

Farmers Dream: Performance Proposal

Community

In the Shakespearean tradition of a summer dream, it will be a late spring night vision... In the American Shaker tradition of gender separation but communal co-habitation, I envision 2 rows of 4-6 seats each facing each other in an open space. They will be divided by a large wooden barn table covered with antique farming tools from Salina. Men dressed in white sit on the viewer's right side. Women dressed in white sit on the viewer's left. They will be bathed in soft pools of light surrounded by darkness as the night draws on.

Labor

Throughout a night, from sunset to sunrise, the men and women will rise and interact with their shared tools. A man or woman will rise, walk up to the table and pick up an implement. S/he will then perform a silent task with it, metaphorically speaking, farming the ground (asphalt, cement, concrete, stone; depending on where we stand). When finished, s/he will return the tool to the table and sit down.

Variations of Labor & Exchanges

However, if another performer becomes intrigued by how this individual is using that tool and wants to imitate, explore or develop that gesture further, or simply wants to be the next in line to use it, s/he may get up and approach him/her, thus indicating that s/he wants it next.

When done, the first performer will ritually hand it to the second and go sit down. More than one performer can work a tool at the same time. But there must always be at least 1 man and 1 woman sitting down, watching the others. Prior to the performance, the group will spend a day in a local farm learning the correct use of the tools from a local farmer.

Voices

Throughout the night, 2 women dressed in white will enter and exit the room. They will sit at the back, in the middle, one at a time, facing the center table, aided by a microphone and speakers.

Poet Lori Brack will read a performative poetic script created from her grandfather's Kansas farming journals, 1907-1922, and other period publications. The performance will serve as a laboratory for the piece-in-process. (This will later be made available through the project website as a *Field School* publication.)

Sound artist Rosi Hayes will be singing live many variations on the hymn *Song of the Kansas Emigrants*, written in 1854 by the Quaker John Whittier. The song is beautiful, complex, fraught with ambiguities. He did not choose music to go with it, but it is written in Common Metre Double, so it can be sung to a number of tunes. In addition, three Lutheran melodies, *Excell*, *King Rejoices* and *Ellacombe*, all with old-world roots carried to the Kansas prairie. Whittier's hymn will be sung to the different tunes in fragments, different parts throughout the night. Finally, the songs of various species via the Western Soundscapes Archive, and Native American chants and words.

Performers

Men:

Ernesto Pujol

Paul Lindholm

Colin Roe Ledbetter

Michael Handley

Voice

Song

Women:

Priti Cox

Kate Lindholm

Aniko Safran (documentarian)

Carla Duarte

Lori Brack

Rosi Hayes

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