

"Dreaming Out-Loud with the BodyVoice"
Christian Swenson plays "Human Jazz"

This is not a dance performance or a play, nor a musical concert, sacred ritual or a comedy show, yet it is in part all of these. It is also homage to the human medium and the spirit that connects us.

In this improvising I am reaching into each oncoming moment with imagination, voice and body. Breath, flesh and mind touching, leading, following and changing each other; loving the longing, the approaching, the touching and the greeting of the Other. As in much of this "dancing", my favorite mode of "going" is pathless. No trail, just bushwhacking, rock-hopping, body-surfing into mountain, desert and ocean. There will be songs, poems and other containers of "real" language, but much of this dreaming will be beyond words.

I am a shaper of energy. I lift aside the thin map of names....

*The Honor of word language is its distance, built and held.
The Honor of presence language is its touches, met and greeted. – Lance Loder*

I call this art-form/play-form/mystical practice "Human Jazz" for several reasons. It is "playing" the body and voice simultaneously. It is acting like music. It uses a global palette of sound and movement. It is rooted in rhythm, tone and shape and grows itself through improvisation and exploration. It is about performing one's "humanness" with integrity, spontaneity, and just the right mix of contrivance and abandon. But, as the late Louis Armstrong once said,

"If you can explain it. It ain't jazz."

Like a tri-polar magnet, I am pulled, held and spun between the singing/acting/dancing.

At times I will choose to "disappear" and simply "behold" the music as it happens. These "disappearings" will range from ecstatic trance singing to slight characterizations. At other times I will perform more recognizably as a dancer, actor, singer or storyteller.

I will also be performing selections from my older repertory, such as "De-evolution" (1986), "Jabberwocky" (1983), and "Face Weather" (1992) as well as "word improvisations" from audience suggestions.

My inspirations come from many sources: singers Bobby McFerrin and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Jimi Hendrix, sculptures, Balinese dance/drama, slide guitar, the African "talking drum", the speaking, singing and dancing of other peoples and creatures, and the shapings of the land itself. I find I am drawn away from my own background toward a more global aesthetic. The French dramatist, Jean Genet, once said, "Imitation is love." So, with an open heart and mind, I freely imitate other ways of being. It is through this experience of imaginative imitation, that I hope we can gain greater understanding and appreciation of our world.

BIOGRAPHY

Christian Swenson has an extensive background in dance, mime, voice and improvisation. He is known for his pioneering work in what he calls "Human Jazz", a global fusion of dance/drama/music for body and voice.

In 1977 he received a BA in Theater from the University of New Hampshire and moved to Seattle to work with the Bill Evans Dance Company. Further training has included work with Tony Montanaro; Diane Schenker; Ruth Zupora; Korean shaman, Hi-ah Park, and with the late Pakistani master-singer, Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. He has performed with Bill Irwin, The Seattle Symphony Orchestra, and The Jay Clayton/Jim Knapp Collective and in Europe with Jim Nollman of Interspecies Communication Inc. He presently teaches in the Theater programs at Seattle University and Bellevue Community College.

For the past 25 years he has been performing creations for the body and voice searching for a more global aesthetic. Since 1980 he has been a touring artist visiting communities and schools in the Northwest and beyond. He has performed and taught throughout this country, as well as in Europe, Japan and Nepal. Christian released his first compact disc, "Off-Road Vocals" in 2000.

As a guest artist he has been seen as: The Monster in The Minnesota Opera's production of "Frankenstein", at New York's "Serious Fun at Lincoln Center" and "The New York Improvisation Festival", with The Flying Karamazov Brother's "New Old Time Chautauqua" " and the 2002 "Rolling Thunder Down Home Democracy Tour" and has been heard on National Public Radio's "Sandy Bradley's Potluck. He was a teacher/performer at the 2005 American College Dance Festival in Buffalo, NY and at the 1998 "Body & Soul Northwest" Conference. For two years he has been a Vocalist with the Integrated Music Program at two Seattle hospitals and is a founding member of the improvisational ensemble "Molten Vocals".

Christian has received Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Washington State Arts Commission and Artist Trust of Washington. He resides happily in Seattle with his wife, Abigail, and two children.

Please feel free to visit me on the web at: www.humanjazz.com