

## Twilight falling over Fitzroy

This is a story about a magical evening. Of things turned upside down.  
Of unpredictable streets and pavements and lamplights and people walking and dancing.  
Of twilight falling over Fitzroy.

This could only happen in Fitzroy.

On the way home I see the streets differently.  
I see a man turn a street corner - *is he going to dance?*  
Is he going to fall lightly to the ground and do a twirl?

Where has the mundane gone?  
I am disoriented.

--

But to begin at **the beginning**.

**Cecil Street.** We all gather, this is part of it; it is relaxed and full of people with a beautiful sense of awareness in their body. There is a light, friendly atmosphere.  
A little chaotic, strange, poetic.

Paul Romano instructs us. Informally.

We are told to follow a group out of the studio and we do.  
*This is exciting I don't know these people something is about to happen.*  
I know these streets but I have never been on them *like this* before.  
Passersby and we- are we the same group? Are they part of it?

Even before the performance begins the mundane and the performative mix.

*lines of building, lamp post, footpath, alleyway, shuffling feet, chatting, **anticipation***

We are led down a tiny alleyway, pavement, corrugated fences, overhanging purple flowers,  
a pile of bright red sand.

*Where are we?*

### **Jane**

A girl is moving in the corner, at the end of the alleyway. She leaps she tosses her arms  
She stops. Suddenly twirls. She is warming up.  
That strange mix is happening - the language of improvisation- the familiar and the new,  
its attention inwards, to weight, limbs, action - of falling, catching, retrieving,  
the particular and recognisable rhythm of physical listening - moving - responding.  
She listens, she dances in lightweight abrupt shifts. It's fleeting.  
We never know what rhythm will tumble out of her body next.

Her runners scrape swish and twirl on the gravel. They create a sound score.

**Suddenly** a leap - **Suddenly** - another leap -

What is happening to her? Lightness. Nonchalance. In that alleyway she could be a girl in the 20's, playing hopscotch. She could be photographed in a sepia photograph.

*(When I was small this is what we did. We went through the back streets climbed over fences stole plums from trees played cops and robbers. We decided we are spies...And everything was transformed)*

She undoes her hair in a sudden swing - *ah*- she seems annoyed- She is stuck in this alleyway. She is small and grown up at the same time. She jumps on the red sand. She seems dissatisfied. She recedes to the corner.

She is told '5 minutes'. This is the code to finish.

*And so, yes, this is underpinned by a structure, a readable tradition, an established dialogue that we are in relation to-*

We leave her there and walk away.

*The light falls. The sky is a pale pink.*

### **Joey and Anne Marie**

A concrete courtyard. Modern Fitzroy chic funky. Olive trees in large pots. Environmentally aware mixed with old warehouse. **A man and a woman** are poised, strangely. She is looking through the window. I don't know what she sees.

*He is wearing bright yellow socks*

They begin to play- the familiar rhythm - a flow of whims.

**And then** - something interesting emerges -

A physical relationship, halting, non-quite comfortable - they nearly tumble, nearly overbalance, step on toes- in a jagged stop-start of two people reading each other.

*And- my favourite moment-*

He lies down - **unexpectedly** - no real explanation why, but there he is-

On the concrete, on the parking spot marked Number – 19?

His body is diagonal on the ground, like the empty parking spot.

A little odd, a little sad. Why is he there? He is not a car.

His body is soft and the lines of it don't fit into the concrete.

*(Strange to see dancers on concrete. I feel slight unease for their bodies. )*

As we go, there is an eruption of energy, they leap onto each other's back - a moment of near flight- their bodies come together, go to the ground- but – *below is concrete*. There is a small withholding.

## Thoughts as we walk

*Improvisation with a particular Melbourne character.*

*Relaxed. Readable. If this was happening anywhere else it would not be this.*

*The body in space can tell me so many different stories - what is this evening telling me?*

*Something structured, something random, something which holds lightly to place,*

*to meaning, which throws a playful light on the architecture of these streets,*

*something that trickles through my fingers. I can't hold on to it.*

## Jonathon

In another alleyway, a space behind a garage. It says:

PRIVATE PROPERTY

UNAUTHORISED VEHICLES

WILL BE TOWED AWAY *(it says nothing of dancers)*

A man dances and speaks to us, signaling sections of his score with self-irony:

**'The wall section.'**

**'The musical section.'** *He performs a segment around the back fence, accompanied by a barking dog. This is charming. But the dog is frustrated.*

**'Retrograde.'**

He moves beautifully, there is poetry and wit in the movement, and yet -

*I start to long for stillness.*

*A constant flow of impulses through bodies in all 3 improvisations so far.*

*I want to see a person just BE, just STOP. This is my personal longing.*

## Group

This was incredible. Walking, we get to a LONG laneway.

A LONG glorious perspective; performers, and beyond them, in the distance – more audience.

*But in this context are we audience? Or are we implicated in it? I felt so part of it*

Close to us is *our* group of performers. And beyond them, the other group. Dressed in black. With their *own*, different dynamic. A play of synchronicity and polyphony emerges.

A man is leaping from one side of the lane, one brick wall, to the other-

*Why is he bashing himself into the wall like that? Is it play?*

They leap, stop, climb, turn, twirl, roll, poise, balance, catch a whim, lift it, hold it, drop it, blow it away like a piece of fluff, they move frenetically, they turn and look. They squat, they shiver,

*I love it*

There is this extraordinary framing- a depth of line which can *never* happen in a theatre.

I can see a hundred metres away. And everywhere people are silently dancing.  
This is spooky and marvelous. *I love it.*

**And yet.** I don't *quite* understand. I think: if on the street I saw a man bash himself into a wall, a man collapse onto the concrete, these would be shocking events. They would stop my breath. I would worry for the man. But here I am not worried. And so although this man is bashing into a wall, something is different. He is not doing it, really. And yet he is physically doing it, he is a real man, it is a real wall. So why am I neutral, aesthetically pleased? Are my senses dulled, because I see this event and it does not have its impact? I just watch and enjoy the flow of choices. Like the music of Haydn. A delicate, impersonal beauty, which draws me in, but does not grab me by the throat.

I notice that the *other* group has a different dynamic to *our* group. They are mysterious. Something intangible but undeniable has happened already, a participating, a secret handshake between performers and viewers.

Each time we move on there is *relief*; a realization that the structure supports the fragility of the improvisation.

And *disappointment*; I am just forming a relationship, and I go.

It is a passing relationship. A conversation on a train. Both personal and lonely.

**Shaun, Dianne, Helen.**

Somehow we are handed over to a woman in a sensational green dress. Flamboyant. Red hair. **Dianne.** She leads our little group down a small street of picket fences. She yells at us like she is in some 19<sup>th</sup> century London street. Then she delivers us at a cream picket fence and we go quiet. **Helen** says: '*you can come closer if you like*'. This is slightly sinister. There is something marvelous and mysterious here. I feel like Alice down the rabbit hole. A corridor of little doors and in each is another reality – all in the lanes of Fitzroy.

A man stands on the porch of the house. **Shaun.**

He moves on the porch like he is lurking. He grabs our attention. He dances. He transforms the place, and himself, moving in perfectly shaped phrases with a dynamism, a beginning, build, middle and end. Each phrase is complete. He surprises us. He – **suddenly**- leaps onto the pebbles, his whole body drops and it makes a crunching sound. He lies still. It is shocking and complete. He comes to the fence and looks at us like we are interlopers. He makes us laugh. He does a Gene Kelly tap dance. He- *ohmygod*- turns on the tap. It's **real**. There is excitement. We don't know which way the world will turn on this strange porch. The feeling of being whirled into a new world, swept up-

The feeling that even after us, he will continue this wild game.

## **Dianne**

It is near-dark. In a laneway, far away, under a lamplight, the woman in the green dress. She is sad and mysterious, dancing, forlorn under that yellow light. Dickensian woman, all alone, in the distance.

Then she disappears. She plays a game with us, taking herself out of our picture, but she knows we are waiting. She is shaping phrase, perspective, and *I know she knows* and that is so satisfying. We don't go any closer because the glint of her red hair under that fading light, between those buildings, tells a story we don't want to understand fully. It is beguiling.

But then she leaps her way to us.  
She dances among us, she drops, we hear her breathing now.

This a story without a soundtrack.  
A detective story, a love-gone wrong story.  
Why is this woman alone at night in the laneway?  
Which century is she in?  
Is she safe?

## **Helen**

It is dark now. On a street, a terrace house. Behind the dark pole of the terrace house, a shape. A shadow of a woman. Is it a woman? I don't see her face, she is wearing a hood. Perhaps she is a ghost. She moves so slowly. The shadows on the porch are as real as she is. If I saw this figure at my house I would be terrified. But this is a performance so I watch with interest. Her delicate white hand moves slowly, she shifts balance. She moves in a smooth phrase. There is a coolness, a quietness about the way she swishes and moves. Internal. *Ah-* for a split second she loses her balance. Her hand stabilizes her. She leans on the post. This is interesting. Perhaps she is a woman who has lost her balance. This is why she is here, among the shadows, hiding silently.

***I am aware of how much I love the presence of experienced performers-, their understanding of shape, of how to walk, work with time, proximity, distance.***

## **All three**

Then all 3- **Dianne, Shaun and Helen**, play together.  
At the edge of a lane, behind the wall is a restaurant, their game is silly, crazy, whimsical, loud, moments cohere, then they miss, suddenly Shaun is a - Mexican? - beseeching a passerby for attention '*I am a goood perrson*', perched on some object, then they sing...  
Chaotic. Delightful.

It's funny, odd, and their theme song is-  
'*We've only just begun...*'

And then it's over.

But not quite.

**Back at Cecil Street**, Paul Romano does a 30- second imaginary finale.

There was something *imaginary* about the whole night.

Delightful

Connected,

Stimulating

And somehow strangely distant,

Like something

fluttering past

that I can't...

quite.....

.....

Catch

.....

**Bagryana Popov**  
**1 April 2009**