

Danspace Project

Conversations Without Walls:

Jo Stewart and Jasmine Hearn with Seta Morton

October 24, 2020

Seta Morton: Welcome to Danspace Project and to this Conversation Without Walls with Jo Stewart and Jasmine Hearn. My name is Seta Morton. I am the Associate Curator, Public Engagement at Danspace. I'm a light-skinned Black woman with brown eyes and I'm wearing long two-strand-twists in my hair. I'm wearing a black top and gold necklaces and I'm sitting in my living room in front of my couch. I am of African American ancestry, a direct descendant of enslaved people and I am of Indigenous Armenian ancestry, specifically from the stolen land of Sebastia, now widely known as Sivas, in present day Turkey. I was raised in New Jersey on stolen Lenni-Lenape land and live still on stolen Lenape land, now in Brooklyn, New York. Danspace Project has found a home for 45 years and counting in the St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery on the island of Mannahatta, and more broadly in Lenapehoking, Lenape homeland. I'd like to pay respect to the enslaved African American ancestors who have participated in the building -- who may have participated in the building of that structure, and who most definitely walked its halls and to honor the Lenape land and people, both ancestors and living. I invite you to take a collective breath with me and consider your own relationship to Indigenous people and lands. Thank you. I want to thank Danspace Project staff and specifically our production manager, Yolanda Royster, who is facilitating everything behind the scenes today and for all Conversations of this series. She edits these videos, as well as runs the YouTube Live show, and so much more. Thank you, Yolanda. I am so grateful and excited to have artists and collaborators, Jo Stewart and Jasmine Hearn join us today during their shared residency time hosted by the Brown Arts Initiative at Brown University. Jo Elizabeth Stewart is a poet and theatre maker. She was a recent member of Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble, rehearsing and touring Cellular Songs from 2017 to 2019. Stewart is currently a cross-disciplinary MFA candidate in the Literary Arts Program at Brown University. Welcome Jo. Curator, director, choreographer, organizer, teaching artist, and a 2017 Bessie award-winning performer, Jasmine Hearn is an Urban Bush Women company member and a 2019 Jerome Foundation, Jerome Hill Fellow. Welcome, Jasmine. Jo and Jasmine have distinct, yet intersecting artistic and archival practices that circulate the imaginative task of remembering. "Memory making," as Jo articulates, and "keeping memory," as Jasmine says. The ways in which you two are archiving your own stories calls the collective, or community, into this act of remembering as an honoring of ancestral history and as a futurist endeavor. Thank you both for being with us today to discuss your divergent and intersecting research and practices of archive and memory.

Jasmine Hearn: Thank you.

Jo Stewart: Hey.

Jasmine Hearn: Hey, y'all.

Jo Stewart: Thank you so much, Seta. I really appreciate your introduction and opening. So yes, I am Jo. I'm sitting here with Jasmine at my dining room table on Narragansett and Wampanoag land, very nearby Brown University.

Jasmine Hearn: And I have a chance to be a visitor here, here in Providence. And with this way of being in different places, I would like for -- well I just invite all of us who are tuning in to this moment, this time, and this gathering, to be with where we are, the space that we get to be held by at this moment...to listen to who has been here, and here for me is here, and here for you is here, and for us to listen to where we are, and who has been here before, and who has built the infrastructures, who has cared for the land...and to remember together...and so with that...

Jo Stewart: Yeah. Thank you.

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah. Thank you, Jo.

Jo Stewart: I'll give a little bit more of an introduction of myself. So, yes, I'm an artist. I'm a poet. I'm a theatre maker. I'm working right now at Brown. As I was preparing to give a little introduction, I was thinking about how we're going to talk a bit about fragmentation today and how actually you know some -- so much of me really reaches towards cohesion and like reaches towards sense making. And so I kind of -- I put a little introduction together that's...maybe a little odd but I attempted to kind of detach the things that I normally say about myself and in their order and put them in a new order and see what it would feel like. So I'm gonna read that and it's very short. Okay.

poet / between elderberry and sumac tree / sun worn thin
coyotes hungry / Sycamore canyon, Turnbull canyon / suck clean an avocado seed
carefully / of mixed heritage / green, green, beds of sand
land of the Tongva people / los angeles santa ana santa monica san gabriel
san bernardino
plain valley valley mountain valley bay / my father runs long distances
beyond the ficus / androgynous / far from home.

Seta Morton: Thank you, Jo.

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah. And I will follow. My name is Jasmine Lynne Hearn. Folx call me Jas, Jazzy J. My mother calls me Jasmine Lynne. I am the daughter of Byronné Johnson Hearn and Donald Hearn. I am the granddaughter of Byron Johnson, Charles Hearn, Earnestine Todd, and Claudette Nickens Johnson. And Yolanda, if we could have a yeah -- photo of my grandmother, my maternal grandmother. Yes. I am from and she has been a part of the village that has raised me. Her, my aunt Sonya, and all my other aunties in Houston, Texas, which is stolen land of the

Karankawa people. And thank you for having her in the room. I just wanted her to be with us because she is someone who has helped me find the language of being with memory and what does it mean to be responsible with keeping memory. I am a storyteller. I am an organizer, as Seta said. I'm a dancer. I love to bake. I love to cook and I love to listen. I love to listen. I love to observe. I am a Black, dark-brown-skin person, femme, queer. I am in a key lime room. Jo and I are bringing you colors of beige, black, navy, gray. I am adorned with circles and spirals. I have a shaved head and I have a gap in between my two front teeth. Yeah, that's who I am. And I'm just so grateful to be here, in this conversation, in this continued conversation because I feel as though Seta, Jo, we've been like kind of just talking in all kinds of ways. And it's been a really wonderful experience to organize and reimagine and remember together.

Seta Morton: Thank you both so much for these just such full introductions into who you are and where you are today. Jo, you introduced the idea of fragmentation and I want to get there--I like feel very antsy to get there soon--but I also want to like recognize that you're in this closing time after a shared residency together. And we haven't talked really. We talked like at the beginning, and now you're at the end. So I kind of just want to check in, you know. How has this time--I mean, a shared residency and going somewhere new during this time of pandemic...and just seeing you two in proximity together is bringing me so much joy, and I just want to check in. How has it been, you know, working together in that space been for you?

Jo Stewart: So much has happened.

Jasmine Hearn: Yes. (laughing)

Jo Stewart: So much has happened.

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah.

Jo Stewart: Yeah, it started with this, like, really beautiful trip from Providence to Pittsburgh. My partner and I drove to Pittsburgh to pick up Jas and drove them home with us.

Jasmine Hearn: Yes.

Jo Stewart: And, you know, everyone got tested and, you know, had to kind of do --

Jasmine Hearn: Take the steps.

Jo Stewart: Take the steps.

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah, to be closer.

Jo Stewart: Yeah.

Jasmine Hearn: And with that I feel like we've been closing a lot of distances, if I can add, being in home spaces together, cooking together. Yeah, being a part of Jo's pod is, you know, in itself a whole other kind of intimacy. Being with a lot of beans, we've been soaking a lot of beans. We've been cooking a lot of beans, and then also being in the studio together.

Jo Stewart: Yeah.

Jasmine Hearn: And allowing ourselves to be...be where we are at as individuals. So a lot of this -- a lot of our responsibility is kept. You know, we're running alongside our shared time together and a lot of this time we have been refocusing ourselves on rest. And what does it mean to be patient and to take each of our time, and then also our time as us coming together and beginning, beginning something together?

Jo Stewart: Yeah. I want to do like a macro/micro version of what you just said, this thing about rest. Because, yes, in a macro sense, I think we both arrived tired.

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah, we were exhausted.

Jo Stewart: And we've had to navigate that fatigue like every day. And in a micro sense, I also want to say that, you know, Jas and I worked together a little while ago, at Danspace Project, and other places, and in Pittsburgh. And but we haven't actually spent that much time one on one. And we've spent a lot of time one on one on the phone in recent months. But this is like -- first of all being embodied, being embodied after like such an, you know -- being embodied after sort of also kind of doing -- at least I'll speak for myself -- a lot of shielding for the last few months. I want to speak to this because I have experienced that sometimes when we're like coming together to like try to plan what we're about to do in the studio or we taught like a -- or Jasmine mainly -- but I helped teach a really --

Jasmine Hearn: We co-taught.

Jo Stewart: Really, a wonderful workshop for Erica Hunt, who's a poet working at Brown right now and her students. That was an incredible class but I found that - almost like a stutter step, like Jasmine and I have been like really having to learn each other's rhythms but also just even the way like our --

Jasmine Hearn: arriving together

Jo Stewart: Yes, just like how we even arrive at a decision together has been sort of hilarious at some points. A lot of missing each other and going back and missing each other and going back. And I think in those moments, to bring it back to slowness, I felt like I've had to, like, you know -- I've been in situations, speaking of pods, like where we've sort of been, you know, we've had months together and we've learned each other's little things and I'm really having to like take a step back and not not, you know, run forward at full speed and just, you know, when

we're having like a thing and need to decide what we're going to do next to just let let our let let our miscommunications happen and slow it down and start again, you know.

Jasmine Hearn: In the ways that I appreciate you saying that because I see also, seeing it unfold and the ways that we have allowed ourselves to be in creative space together. And just ways of like, what is our shared language? What is our shared rhythm? What is the tempo that we're in? And also in the document that we were just writing to each other when I remember saying, I get to remember alongside of you. So that doesn't always mean we're gonna be like right next door. But ways of being together and tethered that doesn't constrict what we want as individuals. And that is such a -- it's such a gift and also such a task to be with and to listen, and not only to listen, but to respond instead of just kind of going with the flow, like actually just taking the time to speak up and communicate, and that's just been a world of lessons for me.

Jo Stewart: Mm hmm.

Seta Morton: You know, now we're talking about memory, and like how you remember together. I love how you just put that as like actually inviting someone into this thing of remembering. And in you know in our conversations, you were -- someone was describing memory and archive as twins. And I'm so curious, I've been thinking about this a lot alongside your work together and separately, but you know, what are those relationships? Or like, can memory actually be like, an alternative or resistance to sort of these more rote ways of thinking about archives? Or, you know, dance notation, or these -- you know?

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah, but yeah, go ahead.

Jo Stewart: Well, thank you Seta. Yeah, um, it makes me think of what we were just talking about over (pause) whatever, eggs.

Jasmine Hearn: Eggs on tortillas that Jo made. I was like, wow. I made a side of greens, just so we all know.

Jo Stewart: Really good...Um, yes, I was just wondering about this And when you brought up the twins again, it's making me think about -- I want to ask you to read what you read. And then maybe we could talk a little bit about when...Seta says memory, my association is with the body. And when I think a out archive, my association is more with language, I think. That's mine particularly. I'm just curious if we could maybe like undo some of that, like talk about...

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah. Let it unfurl. Yeah, I would love to share something that -- Jo and I had a moment to write together. Yeah. Jessie Young helped me with the term of parallel play, and I am sure that a lot of folx have heard it in so many different kinds of contexts. But that's what I learned from another artist that I was working with a couple years back. And I really appreciated it because they reminded me of like being a child and like wanting to be around folx, but not

really needing to like immediately [be] doing the same thing as someone else. So anyway, I was sketching and Jo was writing and then I started to write. So this is kind of something that came: Steps, or man made caves, or under stairs, breaks, opening, granules, shatters, joints, frag, coming from a part, junction, glint, or a parting for the color to come in, cracks that spread out under opportunity, under door, realized instabilities. Yeah, we were -- we said fragmentation.

Jo Stewart: Yeah, I mean, I was -- okay the words I just wrote down was "cracks that spread out" and you also said joints and instabilities, so I keep wanting to like -- I think I want to ask is this -- Is any of that language -- like stored in the body? And can you talk about that?

Jasmine Hearn: Definitely.

Jo Stewart: I'm curious.

Jasmine Hearn: Immediately what comes to mind first are my knees. I've always had some issues with my knees. And I witnessed a lot of the femme folk in my family be with their knees in a really painful way. And so, you know, I do some other kinds of practices and they say, "You can mess with the gods, but you can't mess with your knees." And I'm like, oh, you right. And being with that sense of instability and with that the ways that my body has -- I believe my body holds brilliance and genius. That's something I learned from my mother and also something reassured to me by my time with Urban Bush Women. But listening to that and just really seeing my body shape-shift itself, so that I can do some amazing, incredible things with my body. I'm like, wow, cool. And also understanding what's sustainable and what's not. And so, yeah, ways of being with my knees and a lot of folx connect knees to sometimes with the lungs, lungs with sorrow and grief, stored sorrow, unexpressed sadness, and then also the kidneys. There was something about that that came from some time that I was learning some somatic practices of ways of knees connecting with filtering, filtering out toxins. So that's kind of where it comes first and then I'm also just thinking about the other places where our bones meet. Those are usually -- the word vulnerability comes up. Ways to be exposed, some folx would say, and then I'm just saying that some folx would say. And then if I'm being really non linear, I'm also thinking about ways that folx have used my image or my body without my permission, or without paying me enough, or whatever compensation, respect, and then they say it's for exposure, and then I ask, Do I want to be exposed? So that's what came up for me in that.

Jo Stewart: Cool.

Jasmine Hearn: I want to hear.

Seta Morton: Sorry. Oh sorry, go ahead.

Jasmine Hearn: I kind of just also want to hear what you wrote or any sort of reflection, as you've been talking about being with words, being with text, as you were talking with me about being with my body.

Jo Stewart: Yeah, yeah. Um, okay, so I feel even though I am a performer, and a mover, and a theatre maker, and this relationship. I am those things. I am all those things, but I feel really called to almost be like a note taker to some degree, or to language -- to language -- to language some of what you're describing um so -- which you're also languaging incredibly

Jasmine Hearn: I think we do --

Together: We do both.

Jasmine Hearn: We do both. We do all actually.

Jo Stewart: Yeah. But I guess I just -- because you were asking me to contribute to your archive in a particular way. That's what I mean. Yeah. I mean, like, um --

Jasmine Hearn: Can I provide some context too about, really shortly quickly. I'm so grateful that Jo approached me about being here with you at Brown and right after that was so excited about like being with Jo in physical space and doing something that when I was asked to do a solo, which we'll get to shortly, I approached Jo. I approached Jo to be a witness, to be someone who archives the work, the piece, the solo, however you wanted to do that. I always talk about following my pleasure. And I believe I use some of that language with you as well. But I just wanted to invite that context in with what you were gonna say.

Jo Stewart: Yes, let me -- so let me restate. I think that in terms of parallel play, I am like paralleling with you and I think the part of myself that is stepping forward is my writer self. And so, anyways, all of that to say that, I want to read a quote I think that I have in my journal to maybe help me thread. But this is Renee Gladman, who actually is a poet and fiction writer, mainly, and who taught at Brown actually for a while. But I have a quote from her that says "Imagine how fiction might learn from ambiguities, silences, voids or labyrinths that lie within its own structure. How through derailments within story or at points of interruption (grammar breaking) some new or other space might open up?" So I think I think for me as like both someone who's thinking about poetry and someone who's in my -- using and in my body to perform, when I'm watching Jas and when I have watched Jas, for *Pleasure Memory* especially, it's less so in this in this collaboration. I think I want to -- I'm like trying to get into these like cracks, vulnerabilities instabilities that are expressing themselves in the body. And it's not that I'm attempting to create some sort of one to one equivalent in text. I don't think I'm that -- as Jasmine -- I don't think I'm that interested actually in it being a literal translation in that way. But I think I'm trying to find out how to do derail my own language. I'm just going to allow myself to also be like, kind of all over the place, but I want to bring in one more person because this is going to be really helpful, I think for me, M. NourbeSe Philip, who wrote "Zong!" and the "Notanda" for that book, she says, "I deeply distrust this tool I work with, language... I distrust its order, which hides disorder, its logic hiding the illogic and its rationality, which is simultaneously irrational." I think it's this kind of work and that kind of work of illuminating the irrationality of language that's kind of happening alongside the body and its movements and its disruptions. And I think to speak about the archive and it being a twin of memory, I guess I'm just wondering

what kind of archives -- I think I'm thinking about out a possible archive, emergent archive. It's more of a wondering. I guess I don't have a way to like, you know, I'm not making any sort of like grand statement about it. But I think that I feel this possibility in the archive, in a disrupted irrational archive, and I think that that archive could be twin for memory.

Seta Morton: Yeah.

Jo Stewart: That was hard. (laughing)

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah, I mean also what you were doing with your body in that, you know, I just feel like, yeah. You were gonna --

Seta Morton: No, no, I'm just I'm so excited by what both of you are saying and I think what gets lost a lot in the archives, or like this idea of archiving any materials is like -- what you're bringing forward, which is memory. And what's always fascinated me, in almost a cynical way, but what's always fascinated me about archiving dance is this, like, this idea of recording ephemerality, or like, you know, recording an ephemeral event, as it was, and as it truly was...it's impossible and so is the task of memory. It's an impossible task. It just fails us. That's what it does. It's how it works. And what really intrigues me about both of your work and specifically you know, we are going to watch some of *Pleasure Memory*, which was Jasmine's performance, and the poetic performance score that Jo wrote in response, which is "The Sky was Red." What really fascinates me about "The Sky was Red" is that, and with both of what -- all the poetry that's already been kind of put out, all this language that we're all sort of metabolizing right now that you both just offered, is that you're, you know, you're also speaking to how memory truly functions, right? It's scattered, it's fragmented, it's broken, it's interpreted. And that interpretation also changes over time, but also opens up these like, potentials or these possibilities, or like these "speculative fictions." And so that's like, I just am so excited by everything you're saying. I just wanted to offer that.

Jasmine Hearn: No, I hear that and also with ways of being with, being with -- and being with time. And I'll -- and I think what's coming to me is that specifically for *Pleasure Memory*, which was a part of WPADC (Washington Project for the Arts), a series curated by Tsedaye Makonnen, *Black Women as/and the Living Archive*. And within that, you know, I have a relationship with this series, also because Alisha B Wormsley's films are a part of it, specifically *Children on NAN*. And within her film, I am time. And so being with time, as a body, as a breathing body, a breathing body that moves, and that definitely unfurls itself even more within *Pleasure Memory*. And being with time and portals and doorways, and thinking about the portals and doorways as the joints, as these moments of fracture, as these moments of not being stable. And what happens in those -- what happens on that journey in the portal, or the transition, or the change? Yeah, so that's something that I'm with right now.

Seta Morton: Should we go to *Pleasure Memory*?

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah. I was like should we watch it?

[*Pleasure Memory* video clip 1 plays]

[Jasmine Hearn's audio description: I am dancing in a white room, with a wall to my left and blinds closed to my right. I am wearing a purple garment with pink paint splattered on the front. There is a red glow cast by a light across the room.]

[Music: a looped recorded and produced track of Jasmine's voice. Sounds like a slow and soft siren]

[Music and video clip ends]

Jo Stewart: Yes. How does it feel to watch that again?

Jasmine Hearn: It's you know, it's a way of being with time.

Jo Stewart: Yeah. Yeah. I just -- before I read from "The Sky was Red" and then maybe we can talk--

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah.

Jo Stewart: I just want to say that I've, you know, I've watched this piece many, many, many times, and while I was watching it I was immersed in Jasmine's archive. And I also nonlinearly want to note that when I saw you drawing today, and the colors you picked out, I was like, I know -- you, you have, you have particular color combinations, because I remember from Jasmine's archive, there was a lot of drawing in it. There was many photographs that were like organized and you could maybe -- you can talk about that later. I won't name that for you. But I just want to say that this piece, this section that we just saw was really really central for me both because of and I think because of that kind of -- I want to call it -- I'm going to use my own language here and call it a kind of creep towards the camera that then has this big -- that has just like a break that even still makes me feel like kind of like a nut cracking open something hard and I want to -- you know, made from Earth and so I'm really happy that we saw that particular section and there's a lot to say about it. And so I'm just gonna read -- I have it here on my screen too. I'd love to see it on the shared screen. Yes, thank you. I'm just gonna read this bit here that starts with "DANCER or CARDINAL." "DANCER or CARDINAL" is the character that -- how I named Jasmine in this piece. And "COIL" is technically another character in this piece, but this is their only speaking. This is their only speech, their only voicing, here, that I'm going to read shortly. And we can talk about what the "COIL" is later. Okay.

"DANCER or CARDINAL is still, is quiet. They are crouched, listening to the floorboards. Eyes narrow apprehensively as seams of red glow between the blinds. Something grips / raises their long neck, head, spine / wings hook over their abdomen. The red, its brilliance,

intensifies / they stand astride the color / flanks them on
either side / Red / it hisses, sighs / feathers bristle & lie,
bristle & lie / hot / whereas a cold night / douses
the backs of those seated in the audience

DANCER or CARDINAL release their wings, the weight
of their head, the crook of their knees. They fall, quietly &
obediently, into a --

COIL: heat

collapse

key

collapse

reach

collapse

soar

collapse

knead

collapse

seek

collapse

scream

collapse

feast

collapse

keen,

collapse

keep

collapse

weak

collapse

weak

collapse

burn

collapse

sing

collapse

bend

collapse"

(and then we'll go to the next page.)

"burst

collapse

bow

collapse

reap
collapse
dream"

Thank you, Yolanda.

Jasmine Hearn: Thank you.

Seta Morton: Wow.

Jasmine Hearn: And it's so interesting, not interesting, there's such an alignment, and also it's from -- I'm not gonna like -- I want to not disregard the rigor and the labor that has happened with seeping -- with you seeping into -- yeah, the photos that I put together. I really did take a lot of photos. I travel a lot. I roam, right now as responsibly as I can and I understand that a way for me to be with where I've been is to take pictures, you know, on my phone. And I had a chance -- and then when I have a chance to sit and go through them, I'm like oh, this has been here? And sometimes it's me taking pictures or pictures when I'm home in Texas. But referencing what Jo, you were talking about the ways that I was organizing those photos. The photos were coming from language that I received from Alisha B Wormsley when she was talking about people who mother, people who care and tend, and some folx. You know, I'm not a mother, not at all. But ways of being with tending and care and a sense of responsibility for others, sometimes roles that I feel and I believe that Black femmes have been given, sometimes thrown into situations without consent, on caring, on caring for folx and doing that. So I want to say that. So the folders are titled like "Mothering." There's another one called "The Paternal." There was another one called "Sistering," and some other, in some other language. And it was just different ways of being with also images of myself, selfies, what that whole moment of seeing self and being with reflection and mirrors. Something that we were talking about earlier today. That's something that I will offer as ways of organizing and being with the abundance. I remember mentioning that in the question and answer after that performance, being with the abundance that surrounds me, because, you know, it was such a strict time of being like, I don't have any, I don't have anything. But literally the night before I was like I don't -- I don't understand what's going to happen because I don't -- I don't I'm (sounds of discomfort) in this hole taking myself apart and then realizing that it's still going to be connected, no matter how far away I distance myself from my body, or my responsibility, or my fear. So that's something that's coming up for me.

Seta Morton: And Jasmine, these folders and all these photos that you're speaking to, this is your personal archive, right?

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah, on Google. Yeah. My personal archive. Yeah, that I just shared so willingly.

Jo Stewart: Very vulnerable thing to do.

Seta Morton: You invited Jo into and that as part of the process of writing.

Jo Stewart: Which is incredible because, you know, I'm saying we're just getting to know each other, you know, I had a very intimate access, you know, to this archive really early on in our relationship. And there was this one folder and to just to talk about "Pleasure Memory," and to continue talking about "Pleasure Memory," there was one folder that -- was it called "Back Bends?"

Jasmine Hearn: Yep, "Back Bends."

Jo Stewart: So there was a folder called "Back Bends" and there also were drawings and some language about tail. I think that how I describe the CARDINALI in this piece is -- oh no how to describe the COIL is a dance between head and tail. And I think, I think I got that language from your journal.

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah, I mean, it's something that you know -- I love being with my spine, my spine as a river, being with backbends, and Alisha's film as when being named time. I traveled time through backbends. And that's something that I deeply connect with since I was 17, understanding that, like, I could go that far back. What? And being with that wonder, being without wonder, and being with the spine. And I feel like I was told so much while I was being "trained," putting that in quotations, "Your head and your tail. Your head and your tail." And honestly, I shared this with some folx earlier this week, I'm realizing that I haven't had sensation in my tail in a very long time. And so ways that like I've been with and connected with different folx who work with pelvic, pelvis, with tail, with so much energy around that part of the body now, even more so over specifically over the past two years of my career. And yeah, how that is servicing in the language that I get a chance to be with. I'll also just say that with performance, with practice, I understand and I'll continue to say this, I understand that I'm a vessel for Spirit to come through. And so being with all, with all of these different stories, to be with all of these different stories, I'm so grateful to have had you as a witness, as an anchor, specifically for this piece as it continues to like unfold before, like my eyes.

Jo Stewart: Yeah. Yeah, I'm really -- I'm struck by some of the language you're using around head and tail and like you called it a river just now. And I think, you know, I didn't have that particular language when I was working. And so it's interesting now to feel that there's, it's not that it's like there's frict-- it's not that... there's like tension, maybe there it is that there's some tension between, like, my orientation around back bends or that particular -- you weren't, I don't even think you didn't do a back bend in this piece. It's just that I like, I felt that what -- Did you?

Jasmine Hearn: I did, I did kind of.

Jo Stewart: (Sighs) You did.

Jasmine Hearn: It lives in there, but it's nothing that I like -- it's not something that I stay in for a long time, like I have done.

Jo Stewart: You did. You did. Okay, so maybe I did catch that I can't remember now, but I feel like when I saw the red in that piece you like you -- right before you kind of creep towards the camera you like kind of look out and the red streams in and at that moment, I felt like it seemed to me that there is just this heat coming from outside. And when you drop into your circles, you know, which is your -- which is from my perspective feels like a really instrumental part of your practice is your circles, I felt like the heat of your back to me. It feels like heat of your back bend felt like it was kind of being recalled in those circles. And it felt like it was you were generating. It feels like -- it felt to me like you were out there in the woods getting your kindling to light on fire. Like I felt like, you were like, oh, you're coming out with heat? I'm gonna come at you with heat! And like you were generating energy. And when you talk about the vessel, this is me just going off about my own observations. Seems like probably completely -- you know? I don't know, but you talk about being a vessel and for me when I'm watching pleasure memory I was -- I have a -- when I see the heat generating and I see the kindling, and I see that fire lighting, I'm like, all right, people are coming in! And then and then everything turns red, and then the folk show up, in image. And I mean, they're there anyways. They're there anyways. Let me just say that too. They were there. And I feel like that's, that's true. And that is felt. But then they get sort of like, named in a different way. So anyway, this is me trying to say that that feels like a like, what is the word for this? It's just like this sharp point in the piece where you were there's a switch in orientation afterwards? Oh, I don't know. Do you feel that?

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah. I mean, okay. I think this might be a really great time to --

Jo Stewart: Go to the next piece?

Jasmine Hearn: Because you just brought in a next moment that I think we'll see.

Jo Stewart: Yes, that's true. Thank you. Okay, so we're gonna -- I'm going to read from a different part in the score a few pages later. Thank you, Yolanda. And just to give a tiny bit of context, there is a "Visitor" who's described as only as being unexpected, and they're here. That's all I think I need to say, okay. "VISITOR:" -- this is midway in the conversation that they're having with the "DANCER CARDINAL."

"VISITOR: Why u need the ancient?

DANCER or CARDINAL: Who else gunna kno what all this fire for? No chile, that I sure. Quick, get-the board is burnin I not leavin til' I kno.

VISITOR: I said, I red. The fire burn me so.

DANCER or CARDINAL: Last time I hold u, u was pink as any rose--u smell like tea & dresses.

VISITOR: I come without a message. I come as sign--thrumming red thru ur window. U, who kno how to make the red glow when the rain come, when the wind cut when the cold make color un-certain. I were a rose once. I kno how to make blood come with a thorn. So do u.

DANCER or CARDINAL: What ancients send u?

VISITOR: I say I send myself.

DANCER or CARDINAL: Where from?

VISITOR: U kno the picture, 2 girls knees knobbin in white--from there I sidewalk to this light that u got burnin in them floorboard."

This whole time I was like trying to talk to you. This is like--felt like I was like--

Jasmine Hearn: I felt you, the whole back body.

Jo Stewart: I also want to name really fast actually before we keep going that this piece was selected by Khadijah Queen for the Sublingua Prize in Inverted Syntax. And that is going to be published in November. We're really excited.

Jasmine Hearn: Very excited. I believe that -- Can we watch? Can we view? Thank you, Yolanda, for having that up.

[*Pleasure Memory* video clip 2 plays]

[Music begins]

[Jasmine Hearn's audio descriptions: The room is red, orage, yellow, gold, pink, and red. Kadie Henderson's voice surrounds me as I continue to move. A picture of black eyed peas appears on the wall behind me, with the hands of my great grandmother, Orange Mae. The next photo is of Claudette Nickens Johnson and Byron Johnson.]

Jasmine Hearn: For *Pleasure Memory*, I am one to want different, so many different things around me that I understand will connect eventually, though, I don't ever really prescribe the connection sometimes until I'm performing. I understand performance to be a part of my practice. For this performance, for the solo, I decided to put together a slideshow. I remember learning how to make slideshows when I was in sixth grade with Ms. what's-her-name -- uh ooh, sorry. Saint Ann's Catholic School, though. And I was like, right, slideshows, and ways of being with photos and this editing program on an iPad, and collage-making, something I used to do from elementary school with like old magazines and shoe boxes, to something that like, allowed itself to be in this iteration with photos from home. Whether that was soaking beans, soaking peas, with the hand gestures of the matriarchs of my family, and also just like my body in different places on this planet. And I had a chance to just put something together and allow for it to run, allow for it to run. That week before I believe I was in a shared practice with Kadie Henderson where we were singing songs with one another over the phone. And so I created a loop from her voice. The excerpt that we shared earlier is my voice and the sound and editing I

did in relationship to the choreography, performance, and collage work and letting it all kind of stew. I'm learning how to make gumbo kind of right now. You got to start off with a really solid roux and then other things come into play. But also learning from Jo this week about these different recipes that Jo's put together. That lentil soup you do, delicate with such like depth of flavor. So it's like being with the variants of flavors, with each like simmering or brewing pot. I think sometimes because anyway, I can go longer into that, but I won't, but yeah, ways of cooking, resembling ways of putting together performance.

Seta Morton: Yeah, you've also, Jasmine and you know, in a conversation we had, a few months ago, we were talking about this, this idea of bringing all these ingredients together and this idea of keeping memory as a preserve. So like, yeah, there's this cooking process, right? But then you put it into these containers, and then like, what is that? What is that jarring process? You can contain and store it for later. And something I offered then that I'm still kind of chewing on, is that, you know, these are-- to me these are very alive archives that you both are creating. And so it's like, instead of you know, it's a gumbo, it's a preserve, it's a jam, maybe but it feels also like a process of fermentation. Right, you know, it's that you're bringing all these ingredients together, and you're inviting all these different organisms like these living organisms into the work to not only like be in proximity, or to take on something from the other, but actually digest one thing and produce something else, right. And in that production, there is something different that happens. It's like something's really like activated. Again this possibility is a word that keeps coming up for me. And also an archive of ephemeral moments or this idea of keeping the essential ephemeral moment in question, there has to be an acknowledgment of what dies? What's lost? And I feel like you both are doing that but in that sort of decay or in what kind of gets left behind in the past, there's this production of new material. And, you know, we're coming off of this Harvest Moon that happened a couple weeks ago, and this harvest time. And so I really see you both as doing this cooking and getting into this jarring time. And I wanted to offer one other thing. I was in a conversation with a good friend of mine yesterday, Chanelle Adams, and she's a historian, and a researcher, and a healer. And her research has really been in medicinal plants from Madagascar, and she's worked in sort of the colonial archives of these plants. I was talking to her, you know, about our conversations and these ideas, and she was talking about how, in these archives of this plant material, it's like, the most important thing for the archivist is to keep them like essential and contained and not let any moisture in, not let any air in because once mold starts producing, it's just unruly. And I think some beautiful things that she was offering is -- you know -- why does the process doesn't just stop happening once you contain or freeze it? There's a lot happening inside of those capsules. There's a lot still going on. There's still a lot growing. And then I was reading, you know, an essay she wrote, which is "The Archives Need to Breathe," and she also poses, these are the things that happen "when nature protests being made into property." And I really felt that akin to the work that you're doing.

Jo Stewart: A lot of things are like (sounds of excitement).

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah. (laughing)

Jo Stewart: Yeah. Can I name a few? Maybe we could both name a few. And then see what happens from there? Whoa, okay. What you just said about property. Yes. And okay, so that makes me think about authorship.

Jasmine Hearn: Great.

Jo Stewart: And also what you said about canning and, you know, the Harvest Moon and preparing, I think -- oh, so we get to open that. Here we are at the BAI, part of us being like--

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah.

Jo Stewart: But also, who else? You know, when you're canning and you know, you're not necessarily -- like maybe you're gonna drop it on your neighbor's porch, you know, doorsteps or whatever, like, Who else are we canning for? Comes up for me. You go.

Jasmine Hearn: So I'm going to riff a little bit. Property, that Seta brought in, and then Jo, you restating that. And then just some past experiences that I've been having and conversations that I've been having about, like, you know, nobody can really own an idea. And then at the same time, like along that, like, Oh, yeah, we can share. What happens specifically within the United States of America and the erasure of the labor of Black femme folk, Black queer folk, Black women, Black people, immediately, just like, not even allowing for there to be credit or acknowledgement. And for the conversation to go back on who owns it. So there's something there that I'm tasting. And then something else I was coming, like I -- specifically with the terminology "keeping," there is a performance that I did, and Yolanda, if you could bring up the *MEMORY KEEP(H)ER* photo, if possible. *MEMORY KEEP(H)ER* Claudette, or "Claudette Johnson leaving St. Monica's," either one. And I'll just speak more to that moment, when I made this live performance with my grandmother--yes--Claudette Nickens Johnson and us in conversation about her memories, what she wanted to give me to keep as she is beginning to lose her ability to remember. And being with that information and not only at her words, but also the tone, the timbre, and what was living in between those words, the stories that she wasn't telling me, but that she was sharing with me nonetheless. And the ways that the actual title of the piece *MEMORY KEEP(H)ER* has become so integral to the body of the work I get to be with, or the body of the work that I make or have made. And so yeah, this piece that ended up becoming a short film series, but one of the iterations was performed at St. Monica's Catholic Church, where I was raised, in front of folx who raised me, honoring her. Not anybody else. Her. On this shared -- in the fellowship hall where we all had coffee, and biscuits, and grits with a side of jelly. And that this space, this boundary that we always met in on Sundays, and then that specific event, we were meeting to honor my grandmother and this way of her memories living in movement and dance, and prose, and also just in celebration. And I think that definitely has influenced the ways that I've asked my work, or the work that I make with others to be archived, not just through like the video or the photo, which is so amazing and helpful. But also being really intentional about who's catching and capturing those images from Kayla Farish being really close in proximity during the performance of "shook" at Danspace Project, taking photos

of the cast and performance to asking Jo to write about *Pleasure Memory*, or the view of *Pleasure Memory* and memory that suits you. That suits -- that follows your pleasure, to the ways that I've asked Myssi Robinson on ways of illustrating echo, that Myssi encountered while watching a practice or rehearsal. So different just tongues, different tongues in the room to remember what cannot be remembered all by myself or all alone.

Jo Stewart: Can I add something quickly? Okay, one thing came up and it kind of, well it came up for me, in what you were saying and that kind of connects back to what you were talking about with the canning. So I'm hearing you talk about Claudette and keeping memory with, alongside -- with? for? How would you name that?

Jasmine Hearn: With, for, and alongside. I feel like it could go...

Jo Stewart: Great, yeah, all of them! So with, for, and alongside Claudette and okay, so I'm thinking about that kind of transmission. And again, I'm thinking about that part that I just read from "The Sky was Red" with the "VISITOR." And I'm thinking about -- I'm wondering what kind of transmission is that? Because it's the one, it's one -- it's kind of the one part of that whole score that I think kind of takes, I felt maybe that I took the biggest leap in that moment, because I didn't literally hear that and what happened onstage that day, so, okay, so I'm trying to draw together -- I'm trying to draw together what the keeping of memory and maybe that invention that we were talking about earlier on. And I think in regards to my practice, I think I don't have very much family memory. I don't have that. I don't have much access to that kind of transmission. So I'm wondering about how I -- to me, I feel like Ah, so I'm seeing why maybe my ear feels attuned, is like a tuning towards other kinds of signals, messaging, and a different kind of listening or not different, but a kind of listening in which I have the impulse to then put down something that I think has happened, like it's invented, but it's -- but maybe it's not. I don't know quite exactly how to say that. Like that part with the "VISITOR," I don't know how you feel about that, or how you felt about it reading it for the first time, but in a way, it both feels like it's a stretch, but maybe, but maybe--I remember while I was writing it I returned to your journals, and I copied words that really encouraged me to continue that conversation with the "VISITOR" because all of a sudden, some other stuff was kind of like lifting out of Jasmine's journal, and I felt like, okay, I can't hear I can't, I can only hear this by doing it. I'm not going to find this conversation in its entirety in the journal. But if I move, keep moving through this, listening, for sound, for rhythm, whatever it is, really, that I'm listening for, and then putting down the conversation. So I want to say that about like, can, you know, can I invent memory? I say yes. But also, I want to say, then what happens when we--because it I think, actually, it's really important that both things are happening. Yeah, not both together, but also like, I'm learning from you and I think that -- I think that both things need to be happening in my own practice. But so okay, both things are happening and we put them in the jar.

Jasmine Hearn: Yeah.

Jo Stewart: And what does that do?

Jasmine Hearn: I mean that's what we're going to find out.

Seta Morton: Yeah.

Jasmine Hearn: That's what -- that's exactly what we're gonna find out. Yeah, I can only imagine. And then some folx may say, watch, I say this in a lot of different spaces, but in the movie *Fast Color* when Lila was like, "If you can't--" she's like "If you can't remember, just imagine." And so then I would just, like change them all the time. If you can't imagine, just remember. So being with both ways of imagination and memory.

Jo Stewart: Nice. I like that.

Jasmine Hearn: I mean, yeah.

Seta Morton: Thank you. Well, I hope also that this conversation, you know, we're having this conversation today. It's going to come out in like two weeks to share with people and sort of, you know, and then I hope once it's shared, and then it'll be archived on the Danspace Journal. But I hope it can also, you know, be helpful for your archives as well. And I think it's really special that we're also kind of jarring and containing this moment right now, or maybe sealing it up. And then we're going to go into a process of continuing to talk and like, what kind a label do we want to slap on it? What do we want to name it, you know? And where do we want to put it? And how do we want to hold it? Yeah. And I just want to thank both of you so much for inviting me into this conversation with the two of you. It's just been such a joy.

Jasmine Hearn: Thank you so much for all the ways. Yeah. All the ways that you've been like organizing, and Yolanda as well, like, yeah. You know, as folx will say, as as my mom would say, it takes a village to raise a child. And I think we're all you know, still, like, we're still like ascending as we still descend. So it takes all of us. And I'm just really grateful to have had this moment to just be in this kind of conversation. I think a lot of things just surfaced that I had no idea were right there under the soil. So yeah, in two weeks, where is this gonna land? Yeah, I'm curious.

Jo Stewart: Yeah. I echo, I echo Jasmine's thanks. And I want to say, Seta, that I really appreciate your shepherding us through this process, and I have -- I haven't been able to be in deep relationship with Danspace Project and so I'm really appreciating this little doorway that we've found together. And Yolanda, thank you, yeah for orchestrating, yeah, I just appreciate and Jasmine, I appreciate you.

Jasmine Hearn: Oh my gosh. I've got a whole list of thank you's for you. And I'm grateful for this moment. Yeah.

Jo Stewart: Yeah. Thank you.

Seta Morton: Yeah, more soon.

Jo Stewart: All right. Bye.

[Outro]

Seta Morton: Thank you for joining us for this Conversation Without Walls. The Conversations Without Walls 2020 digital series will be broadcasted on YouTube Live for one time only viewing parties. Don't worry if you don't catch us there, the conversations are all pre-recorded and will be posted ultimately on the Danspace Project website on our online Journal in Issue 11: *trembling archive*. Our Journal issues accumulate over time with new material added regularly. Apart from this series, you will find video, audio, and written work by Danspace Project artists, curators, and writers. Please also check out Issues 1 through 10 to find work that centers the Danspace Project past Platforms, seasons, experiments. The online Journal is really a place to get more insight into some of the internal conversations, research, and work that goes behind our more mainstage public facing programs. So check out the online Journal, and we look forward to having you at the next Conversation Without Walls.