

## **Audio Transcript: Up Close:**

### **Madeline Hollander in conversation with David Hallberg**

#### **Solana Chehtman:**

My name is Solana Chehtman, and I am the director of civic programs here at The Shed and the organizer of “Up Close,” our series of digital commissions born in April 2019 as a virtual platform for both artist creativity and audiences catharsis in the midst of Covid-19. Welcome to a conversation between Madeline Hollander and David Hallberg in conjunction with the powerful piece, “52 [Final] Bows,” created by Madeline and featuring David. I will start by quickly sharing a few of the points of access that we are providing today.

In the bottom right of your Zoom window, you’ll find a button that says live transcript, where you can find real time captions provided by Kathy Cortopassi. To access Kat live closed captioning, click on the closed caption button. We also have American sign Language interpretation provided by Ashley Rodriguez and Naomi Miller, who will be pinned by our team and therefore should be visible to you at all times. And we want the conversation to be fully enjoyable for everyone. So please, at any point, use the Q and A button to share any extra accommodation needs. And that will also be your best way to share any questions for the panelists as they arise and we’ll bring those into the room towards the end of the conversation.

I also want to thank a number of our supporters who made Up Close and tonight’s conversation possible. M&T Bank and New York City Department of Cultural Affairs have all provided generous support, as well as our own Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch Commissioning Fund and the Shed commissioners. I also want to thank the Howard Gilman Foundation for providing the Zoom platform that we will be using tonight for this conversation. The Shed’s relationship with Madeline is long standing. She was one of the artists selected originally as part of “Open Call” in 2018. And we’ve had the pleasure of working with her, and seeing versions of this piece and of this research evolve and transform at every point, both when we thought she would be able to perform a version of it live at The Shed and then when she immediately found a new context, and a new intention and a new vision for it during the pandemic.

The piece was filmed at the end of last year, right here at our eighth floor lab, bringing our building alive even before we were even able to open to the public, giving us hope for art continuing to push us forward. We cannot be more thankful to her creativity, her thrust, and her vision. This digital commission is now as I was mentioning part of “Up Close” which has become a space for mourning, for joy, for questioning, and for reflection.

If you haven’t seen the piece yet, I recommend you do so later tonight on our website, as well as check out other artists pieces including Julia Solomonoff, Troy Anthony and Jerome Ellis, Kiyan Williams, Ayesha Jordan among many, many others. They are truly poignant and moving diary of the last year and a half. Before I introduce our wonderful speakers, I want to introduce Charles Aubin, senior curator and head of publications at Performa, who we’ve invited to co-introduce tonight’s conversation, precisely on the opening night of Performa. So Charles, I leave it to you.

**Charles Aubin:**

Yeah. Thank you very much, Solana. Thank you so much for this wonderful invitation and thank you all at The Shed for making it happen. Yeah, you're right, it's a very special night for this conversation. It's our telethon. And so it's our online telethon, our Performa telethon. And which will start in an hour at 7 pm. So I'm not going to be able to stay with you until the end of this event. But it's moving because basically a year ago at our previous online telethon, we were able to present an earlier version of "52 Final Bows." This wonderful collaboration between Madeline and David. And so it's very exciting to see "52 Final Bows" work tonight, screened by The Shed. Thank you so much.

Maybe just to introduce this conversation. I just want to say that to me "52 Final Bows" is really part of a very moving body of works that Madeline has initiated over the past two years since the pandemic shutdown. In between lock downs, she's been able to collaborate and spend some time in the studio with dancers who were not able to perform because of the pandemic shutdown since March 2020 or like with David to take their final bow. And I'd say that she's found really wonderful ways to examine all these different embodied knowledge, kinesthetic memories, body memories that dancers carry in their own bodies but that you don't always see obviously when you go see a performance, but that they really kept with themselves even though they were not on the stage over the past year and a half.

And I think that in this body of work, she found a very sensible way to make this immaterial reality tangible. And it took different forms, so moving image like tonight, but also live performance. And so I'd like to put 52 Final Bows in conversation with a piece that Madeline is going to premiere at the end of this month with us at Performa, which is titled Review. And for the occasion we're bringing 25 dancers from different New York City dance companies, so Martha Graham, Trisha Brown, New York City Ballet, Bill T. Jones, but also Fiddler on the Roof and West Side Story. And through the system of marking and space blocking that dance is usually used in rehearsals. But that again, you're not always able to see.

She's bringing them together to perform and to mark all these works that never met an audience or runs that cut short because of the pandemic shutdown. And so yes, I think that as you said Solana, it's a very sensible way of looking at what from a personal, from very individual, from the perspective of the dancer these past two years have done. And I wish that... So with Review, we're actually sold out for now. We'll be able to release more tickets in the coming weeks. But we'll be also live streaming the piece on our website. So, I think that this piece that Madeline did with David a year ago was one of the very deep personal study for this work. And I'm so happy that tonight we'll be able to really go deep into it and discuss it more specifically. And so thank you so much and I look forward to this conversation. Thank you.

**Solana Chehtman:**

Thank you Charles for being here. And I lastly want to introduce our two amazing speakers who we're so grateful to for being here. Just as context, Madeline just had a baby, David is in Australia, so it's tomorrow morning. But Madeline Hollander is an artist who works with performance, video and installation to explore how human movement and body language negotiate their limits

within everyday systems. Her work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, at the Visual Arts Center in the University of Austin, Texas, Serpentine Galleries in the UK, the Centre Pompidou.

And David was a principal dancer at the American Ballet Theatre and the Bolshoi Theatre, as well as a principal artist with the Royal Ballet and resident guest artist with the Australian Ballet. He is the author of a critically acclaimed memoir, "A Body of Work: Dancing to the Edge and Back." And since 2021, he has become the eighth artistic director of the Australian Ballet. So, Madeline, David, I'm leaving the floor all to you and I'll see you later with some questions from the audience. Thank you again so much.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Great. Well, thank you so much for having us, and Solana and Charles for the introduction, and David for being here and for partaking in this. And I think probably the best way to begin is just dive into maybe the beginnings or the origin of that piece and take a look at how it all started and our process a little bit.

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah. Well, you gave birth to it to be honest. So for you what was... Was it something that was itching for a while these final bows or was I your inspiration?

**Madeline Hollander:**

I would say it was both actually. And I'd always wanted to collect a database of introductions or these bows and the different reverences that you do, that were dependent on who was teaching class or what the character role was. And this was very much tied into the research I was doing for this other piece that was kind of accumulating all these performances that had been shutdown or canceled or indefinitely postponed. And talking to so many dancers about these experiences of having worked so hard and rehearsed so hard for these pieces that never ended up being on the stage but there was still very much in their bodies and there ready to go. And not knowing if it was going to happen next week, or the following week, or the following year or never.

And kind of hearing their stories, and what they're missing and learning more about these characters. And for me, this was a way of kind of isolating one element that was very much lacking during this pandemic period, which is the relationship between the audience and the dancer and this very intimate and very dynamic energy that you get when you're performing to a live audience. And you hear the applause and looking at, you know what? We're in this drought of an applause in a period where there is no... People were doing performances virtually but never to a silent audience essentially. And that really struck me. And so when we were given this opportunity to work together. I think it was knowing your breadth of work, and your history and your ability to... You've done so many roles in your careers, so expansive that there was such a wonderful opportunity to present this as a project to build together.

**David Hallberg:**

Ask me that question about trying to think of some bows. We had more than 52, right? How many did we have?

**Madeline Hollander:**

We had like 98.

**David Hallberg:**

Did we? Yeah.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah.

**David Hallberg:**

God. And I just started to percolate the bows and not only the bows that I had done, but the bows that ballerinas had done to the side of me, that choreographers had done, that I did as a school kid, different stylistic bows from different theaters around the world. There were so many. And I think what I realized quickly was... And I guess I always felt like this when I was performing. You're still performing when you're bowing. People think that when the dancing is finished, you're kind of done performing, and you're bowing and you're back to who you were but you're still performing. And I always felt honestly, that the performance continued until I was having a beer by myself in my apartments after stage door, after the bows, after the meet and greets. That's when it was done. And so with the bows, it was like, "Oh my God, there's such a breadth of bows."

**Madeline Hollander:**

Choreography, yeah.

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah, yeah.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Either they're all choreographed and you don't really notice that when it's just one bow by itself but when you put them side by side, back-to-back, over and over, you see how unique each one is. And how your character will remain that character until the curtain comes down. And so even when all of the bows are essentially stating the same meaning which is, thank you for your attention, and thanking the audience or thanking the teacher and the orchestra. That thank you is delivered in these different languages based off of where you are, what size theater you're in, what character you just finished, how your performance went.

One of my favorites are, your bow after perfect landing versus your bow after a shitty landing, sorry. And just seeing that in your body, how you embrace that type of gratitude after those moments of, what happens to the ego? Or the personal things...

**David Hallberg:**

Absolutely.

**Madeline Hollander:**

... like spotting your mom in the audience and how that changes that choreography, or catching a rose or passing a rose to your partner...

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah, I very rarely saw people in the audience because the Met is just this black sea and then lights in your eyes. But I did see my parents a couple of times. And my mom's on this chat, actually. And the minute I zoomed in, it was like we were connected. And those were always touching moments to know that you saw someone that you knew in the house. At Bolshoi Theater they bring the house lights up after curtain call three or something. So you can very often see the people that have come to see the show or see the... And I always like that connection with people because it made it more, actually the character or the role kind of came down a notch. And I could just observe the people in the audience. It was always a beautiful moment.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, one of the things I was going to say going back to the character, part of it was while I was watching you go through each of these different roles and we were brainstorming and creating these lists and really trying to hash out as many different character roles as we could, I started to notice that when you start the bow, I would immediately start seeing the costume, and I would see the lighting, and I'd see the set design. I'd start to even hear the music, even though there's no music during the bow. Like, the entire nutcracker would come flooding in or that scene from Swan Lake. And it was such a contrary and it was like a complete transformation.

And one of the things that's not in the video, but I feel like I edited out, that that was very moving for me, shooting it and working with you was seeing you on the side about to run in to begin the bow. And seeing you gather yourself and know that you're about to turn into that character, whoever it was. Maybe there's a few that you remember doing that you want to talk about. And all of a sudden go from David to this moment where you enter, you just were completely possessed. And then you enter and that's where you're wearing white shorts, your barefoot, black backdrop, it was extremely minimal, and yet I would see the cape, and I'd see the fan, and I'd see the costume. And all of the aesthetics that surround that role just came to life. And then you'd exit and they'd kind of evaporate. So that was really powerful for me.

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah, it was interesting because what's filmed is this succession of the bows, but I would have that moment in the wings. Even during the filming and during shows where I would like, I don't know, pick a character, Von Rothbart from "Swan Lake" who's the evil kind of guy. And he'd be in the wings and then I just turn the gaze on and it click on. So then when you get on stage you are him. He's got this long dramatic ballet cape as a lot men do in the ballet world. They've big capes and they came on stage. And I don't know, it was like there's always that transformation. Even in a character I think, not just bowing, but a character in general, I think every dancer has that moment where they're in the wings and it's like the stress, the doubts, all of that are going through your mind and then it's like, but it's always before you enter the stage.

So you see the dancer in the wings become whatever they need to become to get on stage. And then I think some of my favorite bows in the filming... Well, I was joking around with you that the choreographers that I imitated probably will never speak to me again i.e., Mark Morris, who I adore and is a genius, and

Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, again, who I don't know so well but is a genius. But I remember so vividly, choreographers coming out and taking bows and I thought that certain ones should be represented. I think it's the greatest form of flattery imitation, but hey, that's only my humble opinion. Some other ones, I don't know, I mean, I never bowed as a ballerina and it wasn't my thing to really throw the pointe shoes on, except I did once in a Ratmansky ballet. But bowing as Odette, Odile, Kitri, I was a little surprised at how, I don't know maybe easily I could manifest the ballerina in me.

**Madeline Hollander:**

You're a gorgeous Odette. I love that one.

**David Hallberg:**

And then as well the whole flower thing. I don't know, let's talk about the flower thing for a second. Because there's such protocol for flowers in each theater around the world and how things are presented. ABT has their own protocol for flowers. Men don't get flowers at ABT, they somehow think it's emasculating. At Bolshoi Theatre you get covered in bouquets of flowers. I mean, as many as you get, set to stage door they bring on the stage. So much so that there was a clip of a bow where it was like bouquet overload or something. And there's so many flowers, specifically for the ballerina that they gesture to the usher to put them on the floor of the stage and then they step over them because there's just a mound of roses. And same goes for the guys. I mean, if guys get flowers, they'll give them to you on stage. And I think it's a beautiful thing. I mean, it's a beautiful tradition of the art form, I find.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, I liked the moment that there were some humor in this piece as well like, the stepping over the roses or these moments that are also just as choreographed and it's part of the protocol, but it's also something that when your monument becomes a little absurd in a great way-

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah.

**Madeline Hollander:**

... but also just, yeah. Oh sorry. Go ahead.

**David Hallberg:**

Well, just don't forget your thought. But it's like when I danced shitty. I mean, I had more shows than I care to admit, where I knew that I didn't dance well, that I finished a variation like, I messed it up, or something didn't work or which I didn't actually do in our piece when I knew I was injured...

**Madeline Hollander:**

Ooh.

**David Hallberg:**

... Yes, shit just got real.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, you had your own bows for when you're injured.

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah, a number of times where, I remember the first time I sprained my ankle on stage. I remember bowing at Bolshoi Theatre for the broadcast, I had sprained my ankle, like when my shoulder came out, I was bowing. Yeah, and you have this look of like shock. I mean, when I made my debut at Royal Ballet, I burst my calf, I tore my calf. And I remember dancing and bowing, just being like, "Oh my God, my calf is torn." And you just bow. You have to go on autopilot, you can't show the audience the real deal. And it's that look of like deer in headlights thing.

**Madeline Hollander:**

And still trying to uphold the role and knowing that you have to get through it and [crosstalk]...

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah, like smoking mirrors, smoking mirrors.

**Madeline Hollander:**

... completely. Yeah well, I guess the bow and pain is one that we didn't even have to do and is equal to this.

**David Hallberg:**

[crosstalk]

**Madeline Hollander:**

Uh-huh (affirmative). What I was going to say is that we're talking about these as protocols and these traditions. And in fact, choreographies of how many steps, how you actually present the rose to the partner it's all very specific and nuanced. But from my experience, they're not taught, when you're taught the choreography that you're going to be performing throughout the ballet or the piece. But the bow is something that's just passed down from seeing other people do this and having it be transferred to you via osmosis almost or you inherited. And I'm curious if you have any experience with... I didn't ask you this before, being taught the choreography of that specific role or having to learn a new way of bowing for one of these roles or is it really just from being around it for so long?

**David Hallberg:**

It's both. On the other hand, now that I'm an artistic director, I'm instilling a culture in The Australian Ballet of bowing, kind of, in my opinion bowing properly. And I'm actually sort of rehearsing the principal dancers and those that do leading roles in how to really take in the audience, how to present themselves as a ballerina or as a male dancer. And it's a fine line. And bow has a lot of ego in it. And in Russia, it happens a lot. It can just get enough already, just get on with it, get off the stage. Balanchine was so famous about saying like, "Make it fast." And that's what I did in the video with New York City Ballet bow just like, bow and off.

And in Russia, we would bow for minutes and the ballerina would leave, I'd stay onstage, they'd still be going in unison. I come to the wing again and presenter her back out. And by the time we'd be going from pas de deux into the solos. Usually, you're quite puffed to start the male solo from the pas de deux, it's a

whole issue with stamina. But in Russia, I was so rested, I had calm my breath because the bow just went on forever.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, you're at full rest.

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah, full rest. Anyway, I digress, but now I'm teaching artists here how to properly take in an audience. How to take your time, enjoy the moments, breathe. If you've danced well, people want to see, people want to appreciate that. They want to show their appreciation with applause. If you didn't dance well, pick it up a little bit. All that.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, and are they the same movements or is it really about the energy that you're trying to train them with? Or they're practicing what the feeling is? Or is it, this is the step, this is how you do the B plus, here's the actual choreography of what you should do for the Australian National Ballet or?

**David Hallberg:**

I think it's indicative of the role that they're dancing. So like a Don Q bow will be very different from a Balanchine bow. And I feel like I know the difference. So I can kind of coach them in how things should move along in the sense and the energy of the bow. But it's also, here there's a tradition of giving applause to the orchestra and we do that in the piece. And everyone bows, the music director comes out, the conductor comes out, we bow. And then we go forward and the entire cast presents to the orchestra and gives them a round of applause as well.

**David Hallberg:**

Then we go back and we bow again. And I think that's really unique to the Australian culture. Because it's really about the collective and the collective effort. It's the exact opposite of Russia. And so here, it's a little more humble, it's a little more about everyone coming together and having the show other than just about the "ballerina." So I think it's really special that they applaud the orchestra.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, I was really touched by that and feel like that was a really beautiful moment in the video or to learn. But this also reminds me that technically, this video is kind of a collection of bows, these final bows for the stage and different types of stages and choreographers, but also different types of reverences which is not technically a bow because you didn't just perform, but kind of just you practiced and trained with the instructor, who at the very end of class you do their specific choreographed reverence, which is a version of a bow. And want to see if you want to speak about some of those versions through and through.

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah, I mean, that's another tradition. In the ballet school that's so upheld in school. You actually start class with the reverence and you finished class with the reverence. And then if someone walks in that's of superior rank, it sounds so like aristocratic hierarchical, but-



**Madeline Hollander:**

It's ballet.

**David Hallberg:**

... It's ballet, Louis the 14th.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah.

**David Hallberg:**

You bow to them. So, I was taught like a reverence to the teacher, a reverence to the pianist, a reverence to the guests in front of the room, whatever it is. And now when I walk into The Australian Ballet School down the hall to watch class, they stop class, they do a reverence because I've walked in the room. I'm really adjusting to that, it's very strange. But I was on the other side, I was the school kid reverencing the artistic director of the company or whatever.

I think there's a movement to break down traditions to like I want to do, like let's reinvent, let's sit up. But I do think that there are beautiful things in bows and reverences that the tradition, it's a beautiful tradition. It's something that's gorgeous about this art form, because there are certain traditions that have lasted and have stood the test of time.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, and one of the things that I found, I'm kind of leaping here but uncanny about watching this footage and seeing these bows that had so much meaning. You were actually embodying these characters and I didn't feel like you were acting, it was actually you becoming them and giving thanks to that moment, or just reliving those moments was how bizarre it felt to have it be silent. And I've seen you do these bows before, and seeing with this massive applause and standing ovations, and people actually throwing flowers. And to see it was almost like watching it in slow motion in a way for me and the silence was really palpable.

And one of the things that I really struggled with, when I first was editing the piece was what's the accompaniment, what kind of sound do I use for this? How do I play with the notion of an applause and how's that going to work? And then very quickly realized that I needed to, that uncanny haunting silence needed to remain because of the time, and the context, and where we were and the fact that no one was giving bows to large audiences or even live audiences at all. And kept it that way and I think because of that, it does allow for someone to see the articulation and these tiny little details between, speaking of rank and hierarchy, I really love that you did, the corps de ballet bows versus the soloist bows versus the principal dancer bows.

And there's bows that you do all together as a group versus by yourself. And I feel like, those are really specific as well. And the rules and protocols for that, which is a long way of me getting to some of my favorite bows for you which is your signature bow, which is not something that everyone who performs gets to develop. It's more of a soloist principal role because often, if you're in the corps de ballet you have to do exactly what the rest of the corps de ballet is doing. But I'm curious, when you feel like your signature bow which is towards

the end of the video, kind of came into being and where that came from if it was from specific roles, or really from you or from a mentor? If there's an origin story, I'm curious.

**David Hallberg:**

There isn't really, although I neglected to realize that this would have come about because I'm taking solo bows. I've taken solo bows throughout my entire career and not everyone does that. And in the corps de ballet and all that. It's interesting to realize, which I had never realized. So therefore, I was given the opportunity like you said to sort of come up with my sort of own bow in a way, although I don't think my bow was anything signature kind of in any way. I mean, because I did a Nureyev bow in the video and [crosstalk 00:34:42]-

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, that was a signature. Yeah.

**David Hallberg:**

People talk about Nureyev style. He would go from one side of the house to the other second balcony, just really slowly, just pan the audience. And there's no one like him, there's no ego like him. So, that in of itself was an iconic bow. And it felt like Nina Ananiashvili who was a dancer with Bolshoi and with ABT, she would do jetés out to the curtain when they were doing the Paige bows, she would come out and lifts. She would just, it'd become like this insane circus and the audience would freak out. I mean, they love it, they'd be eating it up. But I wasn't inventing lifts as I was bowing, I wasn't scanning the house.

But I think in any bow you want to connect to the audience in a way. And especially when they keep going on and on. Like in Russia you'd get, I don't know, you'd go on for 45 minutes. You do like 20 curtain calls. And they'd be like, "Again, again, again." And people would just stay. And by the time you're in like 12th curtain call, you're kind of out of character at that stage. And kind of you're just looking at the house and the house lights are up and you can see people. And you're looking up there or you're looking there, you're thanking them, you're bowing. So it becomes more human, which I think is a great moment to have.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, definitely.

**David Hallberg:**

Should we take some questions?

**Solana Chehtman:**

Yeah that's... Hi, I'm back to bring some questions from the audience. Everyone has loved the piece. And I thought there's someone that is incredibly thankful for the two of you saying and start so beautiful, taking the viewer back to so many of David's great bows, but then turning comical and making me laugh out loud. How did the comedic aspect come to you? Or was it always part of your vision for the film? And this is connected to something that I was asking you earlier. How much of this was pre-prepared and planned? How much came up in the room with you to collaborating?

**Madeline Hollander:**

I think things really snowballed very quickly with us in the room. And it was really fun to just build these lists. And I think we were kind of overloaded with bows that we had to create these categories. So some were character roles from ballets. And then we had specific ballet companies from all around the world and Broadway versus a contemporary company versus a classical versus a Russian trained. And then we had specific choreographers and then types of theaters like a Black Box versus the City Center versus these different sizes and how that affects your body and your body language. And then these very personal bows like one where you're returning from injury or at the very end we created a bow for the future and I think you created your own bow.

So after accumulating these categories, I was left with so much footage... I mean, I don't know if it was comical when we were shooting it and I think it was very, for me moving and I think some of the comedy or the comic aspects happened during just putting things in contrast with each other. And all of a sudden, something that could be viewed that could appear very subtle looks like a caricatures of itself just because it's next to something that is subtle. So, some of the juxtaposition for me in the editing process, I think, enhanced some of those moments. But I'm curious David, what you felt about some of these roles that are truly caricatures and very performative?

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah, I mean, certainly like the characters like Von Rothbart and the Dr. Coppélius or where they're hunched over, they've got a walking stick, whatever. But on the other hand, like what I felt, what we laughed about was when you found those, like seeing mom in the audience, or catching a rose, or dancing shitty, or dancing like you've nailed it. Those were the funny ones to me, because it was like, "Oh yeah, wait. I've never thought about this." Like, "That's mom." Or that's when I danced really poorly, or I thought to me that was the humor in it.

**Solana Chehtman:**

Absolutely. And Madeline and I just want to mention for everyone that I don't know if they know, that you are a former dancer too. That's a lot of where this comes from. So, someone in the audience is also asking, did this all come from your own experience and memory of witnessing this ballets or advancing them of course? Or was there specific footage that you were getting inspired by?

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, I've always paid attention and really love the different choreographies from taking class all over the world, and being able to take any ballet class anywhere and then all of a sudden have to learn the reverence for that particular instructor. And I've always thought that was really beautiful. And my background is in ballet but my career, I was doing mostly Balanchine work. So I didn't know all of these other roles and all these different companies. So I feel like I had a fraction of the amount of knowledge that David had to give for this project.

But to go back a little further I've been doing this project called Gesture Archive, it's an ongoing kind of database I've been building for over 15 years

where I'm collecting gestures and movements and poses that I find particularly relevant to a specific time or place or a technology and capturing them as these little short videos that I then use when I'm choreographing a piece and looking for inspiration and context. So, everything from how someone would open a phone, or send a text message or really looking at the evolution of our corporeal vocabularies over the course of the past 20 years. And due to the influx of new technology, the new interfaces like this one different, it's really coming from anywhere.

So it's really been an explorative process for me. And that's a huge part of my practice as an artist. And I think that that was very much inspired by being a professional ballet dancer and my training and being able to tour and kind of understanding how different these nuances are from place to place and role to role and being really fascinated by that. So, that was the seedling behind it where I have a lot of projects where I'm going to accumulate 100 different versions of this one particular move and then have it at hand. So it definitely fit within my practice in that way.

**Solana Chehtman:**

And something that you both mentioned the beginning that was we're really moving, I hadn't thought about it like that is bows is a thank you. And because of the role that language plays in your work Madeline, I was thinking as you were talking, is this kind of a love letter to audiences in a way, too? And I just wanted to put out the provocation to hear you both speak a little bit about that.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, I think it's definitely more than a thank you. And I think it's a full bodied, full stage, full theater thank you. And I don't even know if thank you is the right word because it's so multidimensional. And in a way I do feel like the word reverence nails it a little bit more than thank you because there's more honor and it's a little bit more sacred or profound, which I do see and feel in these bows. That is pretty inexplicable and I don't know if it's a thi-, I mean, for me, because of the time in the context of making this film, I do see this piece more as a requiem or kind of a memorial to these moments that were actually missed, that were scheduled, these roles that were not performed and kind of felt this palpable, like the negative space of these empty theaters and the curtains being closed.

And there's kind of a solemn, I wouldn't say darkness to that and the reality of the situation. So for me, that was a little bit where I feel like it's settled. But at the same time, it's kind of homage to these different peoples and these institutions and these companies and these characters and it's showing up they're going to live on. And at the end, we have David create a bow to the future, which is for me very hopeful, he bows. You've choreographed a bow where you are moving across the stage and you're bowing to each direction as you're moving. And I think finishing the piece with that gesture was, I guess, embodied the feeling of the entire piece for me.

**David Hallberg:**

I mean for me, it's in the titles, "52 Final Bows." And a lot of people have said, even here like you never got your final show, you never had your final bow. And we all behold like everyone, I had a ton of stuff scheduled. I was doing final

shows in Moscow, in London, in New York. I was bringing a show to New York. From Australia, I was doing final shows in Australia, like all of that wiped out, which to be honest, everything happens for a reason. And I've always felt farewell performances were funeral. And it was like the death of the dancer in a way and everyone views it differently. And for instance, Maria Kowroski at New York City Ballet is about to do her final show on Sunday, which I so wish I was there for. She's a dear friend and she deserves this celebration, which will be.

But for me, I always was like, "There's more to do in life." I'm really happy in a way that I didn't have that like somber, goodbye, goodbye, goodbye, the curtain closes. I've kind of had to shape shift, become a director in this insane time and life goes on. And I was this dancer around the world and I did all these amazing things. And went these places that I never even imagined I'd go to but like life marches on, thank God. And I really always, even in my '20s wanted to be conscious of the end of the athletic career because you're essentially an athlete in a way. And-

**Madeline Hollander:**  
Completely.

**David Hallberg:**  
... how life would continue. And so thanks for giving me that closure, Madeline.

**Madeline Hollander:**  
Anytime. Well, that's the thing that there was no closure. And that's what I really like about the pieces, that's what I feel like we talked about when we are shooting this, that that was the beginning, it's not the end of being in the dance world. And in this period there's no final. Nothing about it is final. It is the beginning of this next chapter that is going to be very much in that world. You're a director, you're leading all these new students and the company towards learning these roles. You're teaching them the bows right now. So in a way, it's a perpetual, it's definitely a beginning. And I think reviewing these roles and these experiences that you have done all around the world, and have witnessed through friends, and colleagues and choreographers is a really great way of honoring that.

But it was very much almost the opposite of an ending. And there's really like cures on to the next. And that's where those last bows where you're spinning off the stage continuing to balance, creating something new felt really meaningful to me. And these roles are going to re-enter the stage again. We're in the pandemic still. It was called one of details, I think I chose 52 Bows because it was a year into the pandemic when we shot that. And I chose a bow per week, so it's 52 weeks in a year and that seems like a good number. And now we're so beyond that and still very much in it. And it's definitely, it continues, I guess. And these roles are going to be returning to the stage and yeah.

**Solana Chehtman:**  
And on that note, I wanted to ask one last question, because both of you as you say, you're only in the beginning of what's next. But what are the changes you see in the ballet world, and what are the changes in your personal lives that this pandemic has brought? And what are these lessons learned that you think are going to kind of stay in the future?

**David Hallberg:**

I think one thing I hope for is that we have learned that art and performance is vital to life because we've been robbed of it. And the other is that we can't move forward if we go back to what it used to be. We can't charge forward if we don't continue to take risks and see things with fresh eyes. And this is as a director, I have to view this art form and be like, "Okay, what's happening now? What's refreshed? What's in the future?" And I think that's something that I really hope for, is that ballet is, a dance is vital to artistic life, the artistic, I don't know, culture, but we need to keep pushing forward and not feel like, "Oh, we now need to play it safe, because we've lost so much money and we need to get audiences back. Let's just charge."

**Madeline Hollander:**

Yeah, I totally agree. And on that note, just continuing the practice of adapting to new events and new pandemics and new problems and solutions every single day. And not trying to go back to these forms of presentation and performance. I mean, we're never going to try and go back to normal, but just to be in a state of knowing that this could be the last performance or the last audience. And really having a sense of gratitude through all those moments that you are able to perform and be with a community of artists and know that you're going to have to just continuously sculpt and resculpt what those venues and platforms and works are going to look like into the future, and that it doesn't always have to take the same form to be meaningful and I think. Also, I really hope that these notions of reverence and honoring your mentors and your teachers and your audiences is taken or is just no one really takes this for... I hope we all don't take this for granted as we move forward after this period and I know how much we all missed it.

**David Hallberg:**

Yeah.

**Solana Chehtman:**

Thank you both so, so much for your generosity of hearing and sharing your thoughts with everyone. I certainly don't take for granted getting to work with people like you seriously. And to get to share your work, it's such an honor. So, thank you so much. Thank you everyone who joined. And this will be recorded and will be on our website. So, if anyone missed it, just send them to our website soon and you will get to see it, so.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Thank you, Solana.

**David Hallberg:**

Thanks everyone. Thank you.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Thank you, David.

**David Hallberg:**

Thank you, Madeline.

**Madeline Hollander:**

Bye.

**David Hallberg:**

Take care.

**Solana Chehtman:**

Bye.

**Madeline Hollander:**

You too. Bye.