CASTLES II
A guide & reflection

Premiered for 20% Theatre Company's Q-Stage New Works 2020-2021
Curated and stewarded by Marcela Michelle
Devising ensemble: Lu Chen, Chava Kokhleffel, Ondine, Kat Purcell
Written & Directed by Kat Purcell

List of Vignettes for Performance (in no particular order):
  How Many Hands
  Measure Parts of Yourself to Better Optimize Yourself
  Create Your Own Legal State of Exception
  Risk Your Singular Reading of Life
  Leap Outside and Dance Above It
  Become Immeasurable In Order to Escape
  Punch a Hole in the Orderly Progression of a Disaster
  Turn Everything Around You Into a Life Preserver
  Build a Barricade That Both Protects & Connects
  The Body Does Not Have Boundaries That Cannot Be Broken
  Shout an Answer (#1-5)

Contents of this Packet:
  Dear Reader
  Acknowledgements
  Time Lapse
  Barricades are Beautiful
  The De-Arrest Song
  Further Reading
Dear Reader,

Let’s dive right in.

I apply an abolitionist attitude towards my dealings with and feelings about the so-called “united states”. I reek of poverty, and I believe that the united states should be abolished. I couldn’t quite get it down on paper (all the passions & capitulations). I felt overwhelmed. Everyone I spoke to about it also felt overwhelmed. So I made a series of vignettes. Do you know what I’m talking about? How sometimes, a few images laid together can reveal more than the flight of thousands of anxious word-birds.. ? Anyway, here I am, angry and in love with all of you. Then I got inspired by the idea that I could collect the most outrageous “calls to action” against the state (whether those are abolitionist, Land Back, communist, anti-war, tax refusal, labor strikes, or some mix of these) and transpose them, in a rehearsal studio, to build visions of what the future of these kinds of actions could look like. So my work evolved to not only build and rehearse for an art showing, but a vision of how to take action against the state and for ourselves.

Image Description: a large hand-knotted net built by the artist, about thirty feet in length, stretches across the empty stage at the Phoenix Theatre in uptown, Minneapolis. Gold rings dangle from the lower edge, to weight it down. The stage lights are turned on, and speckle the net with yellow and purple light. Lights by Marcela Michelle

This became a series of directives, which I wrote down and then attempted to follow. For example, the vignette titled “Risk Your Singular Reading of Life”, came from an excerpt of NOW by the Invisible Committee:

“Legibility afforded by institutions saves us from having to ever affirm anything, from risking our singular reading of life. The state is the remedy against the people, none of whom can be trusted.”
I do not read this as theoretical. I read this risk as an act, and therefor something that could be transposed for the stage.

There are two things to note about the performance of CASTLES II vignettes for 20% Theatre’s Q-Stage:

1. The vignettes are in a random order
2. The vignettes are mostly spontaneous and unrehearsed (even the pre-recorded ones)
In this moment, a moment (among moments) when global networks of right wing, neoliberal, & neo-conservative powers are calling for violent response to the state practically every day, and simultaneously they are the state, and simultaneously they are daring people to resist capitalism & white supremacy & so-called patriotism (so they can call the people under their thumbs violent). At a time when human-life-supporting ecosystems & infrastructures are crumbling around us (can you believe those protestors? They might block an ambulance!) As someone who has the privilege of the “option” to play the game and claw my way into the middle class, as white queerness becomes more acceptable to the state.. the motivation is that it is imperative for me (us all) to move towards an understanding of what we mean by the state, resistance to the state, and all the ways the state is inside of our bodies and our lives -- even if the work of understanding is meandering. So, there is that.

And I hear these questions a lot - like, do we take over the existing systems? Is that even possible? Is it even possible to leave them if we wanted to? Are we trapped? Does it make sense to take over the CASTLE? Or to exit it altogether (into nature or the unknown or the past or... most settlers on Turtle Island have no idea at all!) And what would that process look like? And what would be all the esoteric and / or metaphysical things that we forget about, that go into that work? These are not new questions for me, but the repetition, and the assumption that desire for liberation is paradoxical (and anti-social), really catapulted me into this inquiry. I entered into the CASTLES inquiry at Pangea World Theater in 2019, with guidance and collaboration from Dipankar Mukherjee, Marcela Michelle, and Taja Will, and created a few short pieces, but these pieces were more exposition and satire than they were the experiments I thought I would engage in.

Image Description: a barricade built by the artist in 2019 as part of their residency with Pangea World Theater. The barricade spans half the space of the Pangea’s rehearsal & showcase studio. The barricade is made of furniture found around Pangea’s studio and attached office, and is held in place by an elaborate arrangement of twine. My feelings for this installation are perhaps why I love the image of the Old Hyderabad barricade I stumbled across in 2020.

Of course the question arises, how do you follow your own directives? “Drink more water! Exercise more!” ..go the internal castigations… Doesn't work so well, does it?
And so, I knew I needed to show vulnerability, too, to the process and the outcomes. That, rather than write instructions about barricades and de-arrests, I needed to write (draw, move, vocalize, cook, eat) my feelings about barricades and de-arrests. Not because I did not understand my feelings before, but before I had not allowed them centrality. Ever. So you will see much of that, too.

And, finally, I knew that I could not perform any of these investigations alone, because I was talking about social movements. And I was favoring non-homogenous social movements, out of familiarity, since my experience as a street activist lies in those events.

(Let us here think on the collaborators, past and present, who have been exposed to our ravings and half-baked ideas, and nevertheless joined us in the work of crafting some coherence from the mystery. Let us be grateful. Let us hope that we can reciprocate. Please see the venmo handle in the show program for Q-Stage, to tip the ensemble.)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:
20% Theatre Company for the Q-Stage 2020-2021 residency and fellowship to develop CASTLES II, the Q-Stage cohort Nakita Kirchner, Commarrah Jewelia Yochanan, & Yoni Tamang for participating in the cultivation of each other’s work, Pangea World Theater for 2019 residency to create CASTLES, Center for Performing Arts for 2018 residency to develop fiber arts installations with Eleanor Savage in role of mentorship, Suzanne Victoria Cross who stage managed both CASTLES and CASTLES II, Johanna Keller Flores who assistant stage managed CASTLES II, Marcela Michelle who designed and curated Q-Stage this year and also coached for & performed in CASTLES in 2019, Taja Will who coached choreography and for rehearsal mentorship for CASTLES in 2019,
Claire Avitabile Executive Director 20% Theatre Company who along with Marcela paid great attention and respect to all of my wild ideas, Gisell Calderón who shot pre-recorded vignettes and Sarah Abdel-Jelil who assisted on set, Nina Medvedeva who composed the melody for my de-arrest song, Crystal Price who arranged that I could use a studio at the Mia Museum last autumn to build my giant hand-knotted net, the TRCSTR program which supported the project of building the net, Commarrah Jewlia Yochanan for blessing the net with its first artistic / metaphysical journey.

**TIME LAPSE:**

![YouTube Time Lapse Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1U0uYULYQQQ)

*Image Description: a screenshot of a youtube video. This youtube video shows a time lapse of the approximately eighty hours of weaving and knotting the 30 foot net. To view the full time lapse, go to https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1U0uYULYQQQ*

**BARRICADES ARE BEAUTIFUL:**

As I write this, the government center in downtown Minneapolis is barricaded with fencing and razor wire. It is patrolled by national guard. Helicopters chop the air over our heads. The city is holding its breath as the trial begins for Derek Chauvin, the white cop who murdered George Floyd last year. We are holding our breath for the charges, the verdict, the response in the streets.

What do I say about these barricades around the government center? I say a lot of works of art and culture suffer bastardized, perverted plagiarism. I argue that the barricade is the art form of the streets, of the neighborhood, and that the government should not be allowed to practice it. People built a beautiful, true barricade at George Floyd Square to carve out space for Black healing, mourning and celebration.

A barricade is beautiful because it is a protection from abusive behavior. A barricade is beautiful for what it is trying to speak into reality. A barricade is beautiful because it carves out a little space, for a little while.
A few drawings that represent the artists' musings on barricades, both classic and speculative:

Image Description: top left shows a drawing of cement barricades places in rows that create a zig zag path to get through, top right shows a drawing of caution tape stretched between lamp posts and long poles stuck through the tape, bottom left shows a three-piece simple structure that includes ballast, balance and defensive thrust, bottom right shows a platform barricade built at the bottom of a hill

Image Description: people on the city bridge and sitting by barricades in Kiev, Ukraine. The barricade is a wooden structure built to meet the curved arch of the underside of the bridge. This was an anti-government demonstration on December 2, 2013. Photo Credit: © Radiokafka | Dreamstime.com
Image Description: Students from the University of Hong Kong building walls from loose bricks to defend themselves from the police. There are also “mini stone henge” structures arranged all through the streets to slow police down. Photo Credit: anonymous

Image Description: Near the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, students built barricades of bamboo sticks, fine green netting and bricks. The bamboo sticks are arranged like tripods and arranged through the streets. Longer sticks and fine netting connect the tripod structures to make it difficult to dismantle or zig zag through. Photo Credit: anonymous

Image Description: Iraqi protesters take cover behind a barricade on Al-Jumhuriya Bridge during an anti-government demonstration in the Iraqi capital Baghdad on 25 October, 2019. This barricade is constructed with corrugated sheets of metal, and is engineered to completely block the bridge and protect protestors from projectiles. The shape of the barricade also seems to be redirecting tear gas up and away from the people taking shelter behind it. Photo Credit: AFP/Getty
THE DE-ARREST SONG:
I want more folks to get more emotionally comfortable with the notion of helping someone to resist arrest. I know that it is a very dangerous thing to do. I know it is illegal. I know that some will think I am irresponsible, or I am only speaking from a place of privilege. I can make space for all of those feelings. But the truth is, community already enacts de-arrests all the time (and not just at public demonstrations & protests). For some examples, visit “De-Arrests Are Beautiful” In the meantime, here are the lyrics of the song to chew on:

[VERSE 1]
moon round the earth and ring round the avenue with a running start, a body slips through fear and anger make a love of a kind that leaps beyond authority (a body slips through, evades the grip of the law) to save a life: a gift i weep when i see a de-arrest i cry to see us awake alive as we’ve ever been i cry to see us try at least, as power’s veil gets thin

[CHORUS]
pull and pull and pull and pull pull me out and swallow me up so i can get away when they put their hands on me, i want you to put your hands on them hand in hand in hand in hand anchored in friendship so i can get away

[VERSE 2]
Rim round a crater, Ring round the avenue A life of being watched Always waiting to be caught, we could Catch ourselves first Walking is to catch yourself from falling Nonviolence won’t purify our living Have you ever played “slingshot”? Link hands in a line and go And then let go Momentum breaks you free from the heat
Away away to...
Do you know how
Is it that catching a foot on the ground
Is an act of moving forward?
the ground is there, so conspire with it

[BRIDGE]
Of course
It doesn’t have to be big
Just hit ‘em with your purse
Or run past and grab his belt
Or set off a firework
I cry because i think: we could all do that too
We could all be powerful and
We could do it
We do do it
All the time

[VERSE 3]
Fronds round a flower and
ring round the avenue
A crowd forms
Round the avenue
not a standoff, it’s
Blood swelling to the wound
They don’t understand us as people, so
When we act with courage
We surprise them

[CHORUS]
pull and pull and pull and pull
pull me out and
swallow me up so
i can get away
when they put their hands on me,
i want you to put your hands on them
hand in hand in hand in hand
anchored in friendship so
i can get away

[OUTRO]
Your weight is the mass of the earth (no fear)
Your pull is the tide of the ocean (no shame)
Your feet are the roots in the dirt (don’t stop)
Your minds are a flock of birds (til i’m free)

Getting arrested doesn’t make anyone a hero
FURTHER READING:

A select list of resources that were part of the research and development of CASTLES II

**Nicholas Galanin Suggests We’re Ready to Fight Back**
Galanin, a Tlingit-Unangax̂ artist, addresses climate change and its connection to white supremacy, as well as the commodification of indigenous cultures.
Read [HERE](#)

**Decolonization is Not a Metaphor**
By Eve Tuck & K. Wayne Yang
Our goal in this article is to remind readers what is unsettling about decolonization. Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools.
Read [HERE](#)

**The Progressive Plantation: racism inside white radical social change groups**
By Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin
I have never accepted this internal racism as the way it has to be, and have always been a critic and thorn in the side of the Anarchist movement. The Black revolution and other national liberation movements in North America are indispensable parts of the overall social revolution.
Read [HERE](#)

**Now**
by the Invisible Committee
The Invisible Committee is an anonymous fragment of the Imaginary Party. *Now* is the third publication in a trilogy. It is the phantom chapter to the Invisible Committee’s previous book, *To Our Friends: a new critique from the anonymous collective that establishes their opposition to the world of capital and its law of labor, addresses current anti-terrorist rhetoric and the ferocious repression that comes with it, and clarifies the end of social democracy*
First published as Maintenant in May, 2017 in France.
Read [HERE](#)

**The Ancestors / Knotting**
By Lise Silva Gomes
A quick primer in thinking about the metaphysical purposes of knots
Read [HERE](#)

**40 Ways to Fight Fascists: Street-Legal Tactics for Community Activists**
By Spencer Sunshine, in collaboration with PopMob
Read [HERE](#)

**Imperialism is Another Word for Hunger**
By Chris Kando Iijima, Joanne Nobuko Miyamoto, "Charlie" Chin
A Grain of Sand: Music for the Struggle by Asians in America
℗ 2004 Smithsonian Folkways Recordings / 1973 Paredon Records
Listen [HERE](#)
**Masterclass (a primer for theatrical jazz)**
HowlRound recording Sharon Bridgeforth’s masterclass for Art2Action & Pangea World Theater’s National Institute of Directing and Ensemble Creation
Sharon will offer participants a series of prompts rooted in some of the principles of theatrical jazz—the art of being present, deep listening, improvisation, innovation, virtuosity and ensemble-building.
Watch [HERE](#)

**Theory of the Dérive**
Situationist International, translated by Ken Knabb and posted to the Bureau of Public Secrets
Read [HERE](#)

**Beautiful Trouble Toolbox**
A collection of hundreds of direct action case studies
[https://www.beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/#/](https://www.beautifultrouble.org/toolbox/#/)

*the only reason you want to go to heaven is that you have been driven out of your mind (off your land and out of your lover’s arms)*
By Alice Walker for “On the Issues” magazine, Spring 1997
Read [HERE](#)

**Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison**
By Michel Foucault
an analysis of the social and theoretical mechanisms behind the changes that occurred in Western penal systems during the modern age based on historical documents from France
Read [HERE](#)

**Necropolitics**
by Achille Mbembe
Necropolitics is the use of social and political power to dictate how some people may live and how some must die. Achille Mbembe, author of *On the Postcolony*, was the first scholar to explore the term in depth in his 2003 article
Read [HERE](#)

**Decolonial Atlas’ Names and Locations of the Top 100 People Killing the Planet**
“The earth is not dying, it is being killed, and those who are killing it have names and addresses.” – Utah Phillips
Read [HERE](#)

**Breaking up with Georgia O’Keefe**
By Owen Marciano
Read [HERE](#)

**Poetry is Not a Luxury (excerpted from Sister Outsider)**
By Audre Lorde
Read [HERE](#)
**Our Death**
By Sean Bonney
A reckless voyage into the apocalypse against which we hurl ourselves night after night
Read [HERE](#)

**Handbook of Critical & Indigenous Methodologies, Chapter 6: Queer(y)ing the Postcolonial Through the West(ern)**
By Bryant Keith Alexander
“...And for those historical legacies perpetuated through contemporary social relations penetrating and infusing a double consciousness of social life, not just for Black folk, but that duality of presumed difference that creates hierarchies of worth in the performative exteriority of daily life, which circulates like conceit in the interiority of bodily experience and culture for both marked and unmarked others—which of course, is all of us.”
Read [HERE](#)

**Swallow the Fish: A Memoir in Performance Art**
By Gabrielle Civil
a memoir in performance art that explores the medium from within its beating heart. Adding its voice to black feminist conversations, it combines essays, anecdotes, and meditations with original performance texts to confront audience, motivation, and fears.
Purchase [HERE](#) or read excerpts [HERE](#)

**Tell Them I Said No Chapter 4 “Concepts of Distance - Stanley Brouwn”**
Essays on artists who have withdrawn from the art world or have adopted an openly antagonistic position against it. The work of Stanley Brouwn is the main inspiration for two vignettes of CASTLES II - “Measure Yourself to Better Optimize Yourself”, and “Become Immeasurable in Order to Escape”.
Purchase [HERE](#)

**How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy**
By Jenny O'Dell
an action plan for thinking outside of capitalist narratives of efficiency and techno-determinism.
Purchase [HERE](#) or find the audiobook on Audible

If you would like to read a copy of the script for CASTLES II, please email the artist at purcellkat85@gmail.com