

Artist Statement
Gina Steverson

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As a martial arts practitioner with a background in physical theater and dance, I write for the whole body, seeking through physicality and kinetic energy what cannot be expressed in spoken language. I savor the humor of humanness; how soft is strong. Sometimes my stories swim toward the fantastical (sometimes there are puppets!), sometimes they bloom from a hyperreal setting. Whatever the form or content, my plays are interested in all that can happen when people come together who would otherwise not likely share space. Held in the safe anonymity of a dark room, my plays invite audiences to practice listening to and imagining with each other. I used to wonder if it was naïve to believe, as I always have, that theater can matter enough to touch the real lives we return to once a performance is done. But I suspect that listening to and imagining with each other is always going to be our way through.

I see theater making as an expression of mutual aid and community action. My work as support staff at a shelter for families experiencing homelessness continually gives urgency to my mission of making theater that presses on the friction points invented to divide us from each other. My work is queer in form and in content, rejecting norms and celebrating nuance, diversity, authenticity, and radical optimism. As a late-blooming queer person, I struggled with shame and disembodiment for years, not understanding who I was or why it took me so long to figure that out. My plays are full of people crying, laughing, fucking up, and communicating bravely as they stumble messily towards healing themselves, each other, and their communities.

I embrace discomfort, centering characters who illuminate the revolutions – personal and political – that are possible when we are not afraid to be uncomfortable, wrong, or imperfect; when we carve our own paths forward into a liberated unknown. My plays are invitations into this collective, liberated unknown. I subvert the fourth wall in every play, because the theater of my wildest dreams reaches out and holds us all, reminds us that we are really here, together, *and what if we could continue to live that way?* I activate this real-time collaboration between storyteller and audience to reaffirm that the theater is a sacred space in which we can vision new futures and experiment with how we might get there together.