

WURF

WURF¹ is a performance project about a marionette that cuts its strings.

The 'marionette', WURF, is a human performer suspended by a harness and rigged to an apparatus enabling others to, initially, control 'its' movements.

WURF can be presented as a 'Sonic Theatre² Spectacle' and/or as a Street Theatre performance:

as a 'Sonic Theatre Spectacle' WURF is 'staged' in an appropriate performance space (very high ceilings, large stage area, very good sound system) and is choreographed with highly skilled performers;

as a Street Performance an easily transported apparatus is set up in a public space and the marionette, WURF, is controlled by a local audience.



WURF as Sonic Theatre Spectacle

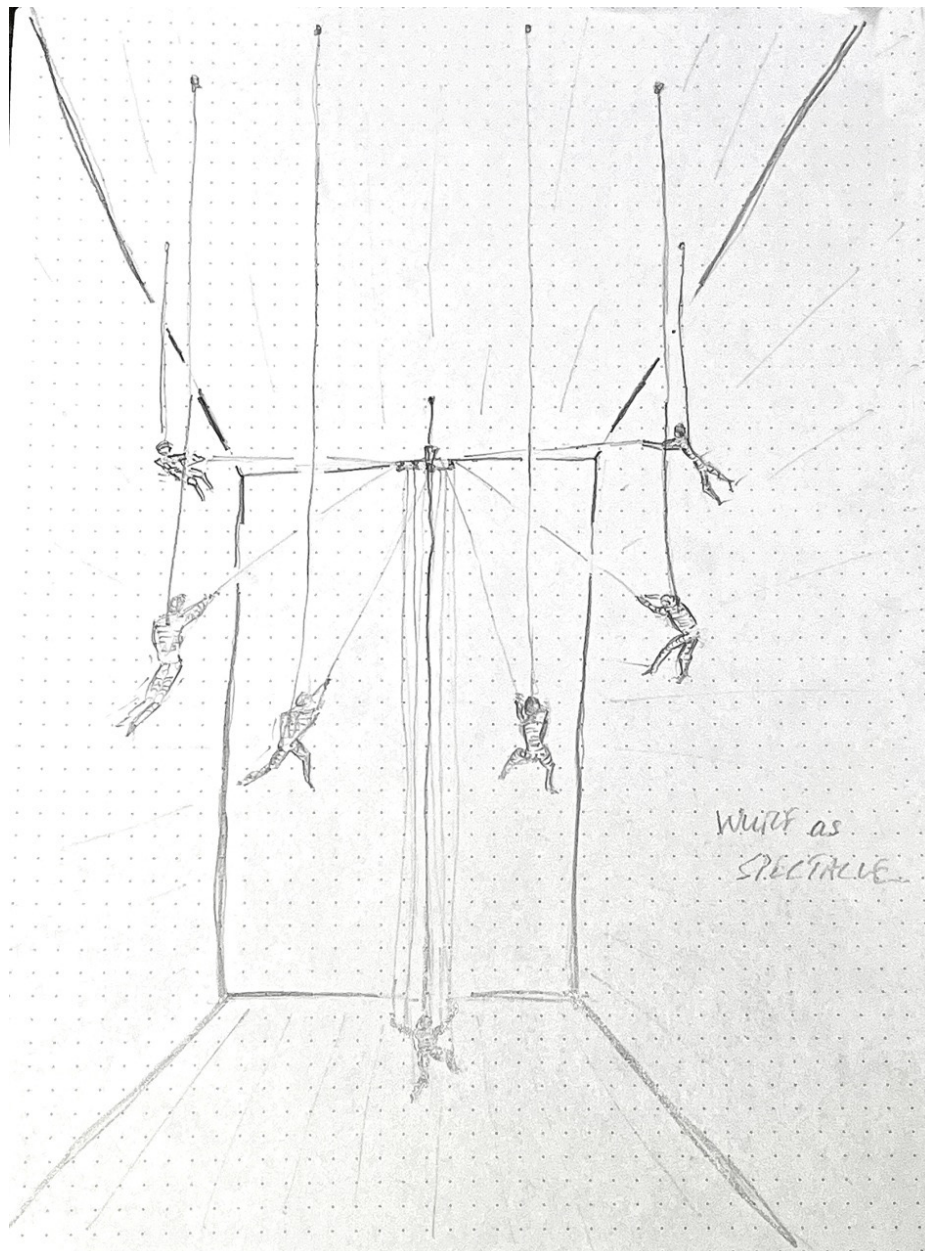
WURF – a human/marionette - is suspended by a climbing rope (preferably over around 200 dm) clipped to a customized harness. Just the balls of WURF's feet touch the ground enabling traction, but WURF's full weight is carried by the harness (this combination of suspension, traction, and a very long rope enables a very dramatic spectrum of possible movement and momentum). Four to eight (or more) 'controller' performers are suspended roughly 130 dm in the air. They actively 'control' WURF's limbs through a pulleys.

'TURB'³ (another performer) descends down the main rope by which WURF is suspended. On reaching WURF, TURB turns on a headlamp that WURF is wearing.

The headlamp - a spotlight - (located at the 'third eye', signifying 'consciousness') illuminates a pair of scissors just out of WURF's reach. The headlamp also illuminates WURF's controllers.

WURF 'awakes', and, eventually, grasps the scissors.
WURF cuts the strings, and falls.

The fall of WURF to the ground opens up a huge spectrum of theatrical possibilities best realised by circus/theatre performers.



WURF as Street Theatre

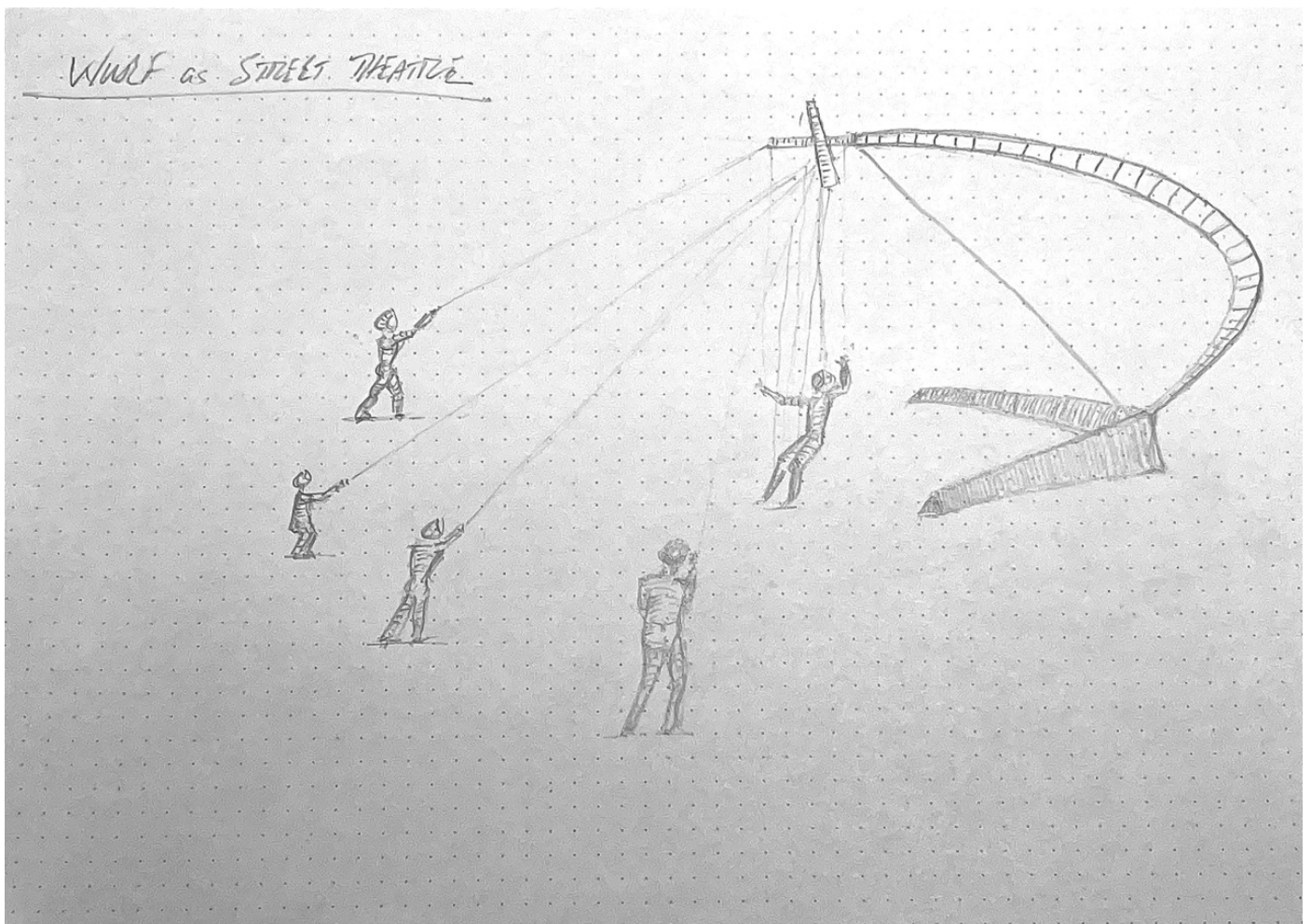
WURF – a human/marionette - is suspended by a climbing rope clipped to a customized harness. Just the balls of WURF's feet touch the ground enabling some traction, but WURF's full weight is carried by the harness (this combination of suspension, traction, and a rope enables a very dramatic spectrum of movement and momentum).

The apparatus by which WURF is suspended and controlled can be transported in a van and will be quickly assembled in a public space. The apparatus⁴ is assembled, and WURF is suspended. A pair of scissors are just out of WURF's reach.

WURF's pulley system is made available to the audience who can actively control WURF through a pulley/marionette system. By collaborating using the controllers the audience can enable WURF to reach the scissors. If/when WURF reaches the scissors... WURF awakes, becomes active/able, and cuts the strings.

WURF cuts free, and falls.

What follows is an interactive theatre focused on WURF's struggle to learn to move in gravity and, possibly, a desire to climb back out of gravity.



The Poésis of WURF

All of us are, often, unaware of the forces which compel us.
All of us are driven by desires within ourselves and forces outside ourselves which we are unconscious of, and even if we are conscious of them we may still be compelled. The strings of a puppet, when we are the puppet, can represent a great many things.

Strung up, strung out, held aloft by strings, controlled by it knows not what, oblivious even to the fact that it's controlled, WURF is... anyone and everyone...

Any person, in their life, can relate to strings that control, and the potential to cut free.



What If?

What if we imagine WURF as an addict, and the strings and controllers as addiction⁵?

Addiction: a comfort, a deep comfort, a kind of paradise⁶, a safe place, a place free from fear.

While you have your fix, whatever it is, you're in a state of bliss, but it's a bliss that has no lasting power and as soon as its candle burns out you're way back out in the dark cold, somewhat worse off than before, and the face of something really terrible is emerging, and so there's a scramble for the fix which staves off that emergence, but which also seems to feed it.

Many, many addictions and addictive patterns are not only culturally acceptable, but genuinely lauded, approved and rewarded... So it's no wonder that a puppet is unaware that it's controlled. The puppet has their social place, a pattern of being that is working for them, possibly strongly encouraged.

All is well.

What if we imagine WURF as a pre-conscious, paradisial, being of grace?

Heinrich Von Kleist, in his essay 'The Puppet Theatre', made an astonishing connection between the lives of angels and of puppets. Both are far more graceful than humans, capable of the most astonishing acrobatic feats, their movements vertical, pendular, circular, unfettered by the limits so peculiar to creatures of gravity whose movements - pulled down by gravity - seem so uncoordinated and shambolical.

WURF, in this case, is blissful and graceful, still in the Garden of Eden, seemingly free from limitation, differentiation, choice, guilt, or even time. The puppet's orientation, like an angel, is always upward, towards the heavens. It rests on the ground only to simulate humans.

"All is well, and all manner of thing shall be well."⁷

What if?

What if?

What if there is a break in the addictive web/the graceful bubble of WURF?

Love, death, heartbreak, overwhelming beauty, catastrophe; all can break the web/bubble/trance of anyone...

The puppet awakes and sees, for the first time, the strings they're controlled by...

If the event is catastrophic enough, apocalyptic⁸ enough, the puppet cannot return, and realises that it must cut free.

WURF sets about cutting away the strings...to be free... but, hanging by a last thread, WURF, a puppet, realises they have no bones, no muscles, no experience of gravity.

Love (which requires courage, and courage requires fear) can only exist in the world of gravity: the world of suffering and absurdity, stupidity and violence, limitation and failure and vulnerability. So, despite the excruciating trials of the 'whirl' of gravity, love can only be embodied and realised by sacrificing the web of addiction and/or the paradisial, grace Garden that only puppets and angels can enjoy.⁹

The Fall

WURF falls -
out of the bliss Web of Addiction,
out of the grace Garden of Paradise,
(perhaps they are one and the same)
- to the Ground:
the desert of withdrawal,
the Land of Nod.

WURF crashes from bliss into helplessness in a moment - and in reality these two are only a shadow apart.

'Bardo' (Tibetan) refers to the place a person who has just died goes. It is a kind of "no place" where all the projects and motives and engines which drive a person are gone; useless. Really you have lost any idea of who you are at all. This may be a dangerous passage because evil spirits, in this liminal zone, can have considerable persuasive powers. And also, it can be a place of extraordinary opportunity: the restraining controlling strings have been cut free, what beautiful vision could WURF now be free to follow.

WURF, in cutting free, falls into primary vulnerability.
WURF has become a child with no comprehension of how to live and move in a world of gravity, and so there is great danger... and great possibility...

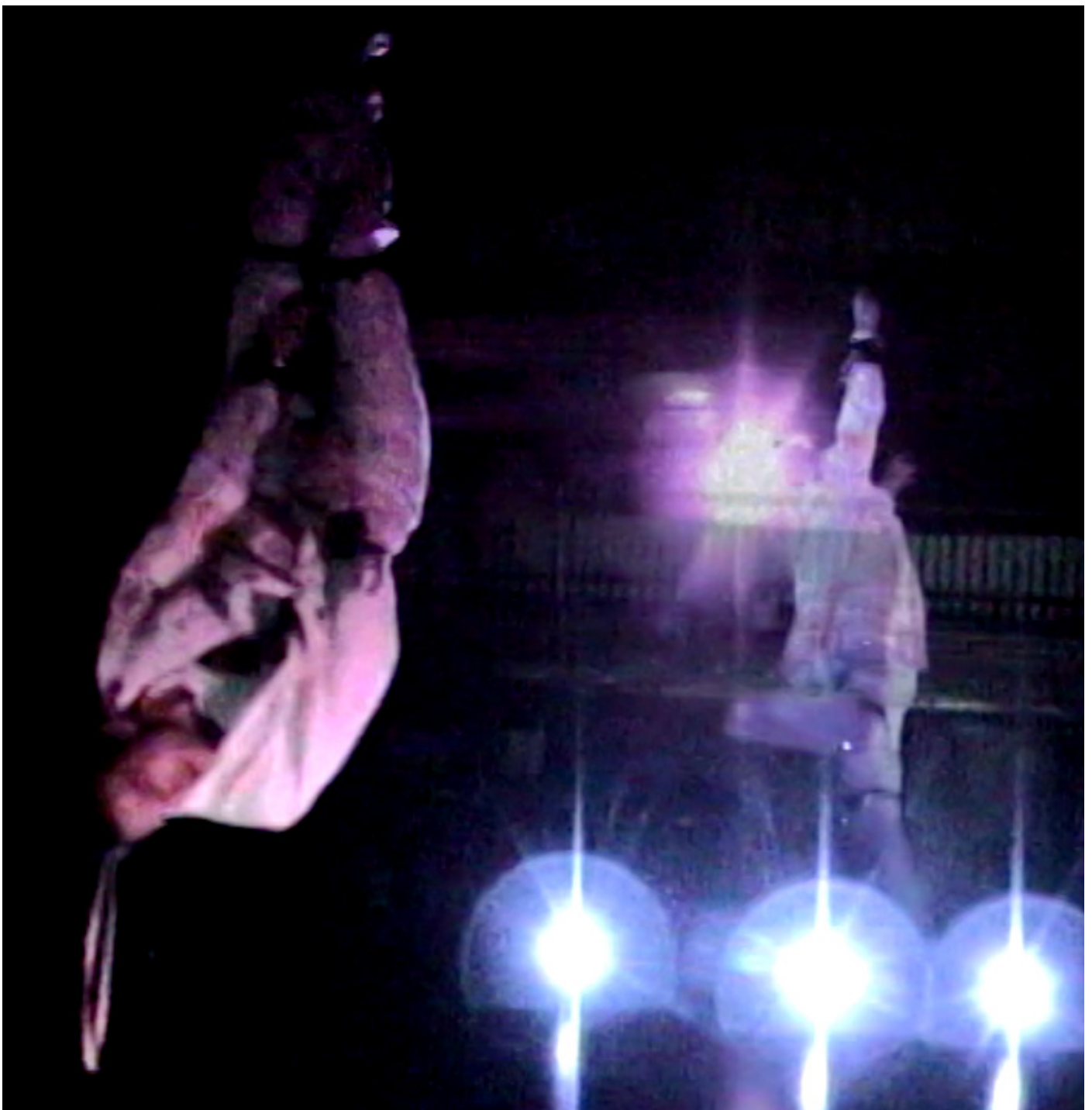


WURF as Creation Myth

WURF, in cutting free from the strings and ties that bind, also cuts off that which bound together. That which controlled and drove and moved WURF was, however manipulative and senseless, WURF's identity. WURF cut's away from his previous identity, throws himself out a window of his known home, tears himself out of his own skin.

This, the scissoring of the strings, the Fall, which feels like death, is a birth of consciousness¹⁰, and all Creation Myths are poetic expressions of the birth of consciousness.

So, WURF is a Creation Myth about a birth of consciousness, a radical and disruptive transformation, for anyone/everyone.



Workshops

Nik is an experienced and skilled workshop facilitator. He has led numerous workshops on change, curiosity and disruption, employing science, myths, art and games. WURF - the cutting of the strings that control us - would be a fascinating and evocative workshop to offer for participants to explore the questions that emerge from witnessing WURF.

Nik Beeson

Nik is a change facilitator/artist deeply interested in curiosity & disruption, addiction & consciousness, and courage & compassion.

As a Change Facilitator Nik has delivered numerous workshops, consulted and coached on the themes of meaning, curiosity and disruption.

As a musician he has written, produced and performed music in the genres of alt-rock, punk-funk, world music, ambient/electro-acoustic/sound art, contemporary opera, as well as compositions for contemporary dance, and video and sculptural installations.

As a dance/theatre performer Nik was trained in Martial & Contact Dance, performed in a wide variety of music, dance and theatre performances, and wrote, produced and performed a series of 'Sonic Theatre' works combining theatre, dance and music.

Nik writes essays, prose & poetry on all of the above.

Nik studied Theology at the University of Toronto with a focus on addiction, consciousness and ecology, was a Spiritual Care/Chaplain on the Neuro and ICU wards at the Toronto Western hospital, worked in Palliative Care, and was a live-in staff person in homes for the homeless and for people with mental health challenges.

Nik's also the proud pop of two very special young men.



Endnotes

- 1 The name 'WURF' is derived from the German 'gewurfenheit' which translates to English as 'thrownness' (from Heidegger).
- 2 'Sonic Theatre' is an invented theatre performance genre, verging on opera or musical theatre, in which the theatrical drama is intrinsically entwined with music/sound art (the music can come before the theatre). It differs from opera in that it may not have a clear 'libretto' nor requires specialised vocal artists. It differs from musical theatre in that it is not 'song' based.
- 3 'TURB' is derived from 'turbulence' and, in biological terminology, 'perturbation'. A 'structural perturbation' is an evolutionary challenge to an organic system that requires it to adapt to such a great degree that it must change its fundamental identity.
- 4 The apparatus, while a highly functional system engineered to enable a wide range of acrobatic maneuverability, is also an installation sculpture symbolically representing the meanings inherent in the performance.
- 5 Addiction is anything that keeps a person or a society from realising their deepest and most living talents and purposes and aspirations. Addiction in this sense is far from mere substance abuse: alcohol, heroine, cocaine, sugar, cigarettes, coffee. From this perspective civilisation is a superstructure of addiction and we are socialised to be addicts; a web of addiction millennium old.
- 6 'Para' means 'around' and 'daeza' is 'a wall'. 'Paradise', etymologically, means 'a wall around'. 'Paradise' is a walled garden.
- 7 Julian of Norwich
- 8 The etymology of 'apocalypse' is very interesting. 'Apo' means 'out from', and 'kaluptein' means 'cover'. So 'apocalypse' really just means 'uncovering' or, perhaps, 'revelation'. If there is enough that is hidden, or denied, revelation can be experienced as catastrophic, hence it's relationship to 'the End Times'.
- 9 'Wings of Desire'; Wim Wenders. An angel sacrifices it's immortality because the angel "falls" in love.
- 10 The roots of the word 'consciousness' come from 'con', meaning 'with', and 'scire' which means 'to cut, to split, to cleave apart'. 'Scire' is also the root for the word 'science' (con-science) and, more importantly for WURF, 'scissors'...