

# “Beauty” by: Jane Comfort and Company

## Residency Report

This residency report includes three elements:

1. Explanation of 2013 Lehigh University / Zoellner Arts Center (PA) engagement
2. Other Residency Activities offered by Jane Comfort & Co.
3. Residency activity ideas for college and university campuses

### Explanation of Lehigh University Engagement

The company engagement at Lehigh University / Zoellner Arts Center took place on Sept 16&17, 2013 and included five elements\*:

1. **“Beauty” reading list**
2. **Talk given by author Peggy Orenstein**, writer (Sept 26, 2013)
3. **Movement and Text Workshop** for dance students, taught by Jane Comfort
4. **Panel Discussion** on Beauty
5. **Performance of Jane Comfort’s “Beauty”** at Zoellner Arts Center

\*January 2014 engagement at Hillsborough Community College (FL) incorporated all of the above and also included a poetry slam titled, “What is Beauty?”.

1. **The Beauty Reading List** was an integral part of the inspirations and development of the piece. The book list was distributed to the Lehigh University community pre-engagement and consisted of:

“Cinderella Ate My Daughter” by Peggy Orenstein  
“When Everything Changed” by Gail Collins  
“The Beauty Myth” by Naomi Wolf  
“Female Chauvinist Pigs” by Ariel Levy  
“The Barbie Chronicles” by Yona Zeldis Mc Donough  
“Barbie's Queer Accessories” by Erica Rand

Also included in the list was a collection of web links to articles and videos:

- Article: [The plastic surgery a model needs to look like Barbie, By Piper Weiss](#)
- Article: [Barbie takes on Vogue – the Black Barbie issue](#)
- Article: [Ashley Judd Slaps Media in the Face Over Her ‘Puffy’ Appearance](#)
- Article: [“34x25x36”](#)
- Video: [Dove Evolution](#)
- Video: [What Barbie Would Look Like If She Resembled an Actual Woman](#)
- Video: [Dance Precisions - Run the World](#)
- Video: [FOTOSHOP BY ADOBE](#)
- Wikipedia: [Slutwalk](#)
- Video: [Your Vagina Isn't Just Too Big, Too Floppy, and Too Hairy—It's Also Too Brown](#)

2. **Talk given by author of “Cinderella Ate My Daughter”, Peggy Orenstein** Orenstein is an award-winning writer, editor and speaker about issues affecting girls and women. Previous books include, *Flux: Women on Sex, Work, Kids, Love and Life in a Half-Changed World* and *SchoolGirls: Young Women, Self-Esteem and the Confidence Gap*. A contributing writer for the [New York Times Magazine](#), in 2012 she was named

by [The Columbia Journalism Review](#) as one of its "40 Women Who Changed the Media Business in the Past 40 Years."

3. **Movement and Text Workshop** Jane Comfort taught a class for dance and theatre students integrating text with movement. Lehigh University opened this class to three local area colleges.

Class description: Jane taught a section from "Beauty" that involves a stream of rapid fire questions addressed to the performers regarding whether they currently use or would ever consider using particular beauty products or procedures. Referred to as the "Beauty Tips Section", this section gives the student the experience of improvising their response to text through movement and spoken word. The students were taught this section from the piece and experienced first-hand Jane's method of integrating content and context into a performance piece. The class was a great success and served to enrich the students' experience as an audience member.

4. **Panel Discussion**

The panel topic presented by Lehigh University was titled: *What is Beauty?* Panelists included representatives from the Art department, the Gender studies department, and an editor from a women's health magazine:

- Lehigh University's Associate Professor of Art at Lehigh University
- Lehigh University's Director of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies
- Assistant Online Editor at Prevention Magazine

While the panel was open to all students on campus and the public, the panel was a direct part of the "1st year Experience" seminar. Students received credit for attending the panel and also received a free ticket to the show. The panel discussion began by posing the discussion topic of "What is Beauty?" The panelists were given this question ahead of time and each prepared a short presentation to begin the panel from his/her perspective vantage point on "Beauty."

Some elements that were utilized/explored in the panel:

- Images of beauty in art
- Human neurological response to beauty
- Live anonymous surveys of audience's daily use of beauty products and impression of self-beauty
- Sociological perspective on the topic of "impression management"
- Cultural ideals of beauty as being socially constructed

5. **Performance of "Beauty" - September 17, 2013**

"Beauty" was performed at Zoellner Arts Center and was attended by the general public as well as by 5 college programs and 2 high school dance programs. It lasted one-hour and included a moderated post-performance Q&A with the entire cast of "Beauty" as well as Jane Comfort herself. Immediate feedback was incredibly positive.

## **Residency Activities that Jane Comfort and Co. offers**

Other Residency Activities that Jane Comfort and Co. offers include **Lecture/Demonstrations, Performance Workshops, Movement Text Workshops, and Repertory Workshops**. The company is available to meet with women's groups, gay alliances, women's shelters, and student organizations to discuss the gender and race

issues involved in our work. All of these activities can be tailored to fit the specific needs of specific communities:

- **Lecture/Demonstrations** offer live performance or various scenes from the repertory, including video showings. This is followed with an informal discussion with the audience about the genesis of the work, how certain scenes were built, how a particular movement vocabulary became a metaphor for a social issue, how the text is laid into the movement, etc. A lecture/demonstration can be combined with an extended workshop in which participants develop their own performance piece based on social issues.
- **Performance Workshops** focus on how to make a performance piece that deals with social issues. Warm up activities include acting and movement improvisations which are followed by discussions of structural options for performance and the social issues involved. Small groups or individuals develop short pieces which are shared with the group.
- **Movement Text Workshops** introduce students to simple compositional techniques for voice and body. Students are given basic breath and vocal techniques to open up emotionally. The class then explores movement and text modules which are built into quick study structures.
- **Repertory Workshops** introduces students to extended segments of the company's work, with an emphasis on scenes that include both speaking and movement.
- **Technique Classes** may be taught by members of Jane Comfort & Company.

### **Residency ideas for college & university campuses**

The below activities could be paired with course offerings in Art, Dance, Dramatic Arts, Education and Teacher Preparation, or Liberal Arts departments, and credit could be given for attendance to any of the following:

- **Movement and Text Workshop**
- **Panel Discussion** on specific book from "Beauty" reading list
- **Performance of Jane Comfort's "Beauty"**
- **Post-performance Q&A** with Jane and company
- **Discussion with Jane Comfort** regarding the research the company did to create "Beauty"
- **Talk with author of book from "Beauty" reading list**
- **Student government involvement**
- **Dance Clubs involvement**
- **Greek Life involvement**
- **Gender and Women's studies involvement**
- **American studies involvement**
- **Health and Wellness involvement in relation to body image**
- **Involvement with neighboring University Dance, Art, Education, Liberal Studies, Sociology, and Theatre Departments**
- **Involvement with neighboring University departments of Education, Art, Theatre, Dance, Sociology and Women's Studies**