THE FIRE LOG
A REPORT ON THE FIRE PROJECT

Workshops, Productions and Tours
1998-2003

Produced by Judith Marcuse Projects, Vancouver, B.C., Canada
www.dancearts.bc.ca
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The FIRE Project is Born

As with The ICE Project, the first component of a quartet of works initiated by Judith Marcuse, a fundamental intention was to explore the worlds of young people – to clarify some of their deeply-felt concerns and to reflect that world, authentically and with respect, in a professional production that would link the realities of their world to a range of possibilities for positive personal and social change. That process led to the creation of the first full-length performance work in the quartet, ICE...beyond cool.

Building on the workshop process developed during The ICE Project, DanceArts Vancouver, now Judith Marcuse Projects, in the period 1998 to 2001, organized dozens of wide-ranging, carefully-constructed and challenging workshops in movement, theatre, media literacy and film and video production that were attended by a highly-diverse group of more than 400 hundred youth aged 15-18 throughout British Columbia. This in-depth process produced a body of stories, observations and insights that provided the “raw material” for the later creation, by the core artistic team, of the script for the production, FIRE...where there’s smoke. While ICE explored the issue of teen suicide, FIRE explored the nature of violence as experienced by youth and its effects on their lives.

The première production of FIRE...where there’s smoke took place in Vancouver on October 18, 2001, at the Scotiabank Dance Centre. In a program note for this first series of performances, producer, director and choreographer Judith Marcuse described the performance piece in these words:

FIRE...where there’s smoke is based on stories and sensibilities shared with us in dozens of workshops across B.C. with four hundred teenagers. Over a three-year period, we explored issues of violence in our lives and this show is a translation of the experiences, the thoughts and feeling of those youth. We have not invented content, but have tried to condense and make clear what we heard.

You will not see one story, but, rather, many stories in a series of short episodes, which, we hope, will help uncover what lies behind violence in some of its many forms. We are not offering up solutions – we think these will be different in every situation. (Our after-show talkbacks will, hopefully, continue that process of exploration.) Rather, we explore what happens to people caught in violence, whether as victims, victimizers or observers.

These are confusing times. Violence is present in what sometimes seems to be an overwhelming variety of forms. We hope that FIRE...where there’s smoke will engage and entertain you. And, perhaps, create shifts – little transformations – that will move you to more discussion, more action.
The Lifecycle of
FIRE...where there’s
smoke, 2001-2003

FIRE...where there’s smoke opened to an
enthusiastic audience reaction. This
premiere performance in Vancouver’s
Scotiabank Dance Centre in 2001 was followed
by an additional 43 performances in Vancouver,
Victoria and Prince George.

In 2003, responding to great interest in the
production from individuals, theatres and
community groups across the country, the work
was re-worked, rehearsed and went on tour to
Banff, Alberta; St. Albert, Alberta; Winnipeg,
Manitoba; Saskatoon, Saskatchewan; Vernon,
B.C.; and New Westminster, B.C.

Performed by nine young professional artists,
the multi-media show (FIRE incorporates dance,
dialogue, music and video) was again a solid
“hit” on the road, with young people and adults
alike. By the time the final 2003 performance
was presented at the Massey Theatre in New
Westminster, B.C., the two touring companies
had given 74 performances to a total audience of
more than 20,000 people. Audience members
were drawn from the general public and from
some 300 schools and community organizations
in Western Canada. In addition, 2,000 youth
were able to attend the performances with
tickets provided to them at no cost.

As with ICE: beyond cool, which was adapted for
television and telecast on the CBC in 2000,
FIRE...where there’s smoke has also been
adapted for television. Production and telecast
dates have not yet been set. An additional eight-
part series of short video pieces is in
development for use in schools.

...as the show itself is a distillation
of the thoughts and feelings of
four hundred youth expressed to
us during a three-year workshop
process, FIRE is, in a very real
sense, the voice of today’s youth....

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the wonderful artistic
and administrative teams who have helped, over five years, to put this
project together. I am also indebted to the two superb casts of
performers whose dedication to telling the truth with passion and
generosity gave every performance both depth and power.

Above all, I would like to thank the hundreds of young people
who shared their experiences and insights with us in workshops
and discussions.

Judith Marcuse, August, 2004
These are confusing times. Violence is present in what sometimes seems to be an overwhelming variety of forms. We hope that FIRE...where there’s smoke will engage and entertain you. And, perhaps, create shifts – little transformations – that will move you to more discussion, more action.
The Story of
FIRE...where there's smoke

A BRIEF OUTLINE

The Setting
The setting is a bare stage set with three very large video projection screens above a semi-circular stepped riser at the back of the performing space. A rock show-like lighting design of moving lighting instruments and a powerful 5.1 surround sound system complete the major production elements.

The Characters
Nathan A bully, there's violence at home, he's in an abusive relationship with Liz
Luba New in Canada, she's had a rough time before coming here, she's isolated at school
Julie Feisty, called “Nothing” at school, a friend of Jill, the popular girl
Diego Nathan's sidekick, a victim of racism, a follower
Jill Has money, power at school, hiding a secret
Mike Gay, out of the closet at school, pretty "together," a friend of Jill and Julie
Liz A tough girl, bully, Nathan's on/off girlfriend, doesn't like Jill
Alan A good student, friendly with most people, a “floater,” his father is never around
Jimmy The “baby” of the group, often teased, sweet, empathetic, likes Luba

Other characters appear in video sequences.

Casting reflects the ethnicity of 15- to 16-year-old Canadian youth.

A scene-by-scene breakdown of the production appears as Appendix 1 to this report.

The Content
All of the characters are dealing with violence in some way, some of it overt and some of it more subtle. All students attend the same urban senior secondary high school; they know each other. During the course of the performance, the audience sees how they deal with the difficulties of their “normal” teenage lives and the transformations that occur when they begin to better understand each other and the issues that they face.

The production is fast-paced, with many short scenes, combining video, music, movement and dialogue to show us what is happening to them in their relationships with each other and with the outside world. The audience also gets a close look at their internal, emotional lives. We see a father and son in conflict; jealousies at school; a small, kind, gesture that changes how a youth sees the world. We hear questions about identity; see how some people deal with a bully; how someone else gets caught in the middle of a fight. We witness the games of control that mothers and daughters can play, the pressures of peers and the pain of exclusion. Alliances change, new intimacies are exchanged. Issues of violence in their lives – from domestic violence to racism, from bullying to date rape, media violence and their sense of safety – are all addressed in realistic and non-judgmental ways.

By the show's end, we have seen each of the characters go through small and more transformative journeys that bring them closer to both understanding and to positive action.

The show does not provide pat answers, but talks openly and in an entertaining and moving way about nine average teens whose lives are rich and complicated.
The “Talkbacks,” Support Materials and Community Outreach

Each performance of FIRE...where there’s smoke was followed by a “talkback,” a forum that facilitates discussion involving the audience and cast. Intended as an opportunity for audience members to share their impressions of the performance, their own experiences of the issues explored in the show, and their ideas for violence prevention and broader social change, these candid discussions sometimes lasted as long as the performance itself. At each talkback, DanceArts staff were constantly amazed by the honesty, courage, and insight of the diverse audience members, especially of the young people in attendance.

Given its subject matter, FIRE tends to evoke strong emotional reactions in many viewers, so in anticipation of people feeling the need for personal disclosure or for support, the company ensured that professional counsellors were on hand at every performance. These counsellors also were able to meet with audience members at a later date and to make appropriate referrals.

All audience members received two specially-written print support materials that they could take home with them: a wallet-sized card with a listing of organizations offering a range of critical services to youth and a 24-page legal education/violence prevention brochure. This “companion piece” to the performance sums up many of the things learned in the workshop process, including key ideas that the youth have talked about; provides some suggestions for adults; and includes a section called “Your rights and the legal system”; and another titled “Oppression and the ‘isms’: racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ethnocentrism, ageism...” Based on the principle that the more one knows about one’s rights, the better they can be exercised and protected, the brochure also provides youth with fundamental information about the new Youth Criminal Justice Act and their rights under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

During the touring period, teachers and others were encouraged to make use of the FIRE Study Guide which was available for downloading from the company’s website (www.dancearts.bc.ca).

The interested reader is able to obtain examples of these materials by visiting the website or by contacting the company offices. The FIRE Study Guide is reproduced as Appendix 2 to this report.

Extensive community outreach to schools and youth-oriented service agencies was a critical element in the company’s commitment to establish a support network around each performance run and formed a key ingredient for the overall success of the tours. Working with local liaison people in each city or town, the DanceArts team established a support network around the performances, so that there would be a resonance to the presentations after the company left.

As a consequence, FIRE became more than a “one-time” event. At each venue, several service agencies and community groups distributed their literature, as well as being listed in the community resource cards mentioned above. Many of these organizations also made group bookings to see the show.
A Few FIRE “Factoids”

• The production uses state-of-the-art technology – including three very large screens, three video projectors, “cinematic sound” and newly-developed software – and uses a semi trailer to move the high-tech lighting and other equipment from venue to venue. The fully-professional Equity company numbers 17 people on the road.

• Our community sponsor in Edmonton, Alberta decided to create an issue-based theatre series as a consequence of our visit.

• FIRE was nominated for six Jessie Awards – and won the award for Significant Artistic Achievement, Theatre for Young Audiences, for Community Contribution at the award ceremony in 2002.

• Tickets averaged $8 at the door for young people.

• DanceArts worked with dozens of community groups both at home and on the road.

• The production and the tours wouldn’t have been possible without the financial and moral support many people and organizations – youth-centred agencies, government funding bodies, foundations, corporations, trade unions and many, many individuals. Without this critical support, each ticket would cost $48.
DanceArts’ Objectives with FIRE...where there’s smoke

The 2001 and 2003 tours of FIRE...where there’s smoke introduced the transformative power of live artistic performance to thousands of young audience members, many of whom had never previously attended live theatre or dance.

Specifically, DanceArts hoped to achieve the following objectives:

1. To articulate and validate the voices of youth around issues of violence as they perceive and experience them, using dance, theatre, and video as our tools.

This objective was achieved through the performances, the talkbacks, the study guide, and the legal education/violence prevention brochure. As the show itself is a distillation of the thoughts and feelings of four hundred youth expressed to us during a three-year workshop process, FIRE is, in a very real sense, the voice of today’s youth. Through the talkbacks, young audience members had an opportunity to articulate their views and concerns around issues of violence as it is manifested in their own lives, rather than being ignored, marginalized, or lectured to, which is often the case. At every performance, young people told us the show is “so real...I could relate to everything...and most of the stuff in the show has happened to me.” Thus, we feel it is clear that FIRE accurately reflected their experiences, validated their feelings, and gave them a sense that they are not alone in the problems they struggle with in their daily lives. For many students, it was the first time they had seen a performance of this nature, and talkbacks often included discussion about the dance, theatre, and video forms of the work.
For students who attended a performance as part of a school group, the activities in the study guide provided an additional opportunity for them to examine and express how violence affects their lives. Furthermore, as the legal education/violence prevention brochure was written by a young person using a style and content which are intentionally “youth-friendly,” many young people have told us that it spoke to them in a language that they could understand; in other words, it dealt with issues of youth, violence, and the law in a way which is accessible and relevant to them.

2. To break the silence around issues of youth and violence, and create greater awareness of the impact of violence on young people’s lives, using the arts as our tool.

All too often, the dialogue around issues of youth and violence is either severely limited or skewed to represent youth as the “bad guys,” or the instigators of violence, as though this violence takes place in a vacuum, with no social context whatsoever. As a result of this silence and/or bias, we rarely get a “big picture” perspective on not just the manifestations of violence, but the causes and consequences of violence in young people’s lives. Through the various activities conducted as part of the FIRE tour – the show, the talkbacks, the outreach and the resource materials – this silence was broken, leading to an open and honest discussion of how violence really impacts the lives of young people. This breaking of the silence has enabled the healing process to begin.

3. To create opportunities for inter-generational and inter-sectoral dialogue and cooperation on the issue of youth violence and strategies for change.

Through the talkbacks and community outreach, the FIRE tours created numerous opportunities for dialogue between the generations and across various sectors of society (e.g., high schools, academic institutions, government, the justice system, social service agencies, advocacy groups, frontline youth workers and so on). As time goes on, we are confident that these new bridges will lead to increased collaboration on the development of new strategies for violence prevention and broader social change, strategies which transcend generational and sectoral lines.

4. To use art practice as a tool to galvanize hope and courage, and inspire young people to become actively involved in advocating for positive change in their homes, schools, and communities.

Unlike almost all other forms of expression, art has the capacity to cut through the detritus of everyday life, getting right to the core of who we are and how we live our lives. Art can create meaningful shifts of perspective, empathy, and respect, enhance our notions of collective potential, and foster deeper, broader understanding of complex issues. As evidenced by the feedback the company has received, this is precisely what the FIRE tours have done. It has helped young people to realize that they are not alone, and it has given them hope that violence will not always infect their lives; perhaps most importantly, it has given some the courage to stop, or at least confront, it. Hopefully, FIRE will have a lasting effect, inspiring thousands of young people to take a leading role in efforts aimed at violence prevention in communities across Canada.

5. To promote awareness of community resources and access to services in the area of violence prevention, non-violent conflict resolution, and victim services.

By means of the community resource cards distributed to audience members at each venue, the FIRE tour played an important role in promoting awareness of services available to prevent violence and help deal with the consequences of violence in each of the communities visited. By making the card small enough that it can easily fit into a wallet, it was hoped that this would promote increased use of these services in situations where it is required. The company also intends to stay in touch with community partners in order to monitor the ongoing impact of the cards.
We believe that the FIRE tours have had a substantial impact on those involved, from the cast and crew to our community partners and audience members. The feedback received from presenters, youth, parents, teachers, and helping professionals has been overwhelmingly positive. A powerful artistic exploration of youth and violence was created, a piece of art that has the capacity to touch, change and save lives while at the same time delivering a cost-effective anti-violence impact.

Creating a work which fostered dialogue and avoided being didactic required a great deal of reflection, as well as the active participation and feedback of many youth from diverse backgrounds. This was important to ensure the accessibility and relevance of the FIRE production. In the process, we became very aware that youth, themselves, have remarkably creative and effective ideas about safe and positive strategies that they can use to solve the issues of violence that affect them.

A range of valued school and community partnerships, in addition to the coordination of a national promotional campaign through print and electronic media, including CBC radio and television, helped to heighten community awareness of the issues of violence in the lives of today's teens, and facilitated a number of sold-out performances. In addition, we found that with a great number of individuals attending the show for the first time, they would often return for a second performance, bringing with them a friend from school, a parent, or a colleague, teacher or social service provider to experience the production. Through this “word of mouth” process, the circle of individuals brought into contact with the issues raised by the work expanded in a meaningful way.

The links between the production’s content, the form it takes in performance, and the audience's experience of that performance – the impact of the work – validates DanceArts’ firmly-held belief that the arts can be a potent and influential component of young people's lives. Based on previous tours of our youth-oriented shows, we also know that the educational resources we have produced will go on to a long and useful post-performance life in schools and social service agencies across the country.

In addition, the young professionals who toured with FIRE as performers and technical staff gained invaluable experience, having had the opportunity to enhance their performance skills and expand the range and quality of their work.

One unexpected, but gratifying, consequence of the tour was expressed in a letter sent to the company by Brenda Heatherington of the Arden Theatre in St. Albert, Alberta. She wrote: “The quality of the FIRE performances and the excellence with which they tackled the subject of violence has influenced us in such a manner that the Arden is currently in the process of evaluating the viability of making some form of issue-based, youth-oriented programming a permanent part of our season.” To members of the DanceArts team, this demonstrates FIRE’s far-reaching impact, both artistically and in terms of its social relevance.

With respect to strengthening community-based partnerships to deal with local violence-prevention issues, the project has played a central role. The process of on-going community consultation has extended from the initial conception of The FIRE Project to the final performance. We have conducted roundtable discussions with social service and justice system professionals; involved youth and community activists in the creation and refinement of the show; linked youth, educators, lawyers, counsellors, social workers,
professional artists and activists of all sorts in a far-reaching network that supported this tour of FIRE; and facilitated conversations across boundaries of age, gender, class, race, religion, sexual orientation and professional expertise. All of this has had an immediate and profound effect on the young people involved – a strong dose of self-esteem and empowerment, we believe, goes a long way toward violence prevention.

Another impact of the tours has been to link together activists and professionals in diverse fields and to encourage ongoing dialogue amongst them. We believe that this kind of networking and support for dialogue contributes in a real way to the community’s capacity to deal with violence and victimization. Our project has also helped to increase public awareness about effective approaches to violence prevention. Every person who participated in a workshop, attended a performance of FIRE...where there’s smoke, or took part in a post-show talkback was exposed to proven models for broad community involvement in violence-prevention initiatives. The legal education brochure and study guide extend that exposure, and will continue to do so in their post-FIRE usage.

In keeping with the conviction that “knowledge is power,” the resources we created to complement the show and the larger array of resources made available to audience members in all the performance venues enhance the community’s capacity to respond effectively when violence and victimization occur; as a result of our project, thousands more Canadians now have at their disposal information that could be of use if they are victims of violence.

Finally, in a less measurable, but nonetheless important way, the presence of art based on humane values and respectful attention to youth and other voices that are too often excluded from the public discourse has a strong capacity-building impact on the entire community.

We are hopeful that the legacy of FIRE...where there’s smoke will continue to assist communities in the development and implementation of solutions to the problem of violence in young people’s lives, as well as helping to cement the value and efficacy of socially-conscious art.

...we became very aware that youth, themselves, have remarkably creative and effective ideas about safe and positive strategies that they can use to solve the issues of violence that affect them.
Lives Touched:

Audience Responses to

FIRE...where there’s smoke

The following presents a sampling of the many thoughtful and much-appreciated comments, e-mails and letters that DanceArts has received in response to the two tours of FIRE.

First Responses

Hey there! My name is K. I go to _____ School, and I was at your show earlier this morning, you know, the one called, Fire...where there’s smoke. I wanted to let you guys know that I really enjoyed it, and I was really moved by it. I don’t know who is going to read this, whether it’s one of the cast members, someone from the staff, or whoever, but I wanted to let you know that your play made me realize that I’m not alone. I could relate to almost everything you guys were talking about, and it was like it was me up there.

I don’t know if I should be saying this but my parents are divorced and earlier this year, my dad started to get abusive towards me. I haven’t seen him in the longest time, but I’m terrified of him, and what he could do to me. When I saw your play, I realized that I need to put a stop to all the bullshit that I’ve been going through. Your play gave me hope, and well, I never thought I’d get my hope back. I can’t thank you enough for what you’ve done for me, and I’m sure you’ve helped a lot of other teenagers along the way. So, for that, I think you guys are heroes. You gave me that push that I needed to help me take a stand and to make a change.

I don’t know if anyone will get this, or even take the time to read this, but I really mean every single word I write here. You saved me. I never thought I could be saved, but you did. Who knew that a play could do so much for someone like me?! When I saw your play, I cried. It was so surreal, and it made me realize all the shit I have to fix in my own life. And the fact that I keep everything bottled up inside me, and I never let it out, and it kills me, well, I realized it’s not good. I need to let it out. I’m sorry I’ve said all this to you guys, but I thought somebody should hear it, even if you might not care. I have so much shit going on in...
“As a high school counsellor, I struggle to connect with the hidden aspects of school culture – the violence that is a part of students’ lives, yet often not brought to light. Your production did that brilliantly. You brought beauty and life to something which is shameful and ugly – violence....”
my life, and I need to straighten it out, and you were the ones who made me realize that. So for that I thank you.

I don’t know if any of you will get this, or read it, but if you do, e-mail me back so I know that someone cares.... That would give me some hope if I could talk to one of you. Or any of the cast for that matter.

So, in closing, I want to thank you all, for giving me that push that I needed to stand up against my dad, and all of my life’s problems. It would be great to hear from you.
– K. (She has since been supported by professional counselling)

My name is N. I had the great pleasure of attending the Fire... where there’s smoke production that was very well put together. The social issues it displayed were raw and very accurate; I know this because I have experienced some of the things that were presented in the show. I was very moved by the passion of the performers and their unique personalities. I believe the need for theatre like this is strong. This type of performance really touches you on a whole different level than say movies or documentaries, because you can actually feel the energy in the room, thus making the message being carried far more powerful and meaningful. I would recommend this show or others like it to anyone.
– N., Prince George

...an accurate reflection of what research on youth violence tells us.
– Associate Dean, Faculty of Education, Member, Youth and Society Research Unit, University of Victoria

This production, rooted in an extensive three-year workshop process with the participation of over 400 teenagers, tackles issues of bullying, racism, domestic and media violence with voices that are accessible, accurate and entertaining.
– Senator Landon Pearson, Personal Representative of the Prime Minister to the UN for Children and Youth

I’ve seen the show 7 times and I’m just wondering if FIRE was coming back to Vancouver....
– C., Vancouver

This 70 minute production is worth one million CAPP lessons.
– from a teacher to another teacher, Prince George

On behalf of the Greater Victoria School Districts (#61) Alternative Education Programs, students and staff, I would like to extend our sincerest gratitude for sponsoring our students’ attendance at this marvelous production. The population making up our student body at our various Alternative Programs in many cases is made up of hi-risk youth.... Many of our kids related closely to the stories that made up the content of this play. The production was extremely well-received by all who attended. The play was a first-class production as well as being very professional.... Many of our students and staff described it as awesome. The actors as well as your organization deserve to be commended and given recognition by our community, our agencies and the government for the messages you are sending and the manner in which you are presenting it. On behalf of our students and staff...a HUGE THANK YOU!!!
– Steve Frankel, Principal, GVSD District, Alternative Programs

As a high school counsellor, I struggle to connect with the hidden aspects of school culture – the violence that is a part of students’ lives, yet often not brought to light. Your production did that brilliantly. You brought beauty and life to something which is shameful and ugly – violence.... Thank you for your vision and hard work.
– Mary, Vancouver
To Whom it May Concern,

I recently attended the Dancearts production of *FIRE...where there's smoke* on a volunteer basis as a “legal expert” for the post-show discussion.

It is my wish to convey to Dancearts Vancouver production staff and performers how impressed I was with the level of professionalism and skill that was evident in this undertaking. As Crown Counsel I deal with the issue of youth violence on a regular basis and am well aware of the need to address this issue head-on. In my opinion your production did just that. It broached the subject directly and in a realistic manner that, I believe, was able to reach everyone in the audience, no matter how they may personally be affected by the issue. The discussion afterward was candid, honest and thought-provoking. It is this kind of community-awareness projects that will help to educate our society on this problem and, hopefully, bring about changes that will help eliminate the kinds of scenarios depicted in the production.

All the above having been said, the show was really fun and it was an entertaining way to spend a Friday evening. You have an extremely talented group of young performers and I look forward to seeing the final two instalments of this series (I saw the first, *ICE: beyond cool*, on television).

Yours truly,

Jamie Dunlap

Crown Counsel

Absolutely fabulous!! Intense!! Congratulations to all who worked on this production. I really can’t think of enough words to express my amazement. I attended the Friday night, Nov. 9th performance here in Vancouver. Since I work in the area of childhood trauma and relationship violence, I was somewhat prepared, at least for the theme. Well, I was blown away!

– B., Vancouver

Hello...[I’m] the kid that has seen the show 8 times...when I see the show it gives me a feeling of not being alone, a feeling and hope that with your show maybe things will change, and this is the hope that I think keeps youth living and keeps them moving

every day, and the fact that...art has the power to give the feeling to other people is incredible, all the work in this project really shows...I have told all my friends about the show and now they all want to see it too....

– Alex, Vancouver

Believe me, the staff need this as much or more than some of the students!!

– Karen, Vancouver

I attended today’s matinee performance with my 14 year old son and am moved to write to you about the experience.... There were a number of young people in the audience. I felt fortunate that my son was among them. Although he has never sat still during any show, he was riveted and remained utterly motionless for the first 40 minutes of the performance. After the show, we talked about the experience of adolescence, how young people trying to make sense of the world and their place in it feel despair, then hope, then despair again. How communication leads to understanding and acceptance.... I found the whole production stirring. During most of the performance, I had tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat – from the opening scene where they indicated their willingness to support each other.... This production speaks to youth. It should be seen by all high school (and younger!) students.... Thank you again for an insightful production, creatively conceived and skillfully rendered by the performers.

– Susan, Vancouver

*FIRE* is exactly what is needed to address the needs of our contemporary youth.

– Philip Owen, past Mayor of Vancouver
Audience Feedback from the Talkback Sessions

A teenaged girl spoke out about the fact that she had been date-raped recently, and stated that “nobody knows.” This girl was surrounded by her friends in the audience, and she proceeded to tell them that it wasn’t her fault, that “it is never your fault.” Although she was crying, she managed to give very valuable advice about safety precautions for girls in dating situations. A counsellor in attendance at the performance was able to speak with the girl after her disclosure. The counsellor has since informed DanceArts that the girl has been receiving professional support, and is being properly cared for.

- Three teens stood up separately to talk about the depth of pain and suffering they had experienced as a result of “crystal meth.” One recounted the story of a family’s fracturing due to her sister’s addiction. Another exhorted the young audience members not to touch it because “it is a cheap and evil poison” and because his best friend is still fighting his addiction. A third youth talked about how he got hooked, and shared his own successful battle to become clean. “I thought everything in the show was real.” [This statement was given as a response at virtually every talkback session.]

- When asked if they had seen a fight within the last two months, an average of 85% of all audience members in every venue put up their hands, 60% just off school grounds, and 50% related to drugs and alcohol. Few had attempted to stop the fight.

Many teenagers said they were hesitant to speak out in their everyday lives because they didn’t feel “safe.”
• Many teenagers said they were hesitant to speak out in their everyday lives because they didn’t feel “safe.”
• The audience was asked, “What can you do about violence?” Amongst their responses there were many creative solutions, including:
  “Tell an adult you trust.”
  “Walk away.”
  “Do something with a friend.”
  “Choose your timing.”
• A young woman from the audience told of stopping two big guys from fighting: “We got damaged, but it was worth it because they stopped.”
• “A one-hour adrenaline rush.”
• A woman described being “deeply touched by little gestures and the reality in the text.” She added that seniors can be reminded of what they can do for young people.
• “I really liked the labels and dancing, and I understood feeling trapped and coming out was real.”
• An audience member was thankful the ‘fag monologue’ was not stereotypically gay, and that the cast member did not play it as a ‘flaming gay man.’
• A girl asked the audience if video games cause violence, and they answered with a resounding ‘Yes.’ [This response varied; sometimes young audiences were split in their responses to the effects of video games.]
• A group of girls approached the counsellor in attendance, and said that a friend was experiencing terrible violence at home and asked what the friend could do about it. The counsellor gave them a contact number for an abuse hotline, and offered to talk further.

A girl said that they watch fights because it is cheap entertainment, “Better than watching it at home on TV.”

• A teacher commented, “It is very difficult to talk about violence, homophobia and racism with students without sounding preachy.”
• One person mentioned that clothes are “a major judgment factor.”
• Some boys in the audience were seen calling the actor doing the “fag monologue,” “sick” and pretending to shoot him in the head. One boy said, “Get a gun and shoot that kid in the head.” Afterward, another youth in the audience challenged them. The audience was asked if these opinions were tolerated, and they answered, “No.”
• One person commented, “We have violence in schools because people are afraid, they want to think that they are better than everyone, they act like they know more, dress better and knock down anyone who doesn’t think or act like them. We aren’t going anywhere fast if we don’t learn to accept what is around us and the differences we have. We have to accept our uniqueness and each other’s.”
• “Being a foreigner can isolate you.”
• The audience was asked if they understood the “trapped scene.” They answered, “Speak no evil,” and “Being afraid to say anything so you shut yourself up and be silent all the time.”
• A mother approached a cast member after the show, and was crying. She disclosed that her daughter who had seen the show earlier had been raped the year before, and was deeply affected by the show. The mother described how she and both her daughters had been in therapy attempting to deal with the outcome of the assault, and how the show had a tremendous effect on all of them. She thanked everyone and said that she wished that everyone could see the show.
• One person asked how long the show would be playing in Winnipeg and was disappointed that this was the last show. Many people were saddened that this was the final show and would have liked to see it again.

A girl said that they watch fights because it is cheap entertainment, “Better than watching it at home on TV.”

• A teacher commented, “It is very difficult to talk about violence, homophobia and racism with students without sounding preachy.”
• A mother approached the Artistic Producer after the show, and very emotionally expressed how easy it is to forget how difficult it is to be a teenager. Her daughter supported her physically during the conversation.

• A young boy in the audience asked the cast, “Have any of you ever been abused? I was abused when I was four by my Mom and Dad and I was wondering if any of you have experienced abuse and how you dealt with it?” A counsellor later spoke with him.

• A mother approached the Artistic Director after the show and lamented that the system was defeating her, as her son was being bullied at school. Although she had attempted to discuss it with both his teacher and principal, she was simply told that the bullying would pass. It became so bad that her son was afraid to go to school, so she pulled him out of school and they moved to a different neighbourhood to escape the bullying and the apathy surrounding it.

• On media violence, one young woman said, “Everything that we learn about violence we learn from adults and TV.”

• Another young man asked, “Why is there so much violence on TV?” An audience member answered, “It’s entertaining, popular and it makes money.”

• A group of teens came up on stage after the show and apologized for the disruptive behaviour of some kids in their class.

• A woman from the Vernon School Board came on stage after the show and said, “Thank you so much for bringing your show to us, we really need it here.”

• One woman asked what to do when trying to intervene as a parent of a child who is being
bullied and when no one else will help. “When you step in and try to stop the bullying and you are met with only resistance.” Another suggested the assembly of a support group with other parents and concerned community members.

• A boy told a story of stopping a fight between a person who used to be his best friend and another boy. His friend (eleven years old) was into drugs and brought a chain to school and started hitting other kids with it. The boy stepped in and told his friend to stop and noted that as a result of this behaviour, they are no longer friends.

• A young woman who had also attended the afternoon show, said that violence and bullying can be stopped, “Talk to a school counsellor or your parents, a teacher or a friend – don’t bottle things up.”

• “I thought that racism was dealt with really well. There is so much racism against First Nations, Asian, black, and other cultures.”

• One man related that the show is helped him in dealing with his past, and the issues that still exist today.

• A mother said that the show made her really think about how she relates to her daughter.

• A woman who works with a Women’s Rights organization commented that, “FIRE is extremely advanced in presenting the issues and engaging conversation,” and commended everyone for their work.

• Another audience member said that he is writing a book about teen behaviour and that FIRE addressed everything that he discussed in 359 pages.

• A young girl tells of breaking up a fight and getting hurt in the process.

• Another tells of witnessing a “curb stomping.”

• A boy admitted that he had seen a fight in the past two weeks, but it was “too scary to stop – you don’t know what will happen.”
Letters and E-mails
from Audience
Members, 2001

I just saw FIRE... where there's smoke and it really opened my eyes. I've been forced by school to see lecture after boring lecture about the hard things about teenaged life, but nothing captured me like this did. Since it was performed by young people, it was a lot more effective that a two-hour talk by a middle-aged shrink who doesn't understand anymore what it's like to be a teen. I'm only upset that only saw it on the last night. I would have liked to see it at least once more.

– Anonymous

My name is alix, you'd probably know me as the kid that has seen the show 8 times. Ever time i see the show people always ask me WHY? i have never answered them, but i thought now was the time to do it, I'm e-mailing you today to see if you were going to come back to Vancouver, i know people are thinking I've probably seen it to many times already but when i see the show it gives me a feeling of not being alone, a feeling and hope that with your show maybe things will change, and this is the hope that i think keeps youth living and keeps them moving every day, and the fact that dance art has the power to give the feeling to other people is incredible, all the work in this project really shows.... i have told all my friends about the show and now they all want to see it too, i know that it would take a lot of work and money to come back to vancouver so I'm not going to ask but if you do ever end up bring fire back to Vancouver could you please e-mail me back. thx a lot and i hope to hear from you soon.

– Alix

The dancers were tremendous – a superb job of performing. The videography was truly amazing.... i found myself wondering how some of the shots were done and thought the whole thing really connected the dancers and the audience. Right from the first picture and dancer action, I thought I would lose it (emotionally). It was soooooo evocative. My whole body was involved. The spot that truly got me was the positive one of the youth meeting the grandmother on the street – because it is so true.

I stayed for the discussion afterwards and enjoyed it very much – hearing the comments from the audience and the responses from the dancers. Clarence responding to the man who said the scene of the 'FAG' t-shirt and kilt was just too preposterous – nobody would have the nerve to do that – and Clarence said he did – in Prince George, no less.

One young woman in the audience had said (a few comments prior) that she had once been part of the violence, and she had now removed herself from that destructive path. And she also said that keeping herself away from violence was the best she could do for now – she didn't have the strength for anything else – but she was no longer participating. Some of the responses, both from some of the dancers and the audience, were encouraging her to work towards stopping the violence – as if she wasn't doing enough. Well, back to Clarence: he drew our attention to the young woman's comment once again, and said to her that what she was doing – keeping herself away from violence – may well be serving as a role model for others; that even if she didn't think it was enough right now – he thought it was terrific – her new peaceful actions may well serve to influence
many people around her and from there – who knew how many more would be influenced to STOP THE VIOLENCE! He told her he thought she was doing WELL. I couldn't help but applaud both Clarence and the young woman.

And that was the end of the night. I was completely elated because I loved the production, yet I was still very deeply moved by the impact of violence that was depicted through the video and the dancers. My friend who was with me said she was amazed by the words and scenes – violence had never been part of her life – and she really hadn't thought too much about it – couldn't understand how people could be like that to one another – especially coming from family. I know that every word in every scene is all too true. I hate hearing the stories from clients – they are so very sad but I also feel so privileged to be even a small part of their path. Once again, a very heart-felt CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL.

– Barbara Bain, M.A., R.C.C.
Health Educator, Sexual Health Resource Centre Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children
Hi. I'm an Asian student from Handsworth School. We went there and saw the play Fire today. Well I'm gay, living in closet and I'm encouraged after I saw the play. I think Clarence, he expressed really well about it and I learned that it's not shame to be gay. I would like to know more about being gay and. All the other performers were awesome too. I think the idea that u guys did with films, that was awesome and interesting. Would be nice if u can email me back. Thanks yeah!!
– C., North Vancouver

I just wanted to say how much i loved Fire, where there's smoke. I thought the concept, the choreography, the dancers, well, everything was absolutely incredible! It really inspired me in many ways. Both in my life as well as my dancing. I was abused by an ex boyfriend. I didn't tell anyone at the time. I feel that my silence built up a lot of anger inside me, and in turn made me a more violent person. Later i found a great outlet for that anger...dance! To release any anger inside, i would dance, and dance, and dance sometimes until i hurt myself. Although i am glad i had that release, i don’t think it REALLY dealt with the problem at hand. I eventually talked about what went on, and got real help. I believe that without the support from my teachers and friends i wouldn't have made it through it. I think if there were any students in the audience at that performance that were having problems, they MUST have been inspired to go straight home and confide in someone. I really felt inspired to stand up and tell everyone my story. To tell everyone it's best to deal with it before it becomes a bigger problem...but i think you guys put that point across in a big way. thank you for that, and i'm sure thousands of people have been more than inspired by this work! I really believe in using the art of dance as exactly that...an art. As opposed to a lot of other forms it seems to take. A few of my past jobs have seemed to take my dancing down the wrong road, and seeing this performance really made me realize what it is i want to say with my ART! Thank you very much for the inspiration...it was much needed, and appreciated. I hope to see another work by this company, and maybe someday be involved in one. Keep up the AMAZING work! Thanks.
– Heather

Just saw your performance Fri. nite. I helped set-up a Gay/Straight School in Victoria. Our school's grade 9 CAPP classes are coming to see the performance on Thurs. A number of staff members will be there as well. Our entire group will benefit from seeing your performance and hearing the stories of youth that have contacted you since your performances. Believe me, the staff need this as much or more than some of the students!!

The ‘Fag’ scene was powerful!!! The humour and the poignancy were spectacular!!! It drove the point home beautifully. I almost fell over when I heard the news about his death (Aaron Webster) because I once knew an Aaron Webster in one of my classes – years ago in elementary school. My gaydar sensed that he might be gay...haven’t seen him recently. Then I heard the man in Vancouver was 41 not 21, like I knew Aaron would be about now. But, it really doesn't matter if I knew him or not – he is another ‘Matthew Sheppard’ – killed for who he is. The most amazing thing is that you are all active in DOING something about it. BE PROUD!!

Thanks for making a big difference and bringing tears to my eyes and soul.
– Karen

...I'm 14, and i live in victoria, i'm a dancer and have danced with the national ballet school for three years. i've been surrounded by homophobia since, well, forever. just recently i've been having a lot of confidence problems, self-esteem and stuff like that. i saw you performance in fire, where there's smoke november 22 in victoria, and i cried. you made me look differently at myself through the eyes of others. it made me feel good, it made me feel great. i was the one who said that “all of you guys are great performers” and i meant it. clarence, you made my day, and possibly my life, so much better, and i wanted to thank you for doing it. You're truly one of the best, and i admire you for that. thank you.
– F.
I saw Fire here in Victoria, with my two daughters. We were in crisis as a family at the time, primarily because of my 14-year-old daughter’s involvement with a fairly troubled crowd at school, not to mention being very aggressive and negative about school and family etc. I want you to know that seeing fire helped me make the right decision, which was to pull her from school and get her out of Victoria.

I wept throughout most of the performance; because I recognized (from my own remembered teenagehood) the pain and anguish of it all; because I saw clearly how outrageous it is that we send our precious children into that architecture, and that environment; and because I recognized myself as the nagging (if well-meaning) parent.

My daughter is now very happy going to Windsor house school in North Vancouver, and is primarily civilized towards me when we are together – and I am learning how to relax and be myself instead of “Mom.” Thank you.

– Paula

Dear Judith:
Again, on behalf of the alternative ed. students and teachers of Prince George, a big thanks for the opportunity to see the production last Thursday.
“The choreography, performances, large screen images, music and monologues all came together in a way that swept the audience up into a whirlwind of emotions.”

You wanted to see the email that went out to selected teachers and youth care workers on the Thursday morning. Here it is:

TODAY’S WHERE THERE’S SMOKE
THERE’S FIRE IS FREE THIS AFTERNOON.
THIS 70-MINUTE PRODUCTION IS WORTH ONE MILLION CAPP LESSONS. JUDY ADDIE AND I SAW THE PRODUCTION LAST NIGHT. EVEN IF YOU CAN ONLY GET 3-4 STUDENTS THERE, PLEASE DO IT. SUITABLE FOR AGE 15 AND OVER.....STARTS AT 1:00 AT THE PLAYHOUSE. TRULY AWESOME.

Please “pass the word” as I haven’t e-mailed all.
– Kathi Hughes

Wow! We thoroughly enjoyed the performance of FIRE! last night. As you know, we were accompanied by my children, 17-year-old Chelsea and 14-year-old Matt. Chelsea had to get home to squeeze in some studying before bedtime so we couldn’t stay for the talk-back.

But given the audience response, I expect that it was a lively discussion.

The choreography, performances, large screen images, music and monologues all came together in a way that swept the audience up into a whirlwind of emotions. The "fag" monologue was such a refreshing piece of work. Wouldn’t it be awesome to see a young man actually take that approach in a high school?

Our imaginations are piqued about ways to make FIRE come alive on television. We know you are heading to Victoria and then Prince George, but when you return we'd be very interested in meeting with you to brainstorm some ideas.

Take care and keep up the extraordinary work!
– Maria LeRose & Sharon Bartlett
Bartlett-LeRose Productions Ltd.
I saw your wonderful performance last Saturday of Fire...where there’s smoke. It has been a long time since I have been to a live dance show and if Fire is an indication of what I have been missing, I will be back. This show really had something to say and said it very well. All the dancers/actors were great so I hate to single out any one performer but Stuart Pierre had a couple of really strong pieces. The ‘labels’ piece and one that touched home was the violence in the home. I am 49 years old but that dance still jogs the memories even three days later so it must have quite the effect on young people living through it here and now. Hopefully kids can get their parents, especially their fathers, to Fire. It may help open some eyes.

I want to commend you for also showing the political nature of violence. Too often ‘artists’ seem to think that politics and therefore the real world is beneath them. I know the show was not offering solutions per se but just by bringing out the issues like sexism or racism you go a long way toward some solutions. Thanks for the experiences.

– In Solidarity, Brian

Cool performance. I was really moved. I especially liked the music by Hal Beckett. Would you happen to be selling the soundtrack?

– Tyler
Letters and E-mails from Audience Members, 2003

One girl wrote who had seen FIRE in Winnipeg. She had grown terrified of her father who had become abusive following her parents’ divorce.

“Your play gave me hope,” she wrote, “and well, I never thought I’d get my hope back. I can’t thank you enough for what you’ve done for me, and I’m sure you’ve helped a lot of other teenagers along the way. So, for that, I think you guys are heroes…. You saved me,” she added. “I never thought I could be saved, but you did. Who knew that a play could do so much for someone like me?”

I was really moved by this play and it made me think a lot and it made me change my point of view on some subjects.
– Jenel

The show was excellent and I came to see it three times with friends, we enjoyed it very much. Overall it was excellent and I can’t wait till it comes on TV so my other friends can see it too.
– April

The pamphlet that came with the event, A companion resource to FIRE, is extremely informative and well done. I very much appreciate your artistic “social engagement” and I hope and trust that you will find the resources to continue such work.
– Eveline

I went to the play as a school field trip and I thought it was inspiring and done really well. Thanks for everything.
– Erin

…the show received a standing ovation and a highly informative and successful session took place after the show.
– Brenda

The conversation afterwards is still echoing; it was so rich and warm. It tells me how much we need theatre/performance/dance works like FIRE. I cannot say enough about your work (aesthetically and its impact on community, both in performance and in creation process).
– Phyllis
When the show FIRE came to New Westminster, I thought it was going to be something really boring, but really I was so interested in all the dancing and movement, I was so into it....

– Sara

I was so moved by the powerful messaging of your work. As a former community organizer, I value the concept of focus groups to legitimize one’s endeavors. You did this with great élan. From the detailing of the process, the superb acting/dancing/singing and SHARING of experiences to the discussion afterwards and the provision of counsellors to help those in need, it was a multi dimensional performance. As an educator I valued your honouring of the different ways we all learn...your work was a model of combining visual, auditory, kinesthetic and interactive paths. Thanks for an exciting evening... will enjoy your next work.”

– Bonnie

I attended your fabulous show this afternoon. The production was very moving, both physically (I just couldn’t stop tapping my feet) and emotionally... I was really surprised by the number of hands that went up in the audience when the question, “How many of you have witnessed a fight in the past two months?”

– Ginnette

I saw your production FIRE... where there’s smoke today and I just want to say it was amazing. The scene that’s about being the same and conforming really moved me. I’ve had problems at my school with people that don’t like me because of the way I dress. I’m really interested in getting involved in a program like this, so if you have any information on how I can get involved in one can you please let me know? Thanks. The play was so awesome!

– Jessica

I really enjoyed the show on Sunday and thought that the production was slick and the performers spot on. The writing was very powerful. The choreography was strong, filling the stage with lots of fast paced movement that was hip, fun and easy for kids to relate to. I also thought that it reinforced the edgy, uneasy emotions that the piece elicits. The video work was well integrated into the production, completing the live action on stage. It provided another dimension, like background information that informed the audience about the kids’ situation and/or feelings.

– Doug

I’d just like to say that the show was really, really good. I liked everything in it. It covered a lot of things, thank you very much for coming.

– Andre

FIRE...where there’s smoke has got to be the BEST dramatic/dance play I have ever seen. Ever. It was really touching, I actually cried when the rape monologue was being presented

– Rachel

Your whole production really encouraged me to stand up for myself in school. I would usually be in lots of fights at school. But the thing that was really dumb was that I didn’t wanna fight. It was mostly peer pressure I guess.

– Daniel

Judith, it was indeed a pleasure to meet you on November 14 after the performance of FIRE...where there’s smoke. I thoroughly enjoyed the production and must compliment you and the cast on an outstanding presentation. All too often people forget how difficult it is for young people to cope with the pressures of their peers, parents and society in general. Your talented cast did an excellent job in highlighting how difficult it is to cope with coming of age and the pressures of dealing with bullying, personal sexuality, communicating with parents and even being the victim of sexual assault. While the performance I attended had over 1,000 school children in attendance, I think many adults would benefit from seeing this presentation. As Chief of Police in Saskatoon I extend my compliments to you and the cast on your efforts to show our young people they are not alone in the pressures they face. A terrific performance and a job well done.

– Russell Sabo, Chief of Police, Saskatoon Police Department, November 17, 2003
Dear Judith,

My name is Camille Martens. Tonight I had the pleasure of being at the Vernon presentation of Fire.

I was deeply moved by your work on many levels.

After coming home and reading all about your work, history, and visions I am in awe. I feel inspired, excited and spiritually awakened. It's as if I've just landed in an oasis after a long season of drought. Your work and your words (especially in your “what we believe” speeches) are a catalyst to an awakening within me.

During Fire, I was able to experience a vast array of emotions. This alone was wonderful. I identified with the characters, I was confronted on assumptions and myths I've bought into, and I was impressed by the overall relevance. I was able to enter in to many of the situations presented, and, as a result gained both understanding and compassion.

Reading your speeches I felt less alone, more capable of making a difference and hopeful that it really can happen. Your words articulate my yearnings (I am sure they are universal).

As a dancer, choreographer I strive to have an impact. I want to help people to open up to themselves, to look, to see and to have the courage to change. I have incredible respect for what I know of you and your work. It's real, it's relevant and it's making a difference. Congratulations! And: Wow!!

I hope that someday, somehow our paths cross and that I will be able to work with you, learn from you, and collaborate with you.

Good luck with all current and future projects. Sincerely,

Camille Martens
E-mails and Letters from Others, 2001-2002
March 26, 2002
Karima Budhwani
Law Foundation of B.C.

Dear Ms. Budhwani:

RE: Review of Fire...where there’s smoke

...my general recollection and impression of the performance was that it was entertaining, professionally performed and above all, provocative in a very positive way. I remember being very impressed by how the event really made me think about various relationships and issues, both within the performance and within my personal life. As a new parent, the messages conveyed in the performance were especially important to me and relevant to what I want to teach my 3-year-old daughter. On that level, this project was a resounding success from my perspective.

With respect to written materials, the information provided to each audience member included a “companion resource” to the event. This written resource is in an attractive CD liner note format. This document contains very detailed legal information for audience members. Under the title “Your rights and the legal system,” this companion resource devotes almost five pages to legal information including legal information regarding criminal matters (arrest, detention, search, privilege, obligations to provide information, youth criminal justice matters). In addition, it provides various resources for obtaining legal advice including legal aid and culturally-appropriate legal resource centres (Aboriginal Law Centre). It also provides information for offender support services. Outside of the legal parameters, it provides a variety of crisis and counselling information and resource groups.

Based on my legal knowledge, the legal information was accurate and likely relevant to a youth audience. Moreover, plain language is used to ensure accessibility. I remember my impression at the time of seeing this resource at the event that it was very useful and comprehensive. Upon a further review of it now, I think it is an excellent resource. I would actually highly recommend this resource as a quick legal primer for youth generally.

I should also note that the organizers of the event also made available the BCCLA’s recently completed resource: “Rights Talk: Students and Civil Liberties at School.” This resource is directed at high school students and includes a discussion of fundamental freedoms (free speech, etc.), legal rights, fairness and privacy. We appreciate their efforts to include our resource in the materials available to the audience. In addition, I recall that there was a table full of pamphlets and brochures from other anti-violence advocacy groups that provided further information for audience members on the subject.

In sum, I think that legal information provided with FIRE...where there’s smoke has been well-conceived, well-presented and hopefully well-received. It is my understanding that the performance has been shown to a wide range of audiences, including many school groups, throughout British Columbia.

If you have any questions regarding my comments, please do not hesitate to call me.

Yours sincerely,
Murray Mollard
Executive Director
BC Civil Liberties Association

Thanks very much for the opportunity to see Fire! I was very impressed with the show on a number of levels. From a research perspective, the comments and ideas the show was built upon (i.e. material from the youth focus groups) are an accurate reflection of what research on youth violence tells us. In that regard, it is nice to see the show has a congruence with the
messages of violence prevention as they are being developed by those in the research community.

The question and answer session following the Friday night session provided several touching examples of the degree of the problem of violence in our society. There are youth in our community who have been driven into seclusion (“forced into correspondence” in their words) and lives of isolation and fear through the expression of intolerance, ridicule, bullying, and the many other forms that violence takes. The DanceArts project is an excellent move toward trying to address these problems. Good luck in your plans to move the project forward to film and broadcast, and if there is anything I can do to help, please do get in touch.

Dr. Ted Riecken
Associate Dean, Faculty of Education
Member, Youth and Society Research Unit
University of Victoria

I have just come from the final performance of Fire...Where there’s Smoke in Prince George. This is a truly important show. It reaches out to, and interacts with teens through familiar media (music/video) while introducing them to dance and movement as enjoyable, powerful forms of expression.

The performers were vivid, moving, and above all accessible. The sheer passion of conviction in the performances was incredible to watch.

For me personally, this work was remarkable because its appeal extended beyond its target high school audience. It made me feel like I was back in high school, and reminded me of the troubling issues people face during that time in their lives. If I were not a poor university student, I would donate with enthusiasm. Perhaps in the future. Dance Arts has created a worthy social and artistic cause. I look forward to the next show.

– Mathew

I saw your show with my drama class (from Handsworth Secondary). This was a great show – it was one of my favourite plays that I have ever seen. The cast was excellent – the acting was great – the dancing was so intense and interesting. I really enjoyed it. I think if this show went across Canada it would be a success! I can’t wait for Earth and Air next! Thanks.

– Laura Schober

January 05, 2002

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to support the nomination of DanceArts Vancouver for a Child and Youth
Friendly Community Award. In my opinion, DanceArts, under the artistic direction of Ms. Judith Marcuse, exemplifies the type of ongoing project which contributes in a variety of ways to the development of social responsibility and optimal *communitas*. My work with the Vancouver School Board intersects directly with the concerns being addressed by Ms. Marcuse and her troupe. In my work with VSB, I have both school-based responsibilities as a counsellor and also a position with District Learning Services. I am responsible for Critical Incident Response, Suicide Prevention, Restorative Justice and work also in the areas of violence and abuse prevention. As well, as a counsellor, my colleagues and I deal on a daily basis with the impact on learning, personal, social, and career development issues of domestic violence, eating disorders, racism, sexual harassment, homophobia, poverty and substance abuse.

The engagement of DanceArts Vancouver with these same issues and themes, through the performances of *Ice* and *Fire*, is encouraging. It is vitally important that performers and artists within the arts communities engage such important social issues and receive support for such activities. The research practices used by DanceArts to develop the themes and content of the performances are themselves exemplary. They serve to focus, instruct, and empower youth at the same time as permitting their voices to be heard. The performances are then grounded within the experience and voices of their intended audience, providing a mirroring and authentication of the experience of youth, who continue to be marginalized and commodified by the dominant culture.

*Ice* and *Fire*, on the issues of suicide and violence respectively, were powerful and evocative explorations. The immediacy of dance and multi-media performances provide the youth audience with an opportunity to both reconnect with their personal experiences and to reflect upon them from the distance that enables new possibilities of decision and action. As such, the work can act as an effective catalyst for counsellors and teachers who wish to engage
their students in their growth and development. In particular, the performances can be used in the context of the recently-developed Performance Standards for Social Responsibility. This document, prepared by the Ministry of Education, is a unique tool that enables schools to clarify and teach to expectations for socially responsible behaviour. For students from Kindergarten to Grade Ten, it enables teachers to ascertain whether a student is or is not meeting expectations in the areas of 1) contribution to the classroom and school community, 2) solving problems in peaceful ways, 3) valuing diversity and defending human rights, and 4) exercising democratic rights and responsibilities. The performances of Ice and Fire, along with the projected works of Earth and Air, seem ready-made for advancing students' understanding and enactment of these dimensions of social responsibility.

Other initiatives underway in Vancouver in the area of youth mental health (such as the YouthNet project currently being sponsored by the Self-Help Resource Association and the Canadian Mental Health Association) parallel the research and performance directions being undertaken by DanceArts. Through these diverse initiatives, we can feel encouraged that the youth of our province may experience a greater degree of recognition and engagement in the public realm. The public representation of youth experience within the aesthetic realm as being undertaken by DanceArts is a key component of this development. As such, it is definitely deserving of recognition with an award that celebrates the promotion of child and youth friendly communities.

Sincerely,
W. Scott Lawrance, Ed. D.
District Learning Services
Vancouver School Board

Feedback from the Teacher Questionnaire, 2003

Although students have difficulty expressing their feelings, they were very interested and attentive during the performance.

The dancing performances were excellent, fantastic!

The performance was a wonderful way of informing students of these important issues without lecturing.

The companion resources are great, full of information/statistics and relevant facts.

Students’ impressions of the play were: Good. Their concerns were validated, [it was] thought-provoking, helpful and justified their feelings.

The play was very ‘hip.’ The music, dancing, and the use of video was very exciting and really energetic.

FIRE...where there's smoke was FANTASTIC and PROFESSIONAL!
– Barbara Bain, M.A., RCC
Health Educator, Sexual Health Resource Centre
Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children

The students were overwhelmed but entertained.

FIRE was outstanding.

The study guide was a great way to prepare kids, especially with such a unique style of presentation.

Students thought it was ‘cool’ and outstanding.

This is a very sensitive topic that adolescents are in the centre of, thanks for the help in dealing with this topic.

The students enjoyed the performance. They were impressed by the dancers' energy and abilities.

Multimedia effects added to the power of the performance's theme.

The theme of tolerance is one that all teachers have difficulty instilling. Some of the scenes made them uncomfortable – hopefully it made them think.

I did not use the study guide to prep my students. However I did use some of the post-show questions as a reflection/response to the performance.

I teach drama – it's important for the students to get a taste of live theatre. Many of them cannot afford to/would not bother to take in a theatre event otherwise.

The students loved it. The issues were current and relevant to them.

It was excellent! The multimedia use was impressive.

It helps teens to see they are not alone in things they are experiencing.
Creating National Headlines

Local and national electronic and print media covered both the show and the issues it raised. Media sponsors of the two tours included CHUM TV, CBC Radio One, CBC TV, The Beat 94.5 FM and the Newsleader/Metro Valley Newspaper Group.

From the Media:
The Vancouver Sun: “Everything here has the clarion ring of unvarnished truth. Marcuse’s performers, some just beginning professional careers, have the unerring ability to convince us that they are telling their own secrets: the drunken hazings, the sexual abuse, the gay bashing, the racial prejudice. The performers would put many senior actors to shame. In FIRE...where there’s smoke, Marcuse and her team have conjured the very best kind of theatre: poignant, unmannered and utterly believable.”
Michael Scott, October 27, 2001

The Globe and Mail: “DanceArts has another hit....” October, 2001

The Winnipeg Free Press: “FIRE, the impressive and important DanceArts Vancouver production, gives voice to the pain, fear and anger experienced by kids today.”

“Dance may seem like a questionable vehicle to give voice to the stories, but the physicality of Judith Marcuse’s choreography boasts surprising communication skills. It expresses those primal emotions that are almost inexpressible. One frustrated, growling boy lets off steam with a scorching, pounding tap solo suitable for Stomp. The constant movement of the restless performers keep the eye engaged and supplies an essential intensity.”
Kevin Prokosh, November 1, 2003

The Vancouver Courier: “...a tour de force of theatrical integration, a compelling 70 minutes of life as seen through the eyes of victims, victimizers and bystanders...the performers bring their characters to life with insight and attitude to spare.”

2001

CKNW Radio: “Every parent, teacher and teen should see this high-energy performance.”
Bill Good, The Bill Good Show, 2003

Text of a CBC Radio Review, October 31, 2003

Robert Enright (RE) is in conversation with Terry McLeod (TM):

TM: FIRE...where there’s smoke is a brand new production in Manitoba Theatre for Young People's teen series. It looks at how young people see violence in the world around them. It's a multi-media piece involving dance and video, and our reviewer, Robert Enright, joined the audience of teenagers yesterday afternoon and has come by to tell us a bit about the show. Now you hinted that you think this is fabulous.

RE: Oh yeah, it's, I mean this is a piece by Judith Marcuse. Now Judith is a long-time choreographer in Canada; has won the major choreographic awards – the Chalmers Award and the Clifford E. Lee Choreographic Award. You can see her influence, obviously, in this, because this is a very slippery piece for kids. I don't think they realized in the hour and fifteen minutes that went on yesterday how much dance they actually saw – contemporary dance – it was so slyly integrated into this quite remarkable multi-media performance. Technically, it is remarkable – they are using state-of-the-art digital video technology on three big screens that are above the actors on stage – surround sound. The choreography, the movement . . . everything
about it is so contemporary and so spot-on that teenagers in the audience were just absolutely mesmerized by it yesterday.

At the end they have a conversation with the kids about what they liked or didn’t like about the show because it’s a show that deals with teenage violence, and one kid took the mike and said “I gotta tell you that I think everything in this show must have touched somebody in this audience at some point.” It is so thoroughly done and I think that comes out of the source for it – Marcuse and her company worked over three years and interviewed 400 teenagers in Vancouver and British Columbia, and found out what kids thought violence was about and how it affected their lives. So everything that’s uttered onstage is actually a part of a collage of those 400 kids they talked to, and I think that’s where the veracity and truth of it comes from.

TM: So does it tell some kind of a story?

RE: Well, it’s interesting, Terry, it does. What it does is... there’s lots of movement and when they first come on – these nine actors, by the way, five guys and four young women, are just the dream cast – they just move and can dance. In fact a lot of them have dance training and aren’t actors, but have turned into very good actors, and basically each of them takes on a character. There’s one young woman who’s kind of ostracized and left outside, there’s a bully, there’s a kid who doesn’t want to get involved but ends up going along with the bully and doesn’t know how to break free from the kind of tyranny that that kid imposes on him... so the characters are onstage and in the midst of the wonderful movement they’ll often stop and break and have a kind of monologue, and these monologues are very revealing. They run from everything from outright declarations of violence against one kid and beating someone up for no reason other than it felt like he wanted to do it, to a very subtle little monologue by a character named Nicco Lorenzo, who talks about seeing a grandmother who drops a card and he doesn’t want to say anything to her because he’s afraid the grandmother will think that he’s going to hit on her somehow, and try and rob her, and when he finally does say something, the grandmother says – even though they’re different race – the grandmother says, “Oh, that was a wonderful thing, you’re just like my grandson,” and the kid says, “It was just a little tiny thing but it made my day.” It has this beautiful sense of being a small sculpted story about how you can, in fact, belong and not have to deal with violence in your life. So it’s very deftly told, this series of anecdotes that, as I say, intercede and are part of the structure of the ongoing movement for an hour and fifteen minutes.

By the way, the music is by Hal Foxton Beckett, a composer who’s won countless awards, and has done, I think, ten or twelve feature films. The music is just wonderful for this thing too – it’s incredibly vibrant and the speed and velocity of this performance is really something to see.

TM: Now this is aimed at teens, right?

RE: It is, in fact, it’s grade 6 and up – anybody younger than that basically won’t get in. It’s pretty hard, it deals with date rape, it deals with lots of violence – one kid comes on and says there’s blood in the classroom, so it hits hard. But it’s so beautifully structured that it really works and, as I say, Marcuse is a kind of master of how to make movement be interesting. She did that as a choreographer, and now she’s doing it with DanceArts, her company, for kids. This is something I highly recommend parents take their teenagers to, or see it, because it really hits spot-on about the truth of kids’ experience today.
Workshops (1998 – 2001)
Leaders:
Judith Marcuse, David Diamond, John Lazarus, Kedrick James, Shari Graydon and staff of the Gulf Islands Film School
Participants: Over 400 youth in 33 workshops

FIRE...where there’s smoke (2001)
Première production:
18 October – 10 November, Scotiabank Dance Centre, Vancouver, B.C.
British Columbia Tour (2001)
October – Open rehearsals in Vancouver, 18 October – 29 November, 44 performances in Vancouver, Victoria and Prince George, B.C.

Artistic Team
Artistic Director/Stage and Video Director/Choreographer: Judith Marcuse
Composer: Hal Foxton Beckett
Writers: Kathleen Oliver and Kevin Kerr
Assistant Director/Youth Community Liaison: Spencer Herbert
Videographer/Editor: Val Nelson
Dramaturge: Jane Heyman
Set Designer: James Pollard
Lighting Designer: Gerald King
Photographer: David Cooper
Costume Designer: Jennifer Eves
Assistant Choreographer: Shaun Phillips
Tap Choreographer: David Cox
Additional Videography: Mark Ellam, Patrick Harrison, Amr Heddaya
Walker, Jordan White, Nettie Wild, Lauren Wolfe, Alex Wong, Sarah Wong, Amy Woods, Jade Yamana, Kevin Yee and Nabaouiya Zouinati

Youth Action Group
Seika Boye, Darcy Cadman, Sara M. Dore, Jesse Ferreras, Sebastian Gil-Riano, Diego Maranan, Rachel Marceuse, Damian Pearson, Mandy Ryan, Drew Thompson, Amy Woods and Nabaouiya Zouinati

Production Team
Senior Technical Director and Production Manager: James Pollard
Stage Manager: David Kerr
Apprentice Stage Manager: Craig Hall
Production Assistant: Robin Richardson
Head Carpenter: Kevin MacDonald
Audio Engineer: Susanne Clampett
Head Electrician: Mark Trueman
Video Operator: Grant Gregson
Technical Director, Set-up: Jean Philippe Trépanier
Music Mixer: Vince Renaud
Guitar Music Mixer: Lee Parker
Design of Media Playback and Editing System: Kenneth Newby and Aleksandra Dulic

DanceArts Vancouver
Artistic Producer: Judith Marcuse
Project Manager: Rob Poelvoorde
Media Relations Manager: Amita Daniels
Development Officer: Tom Sandborn
Financial Manager: Nigel Jones (Quantum Accounting)
Publicist/Victoria Community Liaison: Miriam Shostak
Board of Directors

Miles Alperstein, Salima Bhanji, Barbara Claridge, Yulanda Faris (Honorary Chair), Frances Grunberg (Chair), Barry McKinnon, Danny Steinberg, Diana Tang and Dr. Clive Wrigley (Treasurer)

Remount of FIRE...where there’s smoke (2003)

22 September – 24 October
Scotiabank Dance Centre, Vancouver, B.C and Banff Centre, Banff, Alberta

Western Canada Tour (2003)
25 October – 28 November
30 performances in Banff, Alberta, St. Albert, Alberta, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Vernon, B.C. and New Westminster, B.C.

Artistic Team

Producer/Stage and Video Director/Choreographer: Judith Marcuse
Composer: Hal Fuxton Beckett
Writers: Kathleen Oliver and Kevin Kerr
Assistant Director/Youth Community Liaison: Spencer Herbert
Videographer/Editor: Val Nelson
Assistant to the Director: Andrea Jane Gunnlaugson
Dramaturge: Jane Heyman

Set Designer: James Pollard
Lighting Designer: Gerald King
Photographer: David Cooper
Costume Designer: Reva Quam
Assistant Director: Spencer Herbert
Tap Choreographer: David Cox
Additional Videography: Mark Ellam, Patrick Harrison, Amr Heddaya

* Members of Canadian Actors' Equity Association

Screen Content Performers

As listed for the 2001 production

Youth Action Group
Emma Banks, Nina Bialecki, Jamie Catron, Richard Coe, Peter Haywood, Diego Maranan, Rachel Marcuse

Production Team

Technical Director/Production Manager: Sharon Huizinga
Stage Manager: David Kerr*
Assistant Stage Manager: Caitlin Pencarrick*
Audio Engineer: Susanne Clampett
Head Electrician: Mark Trueman
Video Operator/Technician: Duncan Keith
Video Re-editing: Amos Hertzman
FOH Audio Engineer/Technician: Eric Laliberté
Lighting Operator/Technician: Ryan Kell

Design of Media Playback and Editing System: Kenneth Newby and Aleksandra Dulic

DanceArts Vancouver

Artistic Producer: Judith Marcuse
Project Manager: Rob Poelvoorde
Communications: Joan Wellwood
Development Officer: Greg Starr
Financial Manager: Nigel Jones (Quantum Accounting)
Community Liaison: Zanita Lukezich
Marketing Coordinator: Lynda Clark
Box Office Manager: Monica Kim
FIRE Brochure (2003): Rachel Marcuse

Board of Directors

Miles Alperstein, Yulanda Faris (Honorary Chair), Frances Grunberg (Chair), Spencer Herbert, Barry McKinnon, Joyce Preston, Danny Steinberg, Diana Tang, Dr. Clive Wrigley (Treasurer)
The FIRE Project involved a great many people in many organizations who gave very generously of their time, energy and insight. The following lists our community partners across Western Canada.

Our Community Partners

Greater Vancouver

Youth Against Violence
Burnaby Drug and Alcohol Services
Burnaby Youth Counselling Services
Aboriginal Safe House
Integrated Youth Services
Coquitlam Crisis Line
Dial-A-Law (legal advice)
Delta Youth Services
Reconnect Programs (for street-involved youth)
Family and Youth Services
After Hours
Safer Counselling Services (suicide prevention)
Children of the Street Society
Arrows to Freedom Cultural Healing Society (First Nations youth services)
Last Door Youth Detox
Fraserside Community Services (programs and counselling for youth)
YouthQuest (gay and lesbian youth services)
Elizabeth Fry Society
Seymour Youth Drop-In Centre
North Shore Youth Safe House
Richmond Youth Service Agency (First Nation services)
Richmond RCMP Victim’s Services
Drug and Alcohol Program Options Community Services
Surrey Evergreen (shelter for abused women)
Surrey Crisis Line (crisis intervention and suicide prevention)
GAB Youth Services (for gay and lesbian youth)
Vancouver Safe House
VAVAW – Rape Crisis 24hr. Line
Helpline for Children
YouthCo (services for people living with HIV/AIDS)
Boys’ and Girls’ Club of Greater Vancouver
The Gathering Place
SUCCESS
Watari
Nisha Society
MindBodyLove
Away Program
Aaja Magazine
Dusk to Dawn
BC Civil Liberties Association
Odyssey I
Odyssey II
Save the Children
Red Cross Abuse Prevention Services
UBC White Ribbon Project
BC Safe Schools (Surrey)
Youth Together Against Violence
Vancouver Playhouse
Dunbar Community Centre
Spara Special Services for Children
Foster Parents Association
Xtra West
Douglas Park Community Centre

Victoria and Gulf Islands

YM-YWCA Youth Outreach Programs
NEED Crisis
Youth Empowerment Society (YES)
Victoria Women’s Sexual Assault Centre
Project Respect
Canadian Red Cross
Victoria Women’s Transition House
Law Centre
Child Abuse Prevention and Counselling Society
BC Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse.
James Bay Community Centre
Burnside-Gorge Community Centre
Fairfield Community Centre
Fernwood Community Centre
Gulf Island Film School, Galiano Island

Vernon

North Okanagan Youth and Family Services
Family Resource Centre – Lay Counselling
Whiteville Community Services
Armstrong Community Services
Youth GLO
Teen Crisis Line 542-TEEN
Vernon Integrated Youth Services
RCMP Victim Assistance Program
Women's Transition House
First Nations Youth Outreach
Teen Junction Youth Centre

**Prince George**
Youth Around Prince George Resource Centre
First Nations Resource Centre

**Terrace**
Kermode Friendship Centre
Terrace Women's Centre

**Prince Rupert**
First Nations Education Centre

**Masset**
Haida Health Centre and Nights Alive

**Banff**
Community Services (youth drop-in centre)
YWCA (crisis intervention)
Bow Valley Victim's Services
AIDS Bow Valley – Counselling and Support
Bow Valley Addictions Worker

**Calgary**
Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter
Renfrew Recovery Centre (detox)
Youth Services (day programs and counselling)
Distress Centre (services for youth in need)
The Back Door (off-the-streets programs)
Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse
Gay and Lesbian Community Services
Sunrise – Native Addiction Services
Stop Abuse in Families

**Edmonton**
Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (youth counselling services)
Poundmaker's Lodge (First Nations adolescent treatment centre)
Boyle Street Coop (housing and services for street-involved youth)
Youth Connections (resources and workshops for job/life skills)
John Howard Society (legal advice and halfway house)
Family Violence Prevention Centre (outreach support and anti-violence workshops)
Sexual Assault Crisis Line
Victim Services
St. Albert Youth Community Centre
Youth Understanding Youth (gay and lesbian services)
Teens Helping Teens 428-TEEN

**Winnipeg**
Macdonald Youth Services (emergency services and crisis intervention)
Winnipeg GLBT Youth Group
Mental Health Services for Children, Youth and Families
Aboriginal Health and Wellness Centre
Osborne House (crisis shelter and counselling services)
Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (counselling and support services)
Ndinawe (shelter for street youth)
Suicide Prevention
Teen Touch
Kids Help Phone
Worker's Organizing Resource Centre
Klinic Sexual Assault Crisis Line

**Saskatoon**
Saskatoon Mobile Crisis
Abused Women's Info Line
Kids Help Phone
Parents Help Line
Saskatoon Sexual Assault Centre
Department of Community Resources and Employment – Child Protection Intake Line
Adelle House
Crisis Nursery
Family Healing Circle Lodge
Salvation Army Men's Shelter
Saskatoon Interval House
Tamara's House
YWCA
Alternatives to Men Violent to their Partners
Catholic Family Services
EGADZ Youth Centre
RespectEd – Abuse Prevention Education
Saskatoon Family Services – Domestic Abuse Program (for children exposed to violence)
Saskatoon Family Support Centre – Domestic Abuse Outreach Program
Saskatoon Indian and Metis Friendship Centre
Saskatoon Victims' Services
Gay and Lesbian Services
White Buffalo Centre

And, not listed here, many secondary, alternative and other schools throughout the region.
Our Thanks

The staff and directors of DanceArts Vancouver Society are deeply grateful for the range of assistance that contributed to the realization of The FIRE Project. The following lists reflect some of the contributors to the process that was, among many other things, a labour of love. Names and organizations that should be here may have been inadvertently omitted. For that, we apologize, and again express our thanks to the many who have given so generously and in so many ways.

Core Funding
Canada Council for the Arts, The Government of British Columbia through the BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch, BC Arts Council, City of Vancouver, Melusine Foundation

Major Funders for the Original Production and 2001 BC Tour

Title Sponsor

BC Hydro

Funders

Major Funders of the Western Canada 2003 Touring Production

For the Fire Workshops
Additional Financial Support and Assistance for The FIRE Project


David Diamond, Kedrick James, John Lazarus, Shari Graydon, Vancouver Playhouse, Jaimie Turkington, Jenise Boland, Grant Tufts, Irwin Oostindie, Romi Chandra, Jenn Horgos, Gab Youth Services, The Centre, Natalie Clark, Adbusters Media Foundation, Colin Vint, Fran’s Roundtable, Donna Spencer, Ted Roberts, Robert Rabinovitch, Playdium at Metrotown Centre, Nabaouiva Zouinati, Arnold Baroche (Dusk to Dawn), Michelle Fortin (Watari), Judge Judi Gedye (British Columbia Provincial Court), Laura Huey (BC Civil Liberties Association), Axis Theatre Company, David Huntington (Odyssey I), Helen James (Ministry of the Attorney General, Crown Counsel), Fred Lathen (Odyssey 2), Jennifer Lord, Melanie Mark (Save the Children), Dr. Clive Wrigley, Louise Alden, Cineworks, Scotiabank Dance Centre, Ballet BC, Britannia Community Services Centre, Richard Marcuse, William Louis, Virgin Megastore, Hamilton McLymont, Mo Ling Chui, Tracey Cooke, Wendy Woods, Karen Lepine, Theo Rosenfeld, Susan Gordon, M. Simon Levin, Binder Sajan, The Maples Centre for Youth, Baldwin Wong, Collective Echoes, Vancouver Youth Voices, Away, Alice Niwinski
## Appendices

### Appendix 1

**A Scene-by-Scene Outline of the Production**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene Number</th>
<th>Scene Name</th>
<th>Page of Script</th>
<th>Characters/Description</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stark, fast-paced video montage of many still and moving images and portraits – all of young people.</td>
<td>Video/music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>Dances of Courage</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>Ensemble (All). Introduces the characters; their relationships are revealed in movement and dance.</td>
<td>Live Movement/video/music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Taunts</td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>All. The insults, labels and taunts that we hear all the time.</td>
<td>Live text/video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Soliloquy</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alan, Nathan. What is going on inside the heads of two guys during a violent fight?</td>
<td>Live - Two monologues at top speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mike at Mirror</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mike tries to figure out what he wants to wear, who he wants to be today.</td>
<td>Video movement (fast motion), music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>All. Pressures and questions of identity – school, work, wanting to be “real, not fake.”</td>
<td>Live text and movement, video (one girl, “12 looks”), music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Judgments</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>All. “Too fat, too dumb, wrong hair....”</td>
<td>Live text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Inside the Violence No. 1</td>
<td></td>
<td>We follow a girl running away on the streets, see the beginning of a mugging.</td>
<td>Video movement/music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Attacker/Victim/Observer</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>Mike, Nathan, Diego. The victim, the attacker and the observer. We hear and see each of their versions of an attack – at the same time.</td>
<td>Live text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mother-Daughter</td>
<td></td>
<td>Four women – a humorous take on the games of power and manipulation that mothers and daughters play.</td>
<td>Live movement, video, music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Advice for Dad</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mike. A son turns the tables and gives gratuitous advice on life to his dad.</td>
<td>Live text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Father-Son</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alan. A son tries to cope with his always-departing, no time-for-him father who looms over him on three large screens.</td>
<td>Live text and movement, video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nothing</td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>Julie, Chorus. Someone called her “Nothing”; she defensively explains her acceptance of her new name.</td>
<td>Live text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The Rules</td>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>All. A sung send-up of life as a set of military rules.</td>
<td>Live song and movement video, music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Big World</td>
<td></td>
<td>All. A high-energy dance and video collage about the violence we see in the media.</td>
<td>Live movement, video, music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Violence Is...</td>
<td></td>
<td>Jimmy. A movement solo – confusion and panic, the mixed messages we get about violence.</td>
<td>Live movement, video graphics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Careful!</td>
<td>18-19 Liz, All. The world doesn’t feel like a safe place…. Careful!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Elevator</td>
<td>Mike is trapped in a glass elevator – he panics.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Trapped</td>
<td>All. The conspiracy of silence.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Inside the Violence #2</td>
<td>Parents fight, a young girl watches.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Home is Where</td>
<td>Nathan. “My parents fight; I curl up in a ball and try to make my mind go blank.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Inside the Violence #3</td>
<td>Curled figures in a school hallway, a girl curled up in a doorway.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Flailing</td>
<td>All. An explosion. Where to put all this frustrated energy?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>Diego. Date rape – he tries to figure out how he lost control.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>My Fault</td>
<td>Jill. Date rape – she tries to figure out what happened.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Locker Dance</td>
<td>A young woman tries to run away from her problems and is put down by other girls.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Blood in the Hallway</td>
<td>Julie. Violence is normal at school but she hates it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>Girl on the Stairs</td>
<td>A girl alone in a crowd.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Floating Girl</td>
<td>Luba, All. She’s numb, alone and disconnected; Jimmy tries to help.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Excuses</td>
<td>All. “She made me do it! Who cares! It wasn’t personal! I was drunk! He had it coming....”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Tap Rage</td>
<td>Alan. He explodes with frustration; his anger ignites the whole group.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Silence – the Observer</td>
<td>Julie. She sees a fight and, much to her surprise, stops it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>1st Running</td>
<td>All. The speed and craziness of daily life. Jimmy is teased and humiliated.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Helping Out</td>
<td>Jimmy, Alan, Luba. Friends try to help</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>2nd Running</td>
<td>All. Back into the craziness. Liz splits with Nathan, Jill supports her.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Little Gestures</td>
<td>Diego. Racism, being judged, the power of a small positive gesture from an old lady.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Women’s Duet</td>
<td>Jill, Liz. Two enemies connect in a new way.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Saying It</td>
<td>Jill finally tells Julie that she was raped.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Jamming</td>
<td>All. At the dance – we see new relationships evolving.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Look at Me</td>
<td>Mike. His funny, celebratory story about coming out at school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Jamming Reprise</td>
<td>All. Back at the dance, Nathan is isolated by the others.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Labels</td>
<td>Nathan. The beginning of positive change, new questions…taking off the labels.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>Curtain Call</td>
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**FIRE...WHERE THERE’S SMOKE**
Appendix 2
The Teachers’ Study Guide
A DanceArts Vancouver Production
Study Guide
suitable for Grades 9 - 12

Creating Fire
A DanceArts Vancouver Production

DanceArts Vancouver, founded in 1980, began work on its new quartet of shows with and for youth when Artistic Director Judith Marcuse was presenting some work at a Vancouver high school. She was struck by the intense and frenetic energy in the hallways - the tension, aggression, repression and sexuality - and was impelled to explore what lay behind it all.

Taking a leap of faith, she started a series of workshops, which lasted for over three years, with 400 youth aged fifteen to eighteen. She was interested in hearing their stories, as they expressed by themselves, and so ensured a workshop environment that was open, safe, and respectful. One issue kept coming up; it was that of teen suicide. Upon completion of the workshops, DanceArts Vancouver worked to translate the thoughts, feelings, and stories heard into a readily understandable, exciting, and truthful show. Through much hard work, the power of what was being said by the teens was successfully captured by the first production.

The show went on to experience enthusiastic audience response. Youth lined up around the block to see the original show - “Ice: beyond cool” - after-hours at the Pacific Centre Mall in Vancouver. Subsequent letters sent to DanceArts expressed to staff that seeing the show helped many teens by giving them other options to suicide. In some cases they told staff that the show had saved their lives. The show toured to seven cities across Canada and was made into a film, which aired on CBC this fall.

And then, workshops started for the FIRE project. The FIRE project workshops examined violence in its many forms and incorporated theatre, creative writing, media literacy, video, and movement within the workshops conducted in five BC communities. Once again we discovered there were consistent themes within the fifteen to eighteen year-old age group.

Hearing young people articulate themselves so clearly on the themes, Judith felt it was important to use their words directly in “Fire...where there’s smoke.” In this production, nothing is invented - the content has all come directly from the words and images expressed by youth. A Youth Action Group was formed and mandated to come up with a media strategy that would reach the youth audience effectively. They developed the poster concept, created the matchbooks, and wrote ad copy for radio and television. In addition they helped create the brochure on youth rights to be distributed to the audience after each show. Another initiative to keep FIRE real was to engage a youth advocate/artist to be the assistant director on the project.

Suggested Activities to Prepare for Fire...where there’s smoke

1. Naming the violence
Have the students name different kinds of violence (i.e. sexual, domestic, peer, gangs, bullying, glorification in popular culture, etc.). Discuss the common links between them, for instance, how it starts, how it stops, and how it is perpetuated.

2. Stemming violence
We hear a lot about the prevalence and acceptability of violence in our daily lives. In a recent Maclean’s study, 50% of high school students were reported as feeling unsafe at
school. Break up the class into small groups and have them identify the forms and sources of violence in your school. Ask the group leaders to report back to the class as a whole some recommendations on what steps teachers and school officials can take to eradicate some of these sources.

3. Being affected by violence
Have the students in the class pair-up to discuss the following questions: What do you do when you are exposed to violence or are involved in a violent confrontation? How does your personal safety (both physical and emotional) affect the way you learn? Do you feel safe to take risks and make mistakes?

4. Peer Pressure and Conforming
In our world there can be a lot of pressure to conform to what society defines as "normal". Discuss with the class the degrees of normalcy and the point(s) at which something is no longer considered normal. Who or what creates the model of "normal"? Crossing this line often means that an individual is seen as not fitting in or being outside the mould. This can result in being ostracized. Ask the students to identify how what you wear, do, and say fit society's view of normal. Discuss how labeling someone as normal, abnormal, or weird can be damaging to him/her.

5. Individuality
Whether you're in or out of a group it can be hard to stand up for your own beliefs. If you stand up for your beliefs, or for someone else, you can sometimes risk being pushed out of the group and being turned on. Pose the following questions to the class: Why does this happen? Is this a concern for you? What could be changed about groups that do this to each other - so that they can become groups where you're comfortable being yourself?

6. Escaping violence
Many youth have talked to us about feeling trapped in situations of violence. They didn't feel like they had anyone to turn to for help who would not overreact. Invite students to discuss the following: Has this ever happened to you? What services are out there to help in this situation? Do you have anyone in your life you could talk to if you needed help?

7. The stigma of violence
We know that around violence there is a lot of silence. Discuss with your students and fellow teachers: Why is violence so hard to talk about? How can we change that? Why do adults and youth alike sometimes ignore instances of abuse and violence? What does it take to stand up and try to change a violent situation? Who can you call if you know about a violent confrontation that is going to take place? Would you?

8. Desensitization to violence
A recent study estimated that by the time a child graduates from elementary school they have seen on average 8000 murders, and more than 100 000 acts of miscellaneous violence. Ask the students to respond to the following in writing: What are some affects of seeing so much violence? Do you tolerate violence more as you are increasingly exposed to it? Could this expectation lead to more violence? Do you become desensitized? How do you combat that desensitization?

9. Being judged
Throughout our workshops the issue of judgement came up. One girl said, "I wish just for one day someone wouldn't judge me." Ask the students to write a response to the following questions: When someone calls you a name, or judges you, how do you feel? What are some aftereffects of that judgement? What can you do about it?

10. Accountability
Youth felt that too often adults in their lives had no time for them and neglected them. They felt that they only got some attention if they were in trouble – there was very little positive reinforcement in their lives. Other youth felt that their parents or guardians were too controlling and tended to overreact. Many felt that because of these traits they would prefer not to talk to adults at all. Ask the class to make up a list of things adults should and should not do to gain trust from teens. Encourage the students to share this list with at least one adult.

11. Role of Media
We learn from the media (newspaper, internet, TV, radio, movies, books, magazines, etc.) most of what we learn about society. Discuss with the class: What does the media say about youth? What are the most reported stories when it comes to youth? Is it a positive picture of youth? Does the media’s image of youth reflect your reality? If not, what could you do to make it reflect your reality more closely?

12. Poverty and Hunger
One form of inequality/discrimination that we heard quite a bit about was poverty. One in five youth in Canada lives in poverty. We heard the phrases "Poverty is violence," and "Hunger is
violence.” Ask your class if they relate to those statements and further discuss: What is poverty? How could living in poverty change the way you live your life?

A List of Strategies for Coping
This list of things to try and do in violent or potentially violent situations came directly from the workshops we held with over 400 youth.

- Try not to judge other people. Recognize that there are usually no simple answers to difficult situations. Trying these two things can be a good beginning to solving violent situations.
- It is often impossible to solve violent situations by yourself. Solutions usually lie in working collectively with other people.
- Talk with each other. Listen.
- Be patient with your parents or guardians. Try to keep communication open. If you’re in an abusive situation, get outside help.
- By helping others, we often help ourselves.
- Taking a risk and taking action can be hard, but even a small gesture can have huge effects.
- Trust your instincts. Don’t let other people tell you what you’re feeling isn’t real.
- Strong emotions are normal - we all need to find safe ways to express them. Behind violence, there are often strong emotions that need to be communicated.
- We must never see another person as someone less deserving of his or her rights and of respect than we are. Difference should not be dehumanizing.
- Physical and verbal violence are equally damaging.
- If you feel threatened, it's easy to feel isolated. Calling a help line does not make you a freak. There are peers and adults out there who can help.

Ask your students to respond to the efficacy and relevancy of each of these strategies. Invite them to add to the list. Discuss what would be meaningful ways of circulating the list within the school and community.

Post-Show Activities
Questions about the creative process in *Fire*:
1. What images, situations, speeches, or movement seemed real to you? What did you like? What didn’t you like?
2. Video, dance, spoken words, music, and photography were all part of this show. What element did you find most engaging? How well did they work together?
3. What dance styles were used in this production?
4. What music styles were used in this production?
5. What video styles were used in this production?

Activities
1. Keep a journal for a week and record all the times you are exposed to violence, in whatever way you perceive it. After a week of recording go back and categorize the violence that you can change and the violence you can not change immediately or by yourself.
2. Many youth talked about the lack of positive feedback in their lives, and how important small gestures of encouragement were. Write a letter to a group or person whom you admire or respect about your appreciation of them or the work they are doing.
3. Have your class agree on a fundraiser for a group that is doing effective, and exciting work around the issues brought up by the show.
4. Contact a youth organization in your community and do research on what activities and services they offer. Make a presentation to your class about this organization.
5. Find a local youth organization that does workshops on an issue of your choice (homophobia, racism, sexism, able-ism, poverty, youth rights, etc.) and have them come to your class or group to give a workshop or have a discussion session.
6. Write a review of the show making sure to critique all elements (content, lights, sound score, set design, performers, choreography, direction, video, text, and overall "feel" of the piece). DanceArts appreciates all the feedback we can get - so please send your review on to us!
Evaluation Form for
Fire...where there’s smoke

(If you would like to distribute this form to your students or group members please do so.
Or you can fill it out on behalf of your class/school.)

Name of school:
Address:
Your name:
Number of student and grade level attending the performance:
Was this production appropriate for your grade level?
Was this study guide useful?
Did the presentation meet your expectations?
Can you share some specific comments made by your students?
Was your class or group moved to take some ongoing action as a result of seeing "Fire"?
What were three strengths of the production?
Was there anything you would like to see changed or improved about the production?
Would you like to be directly contacted about the next in our series, "Earth," which is about youth and the environment?

All photographs, both those of performers and those that are part of the video element of the production, are by David Cooper.

Design: Corporate Graphics, Vancouver, BC

Produced by Judith Marcuse Projects
Judith Marcuse, LL.D., Artistic Producer

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Première Production
Vancouver, BC
October 18 – November 10, 2001
Faris Theatre, Scotiabank Dance Centre

B.C. Tour
Victoria, BC
November 14 – 23, 2001
Alix Goolden Performance Hall
at the Victoria Conservatory of Music

Prince George, BC
November 27 – 29, 2001
Playhouse Theatre

Western Canada Tour
Banff, Alberta
October 25, 2003
Banff Centre

St. Albert, Alberta
October 27, 2003
Arden Theatre

Winnipeg, Manitoba
October 30 – November 7, 2003
Manitoba Theatre for Young People

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
November 13 – 14, 2003
Centennial Auditorium

Vernon, BC
November 19, 2003
Vernon and District Performing Arts Centre

New Westminster, BC
November 22 – 28, 2003
Massey Theatre