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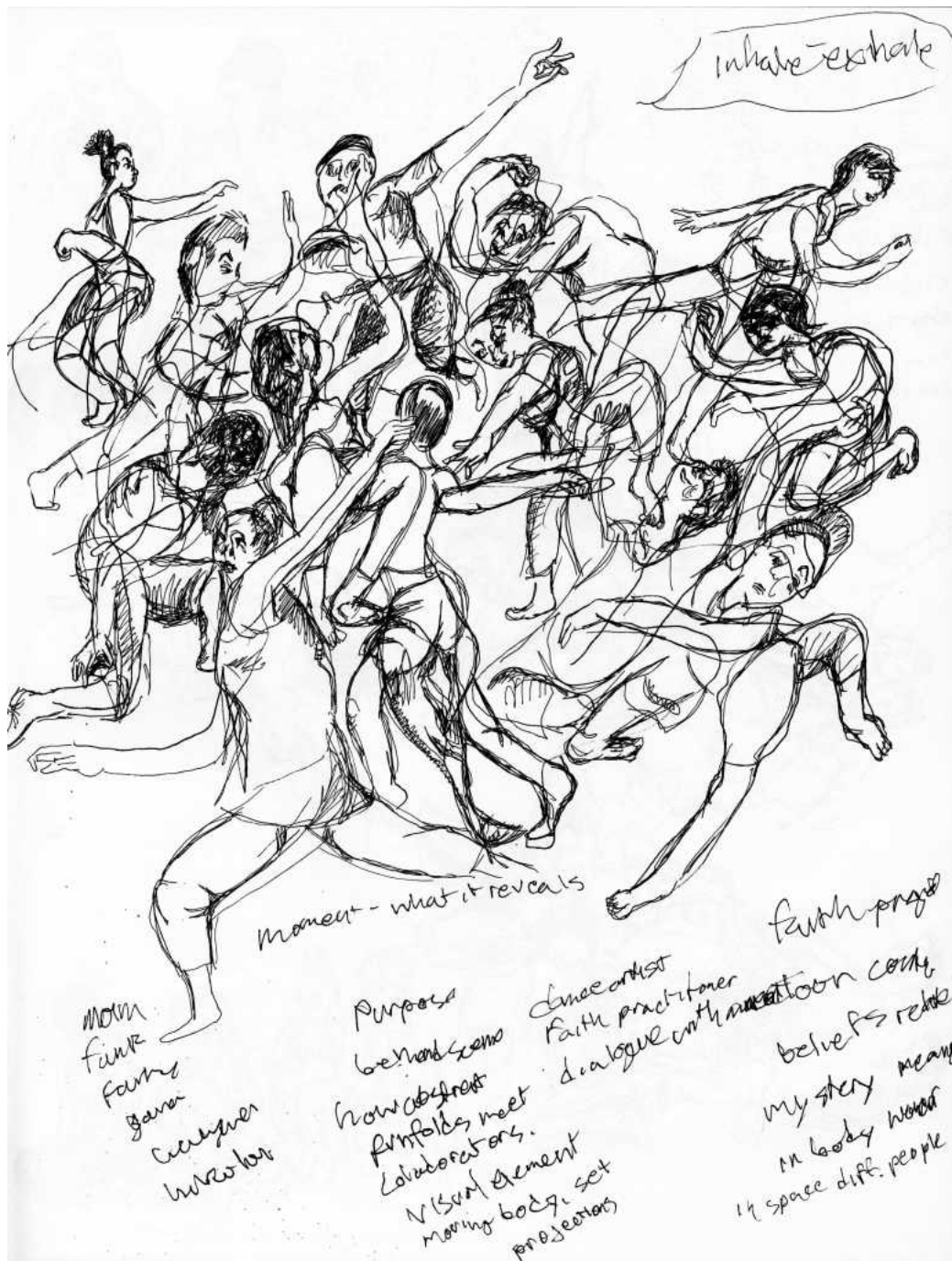
Independent coverage of  
Philadelphia theater and arts

## Dance in Sketch: Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers open studio

March 2, 2018 - [Chuck Schultz](#)



Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers Open Rehearsals series is taking place now as they prepare for *Faith Project*, to be performed at the Prince Theater March 22, 23, and 24, 2018.



I was at the Chi Movement Arts Center last week, February 24. The dance artist's studio was a place to lose any kind of anxiety and turn away these ill beliefs. The dance artists form new relationships with a dialogue with how the body works, but also with who we identify ourselves with, inside and out. The question of belief in the mysterious world is finding ourselves behind the faces and actions of our bodies. The KYL/Dancers find rhythms where faith appears and reappears when it has been lost.



*Faith Project* with multimedia designer Jared Mezzocchi explored the possibilities of live camera projections in order to complete the environment that the bodies imply. The process seems improvised, and the projections show up through layers of filters interactive in real time. Mezzocchi's background in DJing has led to an interesting texture that he has created by capturing the motion and responding to it with visual effects. The immediacy of cause and effect action on stage and in the set is another perspective for viewing the mysteries of our belief.



There are emotions that become more real as we follow the dance artists and try to delve into the patterns of the composition. The mixing of these moments bends our awareness of what is happening on stage, and what is reality. So, when the video is showing an aerial view, and we see the height x depth of the space, it may appear empty or full of what we imagined it to be from our own beliefs. That is, maybe reality is what we make it to be in the end.





The philosophy and perpetual motion that occurs is expressed by a wholeness activated by the dancers. The content of the *Faith Project* Open Rehearsals shared the process of leading ourselves to believe in a second chance. Many emotions from the dance artists mixes with our own experiences in reality and naturally we create our own self portrait. The philosophy of self in the individual is carried by a community, and KYL/Dancer's practice to see and be seen in this particular way.

***Faith Project/The Door*** will run **March 22-24, 2018**, at the Prince Theater, [kyld.org](http://kyld.org)

Online Article Link:

<http://phindie.com/17130-dance-in-sketch-kun-yang-lindancers-open-studio/>

The Arts

March 21, 2018

## Where spirituality and dance meet

by Shaun Brady, FOR THE INQUIRER



**ROB LI photography**

Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers in “Faith Project/The Door,” coming to Prince Theater March 22-24.

As a small audience filed into an open studio session at South Philly’s CHI Movement Arts Center this month, 10 dancers milled around the space, stretching, warming up, rehearsing moves. A few minutes later, at a cue from choreographer Kun-Yang Lin, this diverse group was suddenly moving across the floor en masse, each clutching an invisible ball of energy and then releasing them together as one.

“Some people say that watching us dance is like seeing one organism,” Lin said later that afternoon. “We all come into the world as individuals, but when we start to find our own practice, we do it together. We start to associate with something greater than ourselves – that’s religion.”

Though *spiritual* is a word that comes up often when people describe Lin’s work, he doesn’t follow any particular faith, instead insisting that “dance is my religion.” Wanting to find the source of that spirituality in his own work, Lin set out to create *Faith Project/The Door*, which his company, Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers, will premiere this weekend at the Prince Theater.

### Choreography by ‘story circle’

*Faith Project* was developed through a series of story circles held at Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers’ South Philly studio that gathered dance artists together with members of different spiritual communities from across the city. The meetings were overseen by Kimerer LaMothe, a religious scholar, philosopher, and dancer whom Lin invited to be the project’s “thought partner.”

In her book *Why We Dance*, LaMothe argues that it’s no accident that Lin discovered parallels between dance and religion.

“Dance is the first technology that humans had for bonding together,” LaMothe says. “In my book, I talk about dance as navigating what I call the ethical paradox that humans are: We’re singular individuals, yet we’re irreducibly connected.

“As humans, we always have to navigate that: How do you be both an individual and a community member? Dance has the ability to do that in such an amazing way, because as you’re moving together it

wakens things inside of yourself that you wouldn't have discovered if you hadn't been moving with the group."

For the story circles, LaMothe formulated three questions and asked participants to come up with a single answer: What do you most love? What do you most fear? What is the source of your greatest strength?



**Mike Hurwitz**  
Members of the Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers Company

Dancers posited answers like "freedom" and "myself."

"Each dance we create is not really an answer," Lin says. "It's really about the questions; they allow us to have that chance to dream, to fear, and to think. We're not trying to preach. We're trying to have a visceral response, so people can feel."

## **Gesture as language**

Growing up in Taiwan, Lin was raised by a Chinese Catholic father and a Taiwanese mother whose beliefs fused Buddhism and Daoism. Not only did his parents come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds, they didn't even share a common tongue.

"That's how I discovered movement," Lin says. "My father and mother did not speak the same language, so gesture was very important. I often say to my dancers, 'Think in body and dance in mind.' That way your mind can have the fluidity to listen to the wisdom our bodies can teach us."

In part a celebration of Kun-Yang Lin's 10th anniversary in Philadelphia, *Faith Project/The Door* continues an exploration of community the choreographer has been conducting in recent work.

His 2015 piece *Home/S. 9<sup>th</sup> St.* was a look at the immigrant experience, centered on the changing demographics of the company's Italian Market neighborhood. Last year's *Santuario* was a deeply personal response to the Pulse nightclub shooting in Florida that touched on LGBTQ issues.

"Every artwork is semiautobiographical," Lin says. "The difference now is we use the community as a filter. We have to step outside of ourselves."

## **DANCE**

### **Faith Project/The Door**

- Performed by Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers March 22-24 at Prince Theater, 1412 Chestnut St. **Tickets:** \$20-\$40. **Information:** [kyld.org](http://kyld.org)



## Dancing Faith with Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers



By Kat Richter for The Dance Journal | Photo credit: RobLi Photography

A line of dancers faces the audience, head on, one behind the other and features obscured. One by one, they begin to raise their arms, palms outstretched, sending a ripple of energy down the line. In the hands of a less seasoned choreographer, the sequence would look like a cheap trick—a Vogue-inspired optical illusion—but under the director of Kun-Yang Lin, there is something sublime about it. We’re reminded instead of a multi-limb Hindu deity: Brahma, perhaps, the creator; or Vishnu, the preserver; or perhaps, most accurately, Shiva, the destroyer.

The fact that we don’t know for sure is the beauty of KYLD’s latest creation, Faith Project/The Door, which opens at the Prince Theater on March 22 and runs through March 24. During an open rehearsal last month, Lin explained that he wanted to explore the connection between modern dance and religion, between modern dance and spirituality, but you’ll find no praise dance histrionics, no crucifixion tableaux, no Martha Graham-style Appalachian Spring rip offs.

The religious references in Lin’s choreography are oblique and abstract, based instead upon a series of “story circle encounters” in which the dancers of KYLD partnered with members of the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia to share ideas and reflections upon their experiences with religion. Participants in the story circles ranged from member of the clergy to lay people, representing religious traditions as varied as Islam and



Judaism, Roman Catholicism and Quakerism, Native American beliefs and Atheism, and the dancers created improvised movement phrases in reaction to these shared conversations.

In the studio, large white curtains hang from the back of the space. The dancers warm up with a series of breathing exercises before previewing a section of the new work. They begin by simply walking across the stage but the effect is pleasing as the both the number of dancers and the tempo increases. I've long admired Lin's ability to create stunning visual effects onstage from relatively simple materials: be it a huge sheet of brown paper, a pair of long sleeves extending the arc of an arm movement, or a group of bodies engaged in seemingly "pedestrian" movements. In Faith Project/The Door, he sends dancers behind the curtain, where their silhouettes are just visible. We think for a moment that perhaps we're watching a dancer who represents Jesus this time, but again the reference is oblique, just a suggestion to make us think.

With support from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage and the National Endowment of the Arts, Lin assembled a large creative team for Faith Project/The Door including Jared Mezzochi (Multimedia Design), Cory Neale (Sound Design and Composition), Alyssandra Docherty (Lighting Design), Sara Outing (Set Design), and Jill Peterson (Costume Design). The dancers also received instruction in meditation and Dr. Kimerer LaMothe, a philosopher and scholar of religion, came on board as the project's "Thought Partner." Early on in the creative process, she encouraged the participants to identify what they loved the most, what they feared the most, and what they considered to be their greatest strength—but with an added caveat: the answer had to be the same thing for all three queries. Audiences who attend this weekend's concert might just happen to stumble upon a response of their own.

### **Faith Project / The Door**

Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers

March 22 – 24

Prince Theatre, 1412 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

Information & Tickets – <http://princetheater.org/events/kyld-the-door/>

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Lin/Dancers <https://philadelphiadance.org/dancejournal/2018/03/19/dancing-faith-with-kun-yang-lin-dancers/>

## Kun-Yang Lin and Dancers in "Faith Project: The Door"



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### Kun-Yang Lin and Dancers March 22

**Have you ever seen this company/ before?**

***Tell us a bit about your history with this group/performer?***

Kun-Yang Lin and Dancers are based in Philadelphia. Last year the program Sanctuary was especially powerful. *Faith Project: The Door* used a lighter subject matter and an in-depth process which was shared at open studio rehearsals. The production of Kun-Yang Lin and Dancers always feel guided to feel personal for the audience. The diversity of dancers shows characters on stage that help to move the narrative along. Moments are complete with tones of human emotion. Last year Kun-Yang Lin traveled to Asia, studied Chi Gong, gave master classes, and worked with international artists.

**What was your favorite moment(s)? What inspired you?**

The use of different layers of fabric in the set showed some dancers and hid others under silhouettes.

**Describe as plainly and specifically as you can what actually happened during this performance. We are looking for non-judgmental reporting. No need for complete sentences. Phrases and word lists are fine. YOU CAN DESCRIBE: the artists, their activities, the movement, the qualities of movement, the music, the use of time, the use of space OR anything else you observed.**

The transformation of hard body movements to soft shaking movements. The activities behind the curtain created a beat. The movement was consistent with the music. The video projection showed another perspective to the dancers on the stage.

**Do any images, colors or feelings pop into your head when you think about this show?**

The image of a shuddering attack on the body and breaking out of the mold was a repeated motif. Kun-Yang was searching for a commonality between contemporary dance and world religions. The mold that is beginning to cast a portrait of intolerance between different religions was a groundbreaking theory that underlines *Faith Project: The Door*.

**Describe any or all of these elements: music, lighting, the venue. How did they contribute (or not) to your enjoyment of this performance?**

The narrative introduces heroines or a danger as well as pure emotion. The duets became new stages with in the story. moments are refocused, and the return to familiar forms under new light can be shocking. For example, the dance ends with a scene of meditating Buddha's that was the same feeling at the opening of the dance, but it was a statuesque scene of a killing or a sacrifice.

**Would you like to see this performance / company again? Would you recommend it to a friend? Why or why not?**

I would recommend Kun-Yang Lin and Dancers to anyone who appreciates art on a grand scale. It is always a large production with many dancers, and the meaning is simplified for a general audience. The choreography is designed to make the subject felt through the emotion of the movement.

## **What would you like to have seen more of? Less of?**

The idea behind *Faith Project: The Door* was the universal language of dance and the communication of our beliefs. Dance is an unspoken language and it is a gesture that unites us. Contemporary dance brings out the ritualistic and sacred space that theater arts provide for expanding our minds. The inspiration of dance in theater is fascinating, but modern dance falls short sometimes for an unknowing audience. *Faith Project: The Door* pushed for more research based interrogations into movement as communication, while last year's *Sanctuary* provided an outlet for sex, gender, and exploring emotions in general. The simple subject matter allows for a wide context of relative contributors.

## **If you could, what would you ask the choreographer / dancers?**

How did it feel to challenge religious dogmas with the idea that religion is dance? It seems to be a topical question when someone questions another sacred belief on moral grounds. Cultures around the world seem to be connected and trade ideas, beliefs, or stories that influence the world to want to be diverse, or different.

**Author: Chuck Schultz**

Link to online article: <https://www.dance-enthusiast.com/get-involved/reviews/view/Kun-Yang-Lin-and-Dancers-in-Faith-Project-The-Door-March-22>



## KYL/Dances of the sacred spirit



**March 26, 2018 by Lewis J Whittington for The Dance Journal | Photo by Rob Li**

In development for a year, KYL/Dancers Faith Project/THE DOOR had its premiere run at the Prince Theater last week. It is the latest production of choreographer Kun-Yang Lin's long form dance pieces that doesn't back away from tackling complex social themes. In 2015's HOME, Lin explored the many experiences of immigrants trying to navigate life in an increasingly xenophobic country and last year's stunning Santuario was his artistic response to the massacre at PULSE Nightclub. This newest work explores issues of faith in today's world – its power to bring people together in a collective faith in humanity and a higher purpose, as well as the forces of religion and opposing beliefs that can tear families, communities, and cultures apart.

Lin, his husband Rev. Ken Metzner (executive director of KYL/D) as well as the dancers engaged in a series of dialogues in collaboration with the Interfaith Center of Greater Philadelphia to bring together people of many beliefs to share ideas, issues, and

experiences about religion and spirituality. Such engagement is very much a part of KYL/D's ongoing mission of community interaction and outreach through dance art.

Many of those voices are incorporated into the dance score and soundscape by the composer, Cory Neale, offering a gripping, sometimes cinematic narrative of acoustical, electronica and sonic design. And what cannot be said in word and music, Lin says eloquently in dance.

The opening is a visual dreamscape of eleven dancers moving through set designer, Sara Outing's ingenious maze of scrims. The dancers seem disconnected and in their own zones like they are punched through another realm of consciousness as they embark on a shared journey in dance.

Their inner journeys emerge when Evalina Carbonell convulses in spasms that eventually have her crumbled on the floor, with Frank Leone menacingly hovering over her ready to strike. A phrase that is revisited, and resolved in the coda. Anger and confusion roil, as people of different faiths challenge each other's belief systems.

As he did with *Santuario*, Lin had each dancer build a phrase or step that would be an expression of what they believed (or didn't believe) regarding religious faith. These individual, dance fingerprints were part of Lin's choreographic template.

At one point the dancers line up behind a milky scrim and look like ghost images pounding at the symbolic 'Door' to break through to a universal truth. Evocations of spiritual chaos gather in Lin's choreographic storms. His configurations, particularly in the ensemble transitions tap a whole different choreographic vein at key moments. The full ensemble swarming together at points with precision, stomping out dialogic rhythms, in cryptic formations, sometimes pulsing to the stage edge or breaking apart in movement chaos.

More personal expressions come in a series of duets. Carbonell and Nikolai McKenzie perform the 'Earth Door' duet with McKenzie soaring through the air with his legs pulled under his body then dropping down to fevered, trance-like dance spells. 'Left Door/Right Door' danced by Frank Leone and Weiwei Ma in flowing martial variations that keep evolving. Keila Pérez-Vega and Francis Markocki dance the 'Evolving Door' duet, punctuated with intricate fast moving lifts.

The climactic 'Ritual' begins as a communal circle, with the ensemble in unison deep plies as soloist Annielille Gavino, arms and one leg reaching for the sky at a perilous angle in the center, swirls around the circle, locking into precarious positions then trembling as if imbued. Meanwhile, the ensemble, now crawling on all fours, conjures a ritualized ring of fire. Concussive, dense orchestral soundscape recedes as the dancers disperse in sacred Sufi spinning and then dissolve into meditative poses and postures.

Throughout the ballet, there is seamless film projected on the scrims by multimedia designer, Jared Mezzocchi, and Videographer, Bob Finkelstein. It is so well integrated that

their dazzle doesn't distract from the dancing especially in tandem with Alyssandra Docherty's sculpted lighting designs. Jill Peterson's costumes are flowy and clingy to show full bodies in motion.

Aside from the weighty narrative content, Lin essays, in its breadth, are an ever expansive and inspired choreographic journey.

Lin and Metzner introduced the work and noted that "Faith Project/The Door" marks their ten year company anniversary in Philadelphia. The performance opened with Lin's Dedication scored to Ingram Marshall's elegiac music, which Lin cited as a fitting prologue piece. It is a solo that only Lin has danced until now. He created in 2002 in the aftermath of 9/11, when his company was based in New York and also in memoriam for his father. The solo was performed by Liu Mo who conveyed Lin's minimalist phrases of a grieving heart and mind with intense lyrical precision.

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<https://philadelphiadance.org/dancejournal/2018/03/26/kyl-dances-of-the-sacred-spirit/>

# *Broad Street Review*

*where art and ideas meet*

Prince Theater presents Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers 'Faith Project/The Door'

## Seeking, questioning, worshipping, dancing

Melissa Strong March 23, 2018 in *Dance*

Dance is a language. Is it also a religion? Kun-Yang Lin, artistic director of Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers (KYL/D), believes so. How fitting, then, that KYL/D celebrated its 10th anniversary with *Faith Project/The Door*, a world premiere that explores the relationship between dance and spirituality.



A backdrop with projections of cave-style drawings seems to hint that faith and art are as old as humanity. (Photo by Rob Li Photography.)

Before the performance, Lin explained to the audience that *Dedication*, a solo he created in 2002, would precede *Faith Project/The Door*. *Dedication* responds to the sudden death of Lin's father and the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It is personal and cathartic, a means of processing grief.

Until now, only Lin had danced *Dedication*. He paired the

premiere with this earlier work because they fit together thematically and because the time was right to pass its torch to other dancers.

*Dedication's* varying tempo and seeming hesitation of movement suggested the nonlinear progress of grief. There are good and bad days, and backward steps come just when things start to get better. Liu Mo performed the solo, lifting one leg as if to step forward and pausing as if frozen, later following a slow arabesque with frenetic turns. He crawled across the floor and pawed it, then brought his hands to his head and chest in gestures of pain. If grieving is a dance, it is a solo, this short, moving work seems to say.

### Faith gives and takes

Between dances, author Kimerer LaMothe spoke about her work as "scholar and thought partner" for *Faith Project/The Door*. The show's program notes include lines from poet and Sufi mystic Rumi



(“Knock, and He’ll open the door”), and LaMothe explained that dance offers ways in and through doors that appear to separate different religious traditions and the people who practice them.

A short video about the making of *Faith Project/The Door* demonstrated that this was a big endeavor. It was supported by grants, a research team, and “story circles” in which representatives from local faith communities shared with dancers.

*Faith Project/The Door* portrays how faith and divinity blend love with fear, strength with weakness, and certainty with doubt. It began with dancers entering individually, walking at different paces and in different directions, occasionally stopping to gaze at something arresting yet unseen. Having just watched *Dedication*, I thought of the personal: people may worship in groups, but they connect individually to the divine.



Are the dancers of 'Faith Project/The Door' ghosts or angels? (Photo by Rob Li Photography.)

Jill Peterson’s flowing costumes in shades of white and gray reinforced this sense of individuality as they varied in design from dancer to dancer. One flailed her arms, suddenly collapsing and rolling across the stage. Was she afflicted with pain or the Holy Spirit?

This scene repeated at the end of the dance, but the second time, another dancer reached for the prone woman and embraced her. The sequence recurred with other “afflicted” dancers, who also seemed to receive help and healing.

### **Spiritual abstraction**

Abstract dance tends to raise more questions than it answers, and this is true for *Faith Project/The Door*. Yet it effectively uses movement to explore seeking, questioning, and worshipping.

The work’s strongest sections incorporate multimedia (designed by Jared Mezzochi) with Alyssandra Docherty’s lighting and Sara Outing’s altarlike set, in which white panels divided the stage horizontally and drape at the sides. Dancers behind the panel were in shadow, rendering them silhouettes. Later, the lighting changed and the screen became transparent. Dancers moved through the curtain, suggesting that a barrier was now permeable. On the screen behind them bricks appeared, forming a wall. That wall began to give as soon as it went up, with sand trickling down followed by tumbling rocks. Images of the dancers were projected live onto both curtain and screen, and visual effects alternately changed the bodies into smoke, fire, and indistinct forms evocative of ghosts or angels.

Faith may heal the afflicted, and perhaps dance can too. Some faith traditions incorporate movement into worship. Meanwhile, KYL/D’s mission includes exploring mystery and reinterpreting ancient traditions. *Faith Project/The Door* fulfills those goals and offers the potential to bring people together through a shared experience of dance.