

Takahiro Yamamoto | May 18 - 21, 2023

NOTHING&BEING



ON THE
BOARDS



Copies of *NOTHINGBEING* are available for sale in the lobby.

Dear audience members:

This work is a practice and experience.

Your presence and attention matter in this space with us.

Take this time to turn off your cell phones.

- *Takahiro Yamamoto*

About the Performance:

NOTHINGBEING is a project initiated by choreographer Takahiro Yamamoto, and developed in collaboration with Samita Sinha, David Thomson, and Anna Martine Whitehead. This work investigates ways to embody the presence of nothingness and "being," breathing spaces that we could easily dismiss and considering possibilities for the unfiltered self. Based on philosophical and physical research on the approaches to nothingness as well as extensive discussions and reflections with participating artists about their own sense of existence in the society, their needs in life, and their embodied daily experiences, this work will invite the viewers to "be" in the space together as they witness the artists engaging in questions of not thinking, feeling, surrendering, transforming, conjuring, and forgetting.

In the US society and Western ideology, nothingness is based on a "lack" of presence or significance, which culturally and socially leads to the sentiment of dismissal. As an immigrant of 20 years in the US, Yamamoto has noticed this tendency for the collective consciousness not to pay attention to events or situations unless a bigger and dire incident has taken place. Without something, it is "nothing" to be concerned about. At the same time, most spiritual practices put strong emphasis on the metaphysical: an invisible yet substantial presence without physical evidence. Through investigation of mental and physical states, *NOTHINGBEING* will revolve around questions such as: how can we allow ourselves to shed our protective layers to feel our core existence? How could we unlearn together? What does the presence of nothingness and "being" feel like?

Due to the nature of the performance, late entry and re-entry will NOT be permitted. The lobby opens one hour before showtime, and the theater doors close five minutes after showtime. Please arrive early in order to ensure your attendance.

Performance Dates:

Thursday, May 18 at 8pm

Friday, May 19 at 8pm (followed by a conversation)

Saturday, May 20 at 8pm

Sunday, May 21 at 5pm

Performance Credits:

Created in collaboration with David Thomson, Anna Martine Whitehead, and Takahiro Yamamoto

Thought Partner: Samita Sinha

Physically engaged by David Thomson, Anna Martine Whitehead, and Takahiro Yamamoto

Sound Design by Coast2c

Costume Design by Alison Heryer

Lighting Design by Jeff Forbes

Cover Image by Roland Dahwen

Organizational Support:

NOTHINGBEING is supported by the Japan Foundation through the Performing Arts JAPAN program. It is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creative Fund Project co-commissioned by Portland Institute for Contemporary Art in partnership with Chocolate Factory Theater, On The Boards, and NPN. The Creation Fund is supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Ford Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency). Takahiro Yamamoto is a 2021 NDP Finalist Grant Award recipient. Support was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to address continued sustainability needs during COVID-19 and in support of *NOTHINGBEING*. The development of this project is also supported by Portland Institute for Contemporary Art and the Dance Center at Columbia College Chicago.

Thank You:

I am learning how valuable it is to intentionally acknowledge the feeling of gratitude in order to cultivate relationships in my life. First, I'd like to thank my core collaborators David, Martine, and Samita for trusting me with this new way of working and living to which I am currently venturing on. Sofia, Jeff, and Alison have been amazing to work with. It was so gratifying to trust you all in every way. I'm also extremely grateful for all the institutional supports I have received for this project, namely from Erin Doughton, Brian Rogers, Rachel Cook, and Ellen Chenoweth even though my initial proposition - with indistinct concepts like nothingness and being - was extremely profound yet without any concrete vision. Your trust means a lot to me. Thank you to all my Seattle friends for your love and support over the last few months. It's been incredible to develop friendships with you. And thank you to all the OtB staff for making this happen in Seattle in this turbulent time. Importantly, thank you to my dear friends who continuously make time for coffee and phone dates to let me talk about nothingness and vent out about my life: Lu, Allie, key, Ro, G, sid, Ben, Jmy, and many more. And lastly, THANK YOU to each audience member for making the time to be here. Your presence and your attention as witnesses in this space are extremely important for us to engage in this work. It's an honor to share this experience with you.

Companion Material:

Composed of several short essays, this small book *NOTHINGBEING* is an avenue for me to map language to the thinking that went into this project: my research, reflections of my past memories, and my current perception/construction of reality. Thinking about and theorizing ideas often get my motor running, and it is a huge part of my artistic and personal life. Therefore, in this compilation, I use ideas from thinkers like Hayao Kawai, Michel Serres, and Kitaro Nishida to process my own construct of reality. At the same time, in some writings, I made a point to look inside—my feelings, emotions, needs, and wants—without the enticing coaxings of theory and logic by others, in order to experience the unfiltered self. This required a deep contemplation of my childhood, my upbringing, and my relationship to spirituality and existence.

In addition, it includes a fragmented transcription of a group conversation between the participating artists (Sinha, Thomson, Whitehead, and myself) as well as writings by the three artists who physically engage in the live presentation on how they approach their individual sections, called “Solo” (Thomson, Whitehead, and myself).

Commissioned by On The Boards, this book was designed by Jayme Yen.

Copyediting was done by Van Pham.

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About the Artists:

Takahiro Yamamoto is a multidisciplinary artist and choreographer based in Portland, Oregon. He primarily creates live movement-based performance while expanding his outlets to publishing, sculpture, photography, and installation. His current conceptual investigations revolve around the phenomenological effects of time, embodied approach to the presence of nothingness, and the social/emotional implications of visibility. He has received support from New England Foundation for the Arts, Bogliasco Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation, MacDowell, NCCAkrone, National Performance Network, Japan Foundation, and others. His performance and visual art works have been presented at Portland Art Museum, PICA, Contemporary Arts Center Cincinnati, the Henry Art Gallery, and GoDown Arts Centre Nairobi, among other venues. He co-directs the performance company madhouse with Ben Evans, and is part of the Portland-based support group Physical Education with Allie Hankins, keyon gaskin, and Lu Yim.

David Thomson is an interdisciplinary collaborative artist who has worked with Bebe Miller, Trisha Brown, Ralph Lemon, Sekou Sundiata, Marina Abramović, Deborah Hay, Kaneza Schaal, Meg Stuart, Alain Buffard, Yvonne Rainer, Okwui Okpokwasili and Matthew Barney among others. Thomson's artistic practice centers on the interrogation of presence and absence in the performance of identity. Awards and fellowships include US Artist, New York Foundation for the Arts, Yaddo, MacDowell, Rauschenberg and Foundation for Contemporary Art. Thomson is a Mabou Mines Associate Artist and Danspace Research Fellow. In 2017, he founded The Artist Sustainability Project to expand the practice and discourse of financial, artistic, and personal empowerment for artists.

Anna Martine Whitehead - child of Tony Larry and Karen Marie, sister of Malcolm, granddaughter of Mattie and Ginny, aunt to Mattie and Miles - is a loving partner, community member, educator, performance-maker, artist, and writer. She is currently studying freedom.

Artist and composer **Samita Sinha** creates multidisciplinary performance works that investigate origins of voice. She synthesizes Indian vocal traditions and embodied practices to create a decolonized, bodily, multivalent language of vibration and transformation.

About the Artists (continued):

Sofia Acosta is a multidisciplinary artist and technologist. Under the alias Coast2c, she is a DJ and composes electronic music that oscillates between acid, drone and techno. Fluent in a multitude of rhythmic styles, her DJ sets are eclectic and highly energetic, ranging from techno, acid house and synth punk. In 2018 with the help of a Career Opportunity grant provided by the Oregon Art Commission, she studied synthesis at Elektronmusikstudion (EMS) and helped produced a series of synth educational workshops for female and non-binary students at Superbooth Berlin and The Synth Library, Prague.

Jeff Forbes is a Portland based lighting designer working primarily in theatre and dance. He is a 10 time winner of the Willie and Drammy Awards for theatre for such companies as Artists Repertory Theatre, Broadway Rose, Imago Theatre, the Musical Theatre Company, Storefront Theatre, and Tygres Heart Shakespeare Co. He has also designed for American Repertory Theatre (Cambridge, Mass), the New Rose Theatre, Portland Repertory Theatre, Portland Center Stage, Portland Actors Conservatory, and many others. He is currently the Technical Director for White Bird Dance, a presenting organization based in Portland, and has served as a technical director for PICA's TBA Festival since its beginning in 2003. He is a co-founder, with Linda Austin, of Performance Works NorthWest, for which he also serves as technical director.

Alison Heryer is an interdisciplinary artist whose work combines costume, installation, performance, and community engagement. As a costume designer, she is a member of United Scenic Artists, Local 829. Her design credits include productions at Steppenwolf Theatre Company, 59E59 Theaters, La MaMa, The New Victory Theater, Portland Center Stage, Portland Opera, Kansas City Repertory Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, Artists Repertory Theatre, ZACH Theatre, The Hypocrites, and Redmoon. Her work has been featured in exhibitions at the Nelson Atkins Museum of Art, World Stage Design, and The Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space. Awards include a RACC Build Grant, Drammy Award and Austin Critics Table Award for Costume Design, and the ArtsKC Inspiration Grant. Heryer is a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis and the University of Texas at Austin. She is a faculty member at Portland State University, where she was recently granted the Sue Horn-Caskey and Charles F. Caskey Professorship of Textile Arts & Costume Design.

About On the Boards:

For four decades and counting, On the Boards (OtB) has moved the needle on culture in Seattle. We continue to occupy a unique corner of this region's cultural turf - presenting challenging, provoking, surprising, and inspiring dance, theater, and performance works. We influence the contemporary art field on a global scale, investing and supporting in local artists who go on to develop careers and performances that are shared with thousands of audience members across the world. OtB fulfills its mission by supporting artists from the Northwest and beyond, through new commissions and existing work presented online and in person. OtB offers a range of resources and events that provide in-depth information and complimentary social experiences to frame the art on its stages and create dynamic access for its audiences.

W.A.G.E. Certification: On the Boards is committed to compensating artists fairly for their work. The Jacob Lawrence Gallery at the University of Washington and OtB are the only institutions in Washington state to be W.A.G.E. certified.

Land Acknowledgement: On the Boards acknowledges that we work on the unceded ancestral home of the Duwamish and many other Indigenous peoples, recorded and unrecorded, who have been the custodians of this land since time immemorial. As settlers on this land, we extend our deepest gratitude and respect to Indigenous people past, present, and future. This acknowledgment does not take the place of authentic relationships with Indigenous communities but serves as a first step in honoring the land we occupy. To learn more about land acknowledgments, visit:

<https://nativegov.org/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment>

Covid-19 Safety Policy: While Washington does not currently have a mask mandate, we still require masks in our theater spaces.

Please make sure your mask covers your nose and mouth throughout the duration of the show. If you need a mask, we have some available for your use. This decision is to keep artists and staff safe, and create equitable access spaces for all community members.

We are a small team, and even one significant illness has the potential for profound impact and could cause the closure of a show. As such, we are committed to erring on the side of caution and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

We review our policy frequently to ensure that we are making decisions aligned with evolving scientific and public health recommendations. We appreciate your patience with our current requirements.

On the Boards Staff:

Megan Kiskaddon | Executive Director
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*Deceased**