



Beth and Jimmy
Miklavcic in the
Another Language
studio space at the
University of Utah

Speaking Another Language

Jimmy and Beth Miklavcic have spent 25 years on the cutting edge of art and technology in Salt Lake City

THERE ARE SEVERAL ways one might tell the story of the Another Language Performing Arts Company.

It's a story about the ever-evolving art scene of Salt Lake City, and the 25 years the group has spent performing in the alleys, playgrounds and theater spaces of Utah's capital. It's a story about rapid-fire advances in computer technology, and Another Language's efforts to create "live, real-time, distributed, surrealistic cinema" that is unlike anything most of us have seen before. It's a story about dance and poetry, music and theater, collaboration and a singular artistic vision forged by two people.

More than anything, though, the story of Another Language is a love story, that of the group's founders Jimmy and Beth Miklavcic and their mutual desire

to build a life that incorporates not only their love of live performance, but also their interest in pushing artistic boundaries through the most forward-thinking technology available.

This year, the Another Language Performing Arts Company celebrates a quarter-century in Salt Lake City with its *Interplay: Event Horizon* performances in March and April. And while the shows promise mind-boggling combinations of music, acting and computer graphics made possible through the Miklavcics' day

jobs at the University of Utah's Center for High Performance Computing, these performances are only the latest chapter in Jimmy and Beth's story.

It begins in the mid-'70s, on separate coasts, well before either of them thought computers, or Utah, might be in their future.

THE MEET-CUTE

Jimmy grew up in South Jersey enamored with art, in all forms. He fell in love with theater in high school, and studied painting when he started college while learning to play guitar and write music on the side. Beth grew up in the Bay Area of Northern California, and while Jimmy was deciding to hitchhike across the country rather than stay in school in New Jersey, she was pursuing dance at Cabrillo College.

Jimmy eventually landed in Santa Cruz, where he restarted his education by taking classes in technical theater. One day, he was working in the theater when the Cabrillo Dance Ensemble arrived to perform.

"When I first saw Beth, she was stepping on stage," Jimmy recalls with a smile.

"And he was stricken!" Beth proclaims, leading both Miklavcics to laugh heartily. "Apparently, he was stricken. But he was afraid to talk to me."

Beth had a boyfriend when she met Jimmy, but eventually the two got together, just as Beth was deciding to pursue dance at the University of Utah. They moved to Utah in 1979, and got married in Millcreek Canyon in 1981. Then they started plotting their future.

"When I graduated, my intention was to go to New York City," Beth says. "But Jimmy said, 'I don't think we should go to New York with my income as a picture-framer and your income as a dancer.'" Instead, they decided Beth would pursue dance in Salt Lake City while Jimmy went back to school at the U's pioneering Computer Science program.

In the early '80s, the duo would help organize shows around Salt Lake City under the moniker "Experimental Floss," incorporating theater folks, poets, musicians, filmmakers, "anybody who approached us and wanted to be a part of it." Little did they know at the time, but the kitchen-sink approach of the Experimental Floss shows and Jimmy's pursuit of computer skills would still drive their work 25 years later.

IT'S A STORY ABOUT DANCE AND POETRY, MUSIC AND THEATER, COLLABORATION AND A SINGULAR ARTISTIC VISION FORGED BY TWO PEOPLE.



Dancers Theresa Kulikowski and Patrick Barnes perform in Another Language's 2009 production *Interplay: AnARTomy* at the University of Utah.

ANOTHER LANGUAGE

Jimmy and Beth formed Another Language Performing Arts Company in 1985, and part of their founding mission was to pursue a way to combine live performance with computer technology.

"We always thought of performance as a form of communication, so incorporating cutting-edge communication technology made sense," Beth says.

"Our thoughts of what we wanted to do were way ahead of what the technology would allow," Jimmy adds. "Still are."

At first, the Another Language performances resembled traditional theater to some degree—albeit experimental theater—taking place in small studios or auditoriums. The shows combined live performance with multimedia flourishes.

Around 1995, though, the Miklavcics began to see a future for Another Language that would include more technology and less reliance on traditional venues in Salt Lake City.

"It was when we began to think maybe we should change our focus," Jimmy says. "The Internet was starting to blossom, and we had left our ArtSpace studio and were trying to think of a new venue."

"We started thinking of a Web site not just to give information, but as a venue. The Internet for us was something to look at as the new theater."

INTERPLAY

Jimmy's role as the multimedia specialist at the U's Center for High Performance Computing has kept him on the cutting-edge of Internet technologies, and Beth started studying and working at the Center herself in the late '90s. Running their group



quick shots

[] In 1995, the Miklavcics won the Mayor's Artist Award for Performing Arts.

[] The justice of the peace for the Miklavcic's 1981 wedding was Christine Durham, who is now the chief justice of the Utah Supreme Court.

[] The Miklavcic's 22-year-old daughter is now a student at the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in Los Angeles.

from a college campus is the only way they can pursue their vision of "live, real-time, distributed, surrealistic cinema." Their *Interplay* productions require a sort of extreme video-conferencing that the civilian Internet can't handle, but a massive, high-speed network called the Access Grid—linking academic institutions globally—can.

Thanks to the technology, the Miklavcics can conduct a music ensemble from Salt Lake City, with the ensemble members as far flung as London and New Zealand. Actors in Chicago can interact via the video screens with others on a Salt Lake City stage. Jimmy can add visual effects from one location and mix his work with another artist a continent away, or simply a floor above, while dancers choreographed by Beth deliver intricate steps with partners across an ocean.

To be sure, it's trippy stuff. And it's easy as an audience member watching a live performance to get lost questioning how the production is being orchestrated. Beth acknowledges that many in their live audiences are folks more interested in *how* the art is produced than *what* is being produced. "It's another form," Jimmy says. "For me, it is one of the art forms that is the most interdisciplinary of all of them. It's interdisciplinary in terms of the art forms coming together, and in all the technologies coming together. It's just so complex."

"After a while, you kind of go, 'Why am I on this path?'" Beth says of pursuing their vision for Another Language while waiting for technology to catch up. "But it's finally starting to make sense after these 25 years." **SI**

Another Language
Performing Arts
Company's *Interplay:*
Event Horizon

will be performed March 26 through
April 4 at the University of Utah's
INSC Auditorium, 155 S. 1452 East,
SLC. Visit anotherlanguage.org/interplay
for information and tickets.