

A jukebox, a roadside bar, a fish that never dies.



THE THANK-YOU BAR

THE THANK-YOU BAR is a new performance/installation of dance, live music, storytelling and visual image connecting ideas of displacement, longing, and language to history, pre-conceived notions, architecture, and igloo-myth. Created and performed by Alaska-born choreographer Emily Johnson with composers/musicians James Everest and Joel Pickard. Lighting design by Heidi Eckwall, beadwork by Karen Beaver, paper sculpture by Krista Walsh.

I speak about the bottom of a river, but lay in a plastic kiddie pool. I talk about a fish that can swim to your belly and never truly die. I play my Yup'ik drum, but no one in the audience ever sees it. We hear deconstructed country music on guitar and pedal steel. We see storied images relayed through beading onto my costume. And, while the audience is seated in a semi-circle around the musicians, they swivel on their chairs to see me walking toward them on stilts. They see a movement vocabulary that is part somersault, part hand gesture, part animal imagery. They hold illuminated lightboxes and become part of the image. They see a beaver lodge, they see an igloo-myth, they see the theater walls and I offer the question: What is a true home?

THE THANK-YOU BAR is an intimate performance experience intended to engage many levels of perception and expression. Through a sophisticated concept of theatrical space, unique and powerfully minimalist dancing, and a multi-layered original soundscore, Johnson's illusory - yet partly-true - stories ride the confluences of truth and myth. Appropriate for all ages.

“THE COMPLEX WAIL OF OUR COLLECTIVE PAST SCREAMED IN A BACK ROOM SOMEWHERE”

—Anchorage Daily News

THE THANK-YOU BAR includes an additional concert performance by experimental music duo BLACKFISH. BLACKFISH is James Everest on nylon and steel string guitars and Joel Pickard on pedal steel guitar performing live improvised duets which coincide with The Thank-you Bar tours.

“AT ONCE SUBTLE AND DRIVING”

—Anchorage Daily News



— Basic information —

THE THANK-YOU BAR is an evening length show (55 min) and tours with three performing artists, one technician. THE THANK-YOU BAR is designed for an intimate audience of 30-40, who sit in three concentric circles, on stage. It can be performed twice daily. We enjoyed a two city, sold out premiere run in October, 2009; with multiple shows, audience numbers equaled or surpassed similar programming in both venues.

— Condensed tech list —

Audience is seated on stage

Optimal space size: 64'x 59' (we have performed in a space 30'x 53' and— with alterations —in a space 26' x 15)

Black floor and walls (curtains or paint) is best

Required: 20 chairs, 10 cushions for audience seating

Basic lighting plot/grid

1 projector/dvd player/screen or projectable surface on upstage wall

1 Upright 3/4 bass w/stand & gig bag

4 speakers

2 small guitar amplifiers (25-60 watts)

5 boom mic stands, 4 sm57 or sm 58 microphones, XLR mic cables

Hanging/fly space for 1 lamp

1 box 3'x3', 35.5"deep, painted black on the outside, white on the inside and 1 rolling dolly, 2' x 2'

— Optional —

THIS IS DISPLACEMENT: Native Artists Consider the Relationship Between Land & Identity is a related exhibit of visual and film work by Native artists from around the country, curated by Carolyn Anderson (Diné) and Emily Johnson (Yup'ik).

THIS IS DISPLACEMENT can include a call to Native artists in your theater's area. The exhibit adds the cost of shipping, insurance, install but thus far has received grants to cover these costs.

“QUESTIONING WHAT CULTURE IS, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT AND WHOM IS ENTITLED TO LAY CLAIM TO IT”

—Anchorage Daily News

THE THANK-YOU BAR has received support from the National Performance Network, Forecast Public Art, Subito/American Composer's Forum, Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography, the MAP Fund, a McKnight Choreographer's Fellowship, The Moore Family Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation, the Seventh Generation Fund for Indian Development, and NEA, Westaf, Rasmuson Harper, VSA arts, MOA Arts & Culture Foundation, & Alaska State Council on the Arts.

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“SPELLBINDING” – The Gothamist (NYC) “UNCOMPROMISING INTENSITY” – Gay City News (NYC)

“FRESH AND FIERCE, EVOCATIVE AND DISCIPLINED” – Dance Magazine

“A SENSIBILITY WITH REMARKABLE DEPTH AND CLARITY.” – Star Tribune (MPLS)

Emily Johnson is a director/choreographer/curator, originally from Alaska, currently based in Minneapolis. Her work has been commissioned by the Walker Art Center, National Performance Network, OutNorth, Franconia Sculpture Park, Interact Center for the Visual and Performing Arts. She has been presented by Links Hall, Dance Umbrella, the Walker Art Center, ODC Theater, Velocity, and the Southern Theater, among others. She has toured with Scuba and NPN and self-presented in numerous venues including Dance Theater Workshop and the Que'Ana Bar in Clam Gulch, Alaska. She has embarked on performance projects in Montreal and St. Petersburg, Russian, and toured her work to 14 American states. Her dance films have screened at the Walker, DTW, Chicago Cultural Center and university film festivals. She is a 2009 MANCC choreographer fellow and the recipient of a McKnight Choreographer's Fellowship (2009), Seventh Generation Fund Grant (2009), Map Fund Grant (2009), Forecast Public ArtWorks Grant (2008), MAP grant with Lisa D'Amour and Katie Pearl (2008), National Museum of the American Indian Visual and Expressive Arts Grant with Rhiana Yazzie and Carolyn Anderson (2008), Blacklock Nature Sanctuary Residency (2007), Puffin Foundation Grant (2005), Bush Artist Fellowship (2004), Jerome Artist Fellowship (2001, 2002, 2003, 2004), and Minnesota State Arts Board Fellowship (2001).

Emily has created dances about love, global warming, violence, memory, missed opportunity, regret, hope, mean people, and home. She has made large cast dances for public spaces with people of varied genders, ages, cultures, and physical abilities. She has collaborated with musicians, visual and video artists, sculptors, writers and geothermal scientists to make work born from the joining of creative forces. She takes her inspiration from the annual migration of salmon, who swim upstream for thousands of miles because they must. She has watched these salmon swim up waterfalls and she believes humans can also be called to do amazing things. Recently, someone told her that she makes dance for “the dance snobs” and she makes dance for “people who generally don't like dance.” She would like to think that is true; she would like to think that her dances are for every body and that maybe they enlighten small aspects of our existence.

Emily co-curates *Capture!*, a dance-film series in Minneapolis and writes about dance and performance in the online magazine *Mental Contagion* and in her own post-performance project, *Post-re-View*.