

## Background to Mortal Condition

### Credits

Larissa McGowan	Concept & Choreographer & Dancer
Steve Mayhew	Associate Director & Dramaturge
Thomas Bradley	Dancer
Kialea Nadine Williams	Dancer
DJ Trip - Tyson Hopprich	Composer
Toby K	Lighting & Projection Design
Lisa Griffiths	Choreographic Advisor
Jason Cross	Insite Arts, Producer

*Mortal Condition*, takes us from the reality of our human interactions and transports us to a virtual world we might escape to.

Who are the avatars and who is playing who?

Part I: Condition

Part II: Mortal Condition

Partly inspired by a Mike Patton album and partly by observing gamers play for hours on end, Larissa McGowan's *Mortal Condition* explores human interactions and what might materialize from them in a virtual gaming world.

Staged in two distinctive parts, *Part I: Condition* starts with the guttural and vocal gymnastics of Mike Patton's experimental album "Adult Themes for Voice". Extraordinary human yet violent sounds underpin an expressive and wordless raw dialogue between two bodies.

In direct contrast *Part II: Mortal Condition* uses the personas of secondary female video game characters to explore virtual worlds where there are no rules. With DJ Tr!p's score inspired by the cinematic explosions of adventure, *Mortal Condition*, takes the real and raw emotion of being human and transplants it into a very made up world of video games.

It's one of those evenings where Lara Croft and Portal's Anger Sphere play Tetris.

## Artistic Background

MC explores reality versus the virtual world and is developed as two distinctive parts, that come together to represent each of these worlds. MC takes us from the reality of our human interactions and transports us to the virtual world we escape to. Part 1 (P1) is danced by a male and female dancer and two female dancers perform in Part 2 (P2).

MC is inspired by my interest in abstract movement that a broader audience can relate to, by drawing upon a playful juxtaposition of popular cultural references; music, movies, cartoons and video games are a large source of entertainment and these forms allow me to play with elements, themes and choreographic language that invites a broader audience into the abstract world of dance. Mortal Condition was (in part) inspired by an album and the world of the video game.

The work (part 1) starts and departs from Mike Patton's album "Adult Themes for Voice" which for me inspires a conversation between the sound and the body.

Mike Patton best known as the lead singer of the alternative metal band Faith No More has earned critical praise for his diverse array of vocal techniques, which this album explores. To me it is a representation of communication of the mind through the body, expressing the trauma and tribulations that come with human interactions.

In the first stage creative development (over 2 weeks) dancer Thomas Bradley and I worked with the album to respond to fixed stimulus through the sound. The contrasting energy of the voice allowed us to play with a large range of physical interactions. The freedom to be bold in our movement and movement style is informed by the tone, texture, dynamics and intention of the voice within the sound score. While the music lends itself to intricate movements they need to be structured in a way that allows the audience to catch their breath. Throwing the dancers into a cathartic metamorphosis, the score allows us to represent a plethora of human emotion that is evident in any relationship.

The work playfully asks the audience to question their reality of the relationship between the two dancers. Is it a battle of the sexes? Are we siblings, lovers, friends? Is the relationship stable & secure or breaking down? What is their condition and is this a natural part of our own

mortality? Or are we animals using our bodies as a language unique only to us. Just as our language, culture or voice is unique. The work is visceral and animalistic in quality, primal even, but they are humans and as a consequence, there is vulnerability.

Part 2 is an escape or perhaps a retreat from the real world we have experienced in P1. This came about from watching my partner and male friends being absorbed into the virtual realm. I was fascinated by their intrigue with certain characters, surroundings and even competitive nature of the game. Whether that be with themselves, others or the challenge of the game itself. We have spent time looking at a range of games from the old pixel games through to the 3D games that feel strangely real.

For more than a generation people have found ways to relax and imagine themselves as avatars transported through the medium of games, Virtual worlds that we create and explore. P2 takes the persona and physicality of secondary female characters within the fantasy world of video games along with the portrayals of the female gender in the world of fantasy and entertainment. Apart from characters such as Lara Croft the lead characters in gaming worlds are traditionally held by iconic male figures. I explore the internal logic of these female characters that are bound by tradition and condition and the possibility of breaking this mold by challenging the realm they are trapped in. I will seek to reveal the fascination with the power and prowess of leading characters by using these female roles to challenge that of the lead hero, boss character, or male.