptible but there. things shift, turn, are quicksilver, lines move at the speed of thought or sometimes at the tempo of the drum or the lyre. think slide guitar and drum and think too EDM and its many beats per minute. the plays fluctuate between folk and electric, between the language of film and the language of theatre, the

architecture of installations and the elemental simplicity of sidewalk games, and sometimes they hide from the virtual because what they want to do is give it back its promise of light, instead of the deadening stare of surveillance.

magnificent waste

there's decadence sometimes and a too-much-ness, a kind of neo-baroque vibe. it's spoken word time or acid house sound, or seeing the stark opulence of societies in times of catastrophe. torch songs for blasted times. or simply trance - the power of vision and prophecy.

instructions for breathing

the line falls into a rhythm, the cadence marks the beat, each line flows into the other like they do in verse, even when the plays are not in verse. think Slant. think too Syncopation. think of the interlocking chemistry of listening and receiving. the sentences are sometimes missing articles, the words carve the air, the words tumble cascades of memory, go with the flow and the flow will yield. tread lightly even when dark. wit and grace are your companions as you ride the music of the lines.

all this maddening beauty

as if to say is that all there is? life can be beautiful even when the story is bleak. look at this world we have made, how will we live in it, it's madness, but we carry on, it's a beauty we cannot contain, and it is one that may not look beautiful in a conventional sense at first sight. think of the choreography of language and space. think of how dance theatre is lit by designers. think of all we can make with just a few things or a hundred. think of a theatre that is not always in a theatre but is outside. hybrid in spirit, crossing temporal and spatial planes. Image inside the line, action on the line, image in counterpoint. look. there is the horizon line.

the breath of stars

we are stardust. all this is star stuff. all this is play. our words are spirit things. their edges cut but we can bleed harmony, if we try. because we are myth. and sometimes because we are recordings of what came before: field recordings from the cosmos in stolen time.

the hour of all things

we will live the world in a short time. in this hour (conceptual/spiritual/practical but also intellectual and philosophical), we can traverse the moon and back, even when we are sitting near the bayou or standing near the railroad track or going blind while painting a last painting. trust how time works in the plays. even when time shifts or passes or leaps. and too when it seems to be still. we sing in this world. songs that are fractured. we fill the time with our protest and longing.

'bad' english

it doesn't always scan 'right.' it doesn't always stay in one linguistic register. language moves freely. sometimes it is blunt and stark, limited on purpose. sometimes it operates like a mixtape, pulling references from different places to make its own new sense. sometimes it is operating in a received manner: comedies of manners, dark and light. there's humor, always. lean into it. seek it out. it's there. trust me. the characters and voices in my plays live by their wits. sometimes it is calling out how English is a colonizing language, and exposing it for its cruelties. sometimes it's in Spanish. sometimes it asks for sign. mostly it's connected to the mythic and incantatory in some way. even when it doesn't seem like it is.

future emergencies

nearly always pointing to the emergency/emergent state of the world. the fluctuating points between where we have been and where we are headed. in the aftermath of crisis right before everything is about to end. the prospect of sacrifice. one last glimmer. one last hope. one more walk or ride down the highway. before the morning light.

theatre: a love story

it's all theatre. and i love you. even when i don't think you love me back. here is the love of the universe, the planet we need care for, the stewardship of the elements and also of language which has power and isn't a mere plaything. here are the odd jokes and savvy lines, the shimmying bodies and the ones that fight for the magic of crip time to be given its due; here's the burning beat of a vinyl version of rock n' roll and the synthetic sounds of what was once new music. (remember new music?) they're song-plays even when the songs aren't sung. and if you don't believe me, all you have to do is close your eyes and dream; you will see.

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