

Dreaming, Collaboratively... creating "Lucid Dreams"

*My presentation is video selections from the film, **Lucid Dreams**, and my comments from a joint interview about how we three collaborators made the piece...*

My interview comments highlight the centrality of trust and improvisation in a collaborative creative process...

"Lucid Dreams"

We three creators of **Lucid Dreams** - composer **Edward Bilous**, choreographer **Alison Chase**, and filmmaker **Mirra Bank** - talked with **Brooklyn Academy of Music** executive producer **Joseph V. Melillo** about the creative process ... just ahead of our premiere at **Carnegie's Zankel Hall**.

The questions and answers below are between Joe Melillo and me...

Mirra, you have collaborated with Alison Chase before -- what do you continue to discover about the intersection of the art forms of dance and film?

Before working with Alison and Ed on **Lucid Dreams**, I had made two award-winning documentary films with Pilobolus (**Last Dance, Academy Award-shortlisted for Best Feature Documentary**); and **Monkey & The Bone Demon**, (a short film commission from Wolftrap Foundation for the Performing Arts); as well as several short performance pieces.

I love the way a Pilobolus dance evolves on film: collaborative, in-the-moment, improvisation-driven.

Dance is a seductive and tricky subject for film, because, like any storytelling, it demands a pliant and convincing structure to work.

Creating **Lucid Dreams** as a film had rigorous limitations: we had Ed's score -- no naturalistic sound or dialogue -- and Alison's two dancers moving in a 'dreamscape.' This ultra-minimalist palette was rich in beauty of movement, and ambiguity of meaning.

The public performance at Carnegie Hall would be teeming with life onstage: a singer, 30-odd musicians, a conductor, two dancers -

So, it was clear that the video had to be stripped down, elemental.

Lucid Dreams uses the landscape of the dancers' bodies - and the point of view from the dancers' bodies moving, sometimes flying, through space - to create a '4th dimension': the dreamer's consciousness. In these passages, our video reveals facets of dance movement not seen by the audience.

And the finished film, projected across two huge walls behind the live dancers onstage, expands the temporal dimension in which the audience experiences choreography, music & video all at the same time.

This expansion suggests the multiple realities of a lucid dream: the dreamer 'sees' the dream, knowing that he/she is dreaming. But the dreamer remains asleep in the dream.

Mirra, what challenges have both Ed and Alison provided you?

Conceptually, Ed gave us the challenge of embodying the phenomenon of lucid dreaming - the dreamer aware within the dream.

We all agreed that we'd work with **three classical aspects of that state, roughly described as: Eros, Flight, and Secret Spaces.**

For performance, Ed's edgy, high-energy score challenged us to meet it with equally arresting dance movement on stage, and on film.

Alison gave me the challenge of first creating filmed dance passages that she would then build on or counter in her stage choreography.

Our layers of filmed and live movement would sometimes intersect; sometimes diverge. We'd invent **Lucid Dreams** as we worked. It is never pre-structured 'recording' of choreography.

Alison & the dancers would bring in what they'd been developing in rehearsal, I'd come with a premise for the moving-image narrative.

Together we'd knock it all down and re-build it based on what develops as the dancers improvise further.

So, as the filmmaker, I'd anticipate, respond, re-shape my ideas, and re-block camera movement as the dancers discovered movement.

[** \(Several photographs I've provided document how this process looked during production.\)](#)

In addition, since we had no way to meet and assemble all the performers, or do a full tech, ahead of the premiere at Carnegie Hall, we had to 'imagine' ourselves into the situation, and dream up the best way for the audience to be immersed all the elements. 700 people, including us as creators, would see it come together, live, for the first time, at the opening.

Mirra, has this been an art enhancing experience for you as a filmmaker?

Absolutely. Rarely have I had the chance to work this 'playfully' and intuitively with artists whose work I deeply admire.

Lucid Dreams has been a leap of faith, seat-of-the-pants journey for me, and I'm thrilled to be on it.

NOTES:

Lucid Dreams emerged from a special 3-way collaboration between Edward Bilous (composer); Alison Chase (choreographer/Pilobolus); and Mirra Bank (filmmaker) commissioned by the **American Composers Orchestra**.

The piece is a multimedia exploration of *Lucid Dreaming: being aware of the progress of a dream while asleep and dreaming it*. The first time everything came together - including a 30-piece onstage orchestra with a conductor and singer, alongside the two dancers and the film projection - was when **Lucid Dreams** premiered at Zankel/Carnegie Hall in front of 600 people... hair raising, but magic.

The New York Times hailed its "*Daredevil Spirit... with a duo from the company Pilobolus executing a tangled, erotic duet simultaneously onstage and in a film. "Lucid Dreams," seemed an awakening ...Mirra Bank created the video.*"

Webpage: <https://www.mirrabankfilms.com/lucid-dreams>