

Livermore Falls Advertiser

Spanning Three Centuries of Service to Livermore Falls, Jay, Livermore and Surrounding Communities

Established 1892

Vol. 120 No. 32

Livermore Falls, Maine • Wednesday, August 8, 2012

50¢

Frantasia, from a performer's perspective

By Barry Matulaitis,
Editor

JAY/LIVERMORE FALLS -- One of the returning performers to Frantasia this year is Teresa Fellion, who has taken a childhood love of dance to another level by forming her own dance company in New York City. This reporter had the opportunity to do a Q and A by e-mail recently, and Teresa was generous enough to take time out of her hectic schedule to answer the questions listed below:

1. Q: How did you first get involved with dance? What motivated or inspired you to stay with it and progress to forming your own dance company?

A: I first got involved with dance as a hyper and hyper-mobile child! I was walking at 8 or 10 months and climbing on anything I could find. My mom put me in dance class at age 2 and I've loved it ever since.

I was in a regional ballet company in Massachusetts from age 11-18 and also trained at Boston Ballet. In college, I studied English and French, but continued dancing. When I was 20 years old, I knew dance was what I wanted as a lifelong career, while I was living in Africa and dancing professionally there.

Upon returning, I danced for 3 years at Alvin Ailey in their certificate program and danced for several NYC-based choreographers, as well as choreographing my own work. This was a mixture of modern and African styles.

In 2004, I formed my dance company because I

found that I loved choreographing even more than performing. I have a passion for working with full people: mind, body, and soul, which is what dancers are and artists are. They understand the subtlety of a look or a gesture as well as the power of a big movement: or vice versa--the power of a small gesture. They have a supreme sense of time, space, and energy that infects the work beautifully and promotes me to have an even keener eye as a choreographer. I wanted to create my own art through dance and share it with a variety of populations.

Since 2004, we have grown a lot and it is working with amazing artists to challenge myself, discovering new physical approaches and subject matter, and solving new creative problems/puzzles that keeps me inspired in my craft. Also, learning from amazing mentors such as Sara Rudner, Dan Hurlin, and Richard Colton has opened up my eyes to dance pockets I didn't even know existed before!

2. Q: How did you find out about Frantasia?

A: I met Fran when I was 8 years old and then didn't see him again until 2007. He is a childhood friend of my father's. We reconnected by phone in 2005 while I was visiting my parents and he called. We had such an inspiring conversation, it was inevitable that we would end up working together. What a special, intuitive, and motivating person he is!

3. Q: I recall watching your dance performances at Frantasia last year. Why did you decide to come

back this year?

A: I decided to return because every year I attend (this year will be my fourth), it is valuable research towards new choreographic ideas. It has also helped me go further in my improvisational practice. The first year I attended (2007) I had never improvised onstage (in performance) before. It was wonderful to do three solos with three different musicians where I could find new approaches to converse with the musicians onstage and discover new movement vocabulary for myself.

Since that first experience, I have incorporated improvisational works into almost all of our company's endeavors. We also use improvisation in rehearsal for research purposes. The second year (2008), I came to the festival with two dancers and I created improvisational scores for our performance. We ended up collaborating with Christopher Cathode from this experience on "The Border Project", a 26-minute dance theater piece that we toured internationally, including in Lyon, France, and at the Baryshnikov Arts Center.

In 2011, I returned to Frantasia to work on solo improvisational work. I was at the beginning stages of a new piece and I used my time at Frantasia to give myself improvisational scores to discover what about the work was important to me. From this research, I created "No One Gets Out of Here Alive" this past year, a 17-minute dance theater piece that we will present this year at the festival. Starting with improvisation

to "get to know" a new idea better has been such a wonderful way to work for me.

4. Q: Is one of the most rewarding parts of Frantasia for you being around the other artists and experiencing their creations, be it with sound, dance, or humor?

A: YES! Every year at Frantasia, the other artists inspire me so much. I always enjoy the intelligent conversations around the farmhouse and the venue. Listening and watching their performances as well is so wonderful. Witnessing the artists think and feel and create in the audience's presence is so electric.

The level of experimentation is so elevated, too, that I am always opened up in new channels by being an audience member. I have also enjoyed continued collaborations with Killick!, Christopher Cathode, and Noel Walsh from what we began at Frantasia, which has been fantastic!

5. Q: What are your impressions of what Fran has achieved in bringing together such an eclectic mix of performers?

A: Fran, with his heightened intuition and his gifts as a producer, has achieved a lot in the last several years. He has given us all a community to return to and a yearly place to grow. It's really amazing what he has grown in Livermore Falls. It is far for some of us to travel to, and so worth it! I think this festival adds a lot to the New England Arts community and to the community in general and with funding from NEFA or other such organizations, it could grow even more!