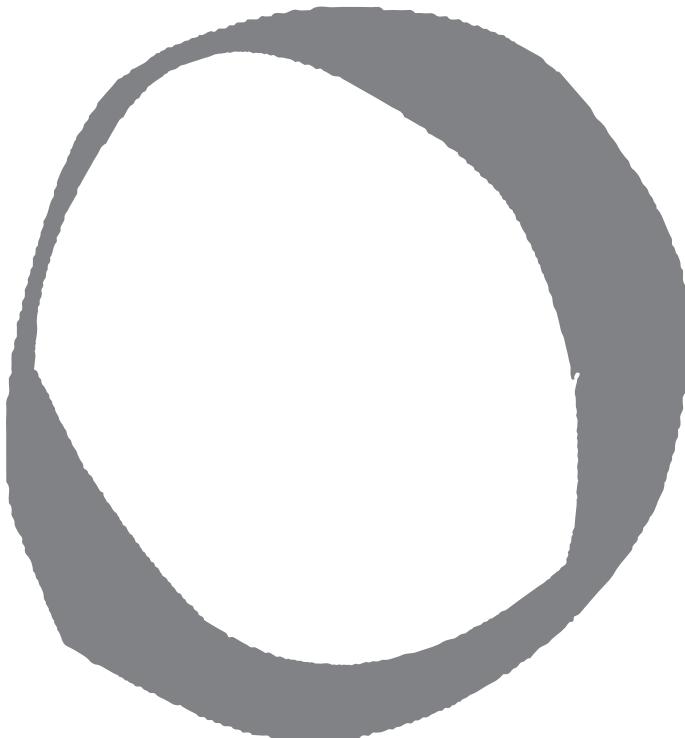


creating moments



# creating moments

ali kenner brodsky

dartmouth, massachusetts

## introduction

There is a moment that stands out crystal clear in my memory from my early 20's when I was an intern at the New York State Council on the Arts under the direction of Beverly D'Anne. I was contemplating going back to school for my MFA in choreography when Beverly said to me—"You want to make dances. Go, and make dances." She was suggesting that I didn't need permission. I just needed the desire to explore, the will to create, and the tenacity to keep going. For the past 20 plus years, those words have been a driving force behind me—"just keep making. Keep trying. Keep digging deeper." Those words have led me to the project in your hand, *creating moments*.

With *creating moments*, I offer you the space to explore your own movement impulses and movement vocabulary. I've provided a framework by sharing prompts that will get you started, but these are just suggestions. Feel free to follow your desires to create your own movement story. You can interpret these prompts however it makes sense for you. Whether the way you move is swimming or walking or playing sports or dancing, I hope you feel comfortable to take your embodied experience, trust it, and interpret these prompts in the way that makes the most sense for you.

My hope is that you approach this experience with openness and wonder. These movement studies can take place anywhere—in the woods, on the beach, in your garden, your home, seated in a chair, lying on your bed—anywhere you feel inspired, creative, and/or curious.

I've always used dance as a way to "speak" the words I cannot find verbal language for. I use my body to express and make sense of emotions that I need to process, that make me feel vulnerable. With my dance works, my hope is that we can find ways to begin conversations around these sensitive topics. I hope we can bear our vulnerabilities, and share them across differences, together.

My dance making practice has developed out of my desire to share my story. When working with dancers, I work to create a space where they feel supported and cared for. I ask them a lot of questions, and I ask them to go deep and share their story. I often ask: "What would it feel like if you did \_\_\_\_ this way?" or "What if \_\_\_\_ happened? " or " What if this came first, then this followed?" I'm interested in the research aspects of dancemaking, and in the honesty of movement. I'm curious about how we can tell stories with our bodies and make people, viewers, and passersby feel something. When I'm watching, I want to feel, I want to be moved, and I want to experience something through dance.

I want to share that entire experience with you through this project, *creating moments*. These prompts have come directly from my personal artmaking practice, directly from the words that I use with collaborators and students. When I make dances, I think of carving space. I am interested in the moments that happen in between—the breath that initiates and the pause after an impulse. I'm interested in movements that have cause and effect: what takes me where, and on what pathway. Through the *creating moments* project, you as a mover can use these questions as a guide to get you started. I hope that you will use the prompts provided as a jumping off point, and then create your own pathway to creation.

Over the past few years, I've been making dance films with cinematographer Rich Ferri. These films are made by designing choreography specifically for the camera. If you would like to investigate what it feels like to capture your movement on camera, I invite you to think of the camera as your partner, a partner that you are performing with rather than for. I've included some prompts for how to position the camera and how to frame your body. These are just suggestions and not a comprehensive list. I invite you to follow your own intuitions and desires. I've also included a few links (via the QR code or [alikennerbrodsky.com](http://alikennerbrodsky.com)) to some studies I've done in the wild as well as a link to my first film, *between silences*.

My hope with *creating moments* is for you to design your own movement story through the prompts provided, or the ones you devise yourself. You have the option to mix and match these prompts, and to use as many or as few as you like. When I'm making a piece, I make phrases—either full bodied, gestural or a combination of both—and I string these phrases together until they feel right. I think of these phrases as puzzle pieces or movement sentences. Oftentimes when I'm choreographing, I realize that the “pieces” may be in the wrong order. In that case, I rearrange my “pieces” until I find what feels right. Or sometimes, the phrase may feel like it's missing something. In that case, I may use an additional prompt or rhythm as an aid to help me fill in the blanks. Most of the time I create either in silence or I use music as an inspiration. While you play with *creating moments*, why don't you try both ways and see what feels inspiring for you? I've included a few links (via the QR code or [alikennerbrodsky.com](http://alikennerbrodsky.com)) to my collaborator MorganEve's music that you can use if you'd like.

Dance making can feel daunting. Like visual art, there is a blank slate and the only way to approach it is to jump in and begin. I hope you can begin with openness and leave judgment at the door. Most of all, I invite you to have fun and find joy in your movement.

I welcome you to share your reflections, aha moments, drawings, or inquiries on the blank pages in this book. You may choose to leave your name or remain anonymous, whichever feels more comfortable for you. I would love to read about your experience either way! Feel free to leave me a note via my website as well.

### **What you'll find in the box**

- 9 handcrafted trays, arranged in sets of 3, made and designed by Providence artists Anna Highsmith (ceramic trays) and Cyrus Highsmith (lettering)
- 9 prompts devised by Ali Kenner Brodsky
- A QR code that will bring you to several short musical inspirations by MorganEve Swain. There are also links to several short nature-inspired movement studies and dance films created by Ali Kenner Brodsky and cinematographer Rich Ferri

### **What you need to know**

- Arrange the trays as you like, in any order you desire
- Use the prompts on each tray to create a movement story
- Use a minimum of 3, a maximum of 9 trays

### **What you need**

- Openness to explore
- Trust in your instincts
- Any place you feel inspired
- A camera (optional)
- Music (optional)

### **Things to consider while making**

- Try not to self censor as you explore and design
- Allow your subconscious to move you
- Listen to your impulses
- You have the freedom to create your own prompts (and if you feel comfortable, please share them on the blank pages provided in this book)

### **Considerations for filming (use your phone or camera)**

- Notice how these different framing options can alter how you see, generate and execute your movement.
- Frame your feet
- Frame from the hips down
- Frame from the hips up
- Frame your hips
- Frame your movement story from the back
- Frame your movement story from the front
- Place your camera above or below you

## about the artists

**Ali Kenner Brodsky** (she/her) makes gesturally rich and emotionally driven dance-theater works and dance films that ask the viewer to indulge in a world of reflection, remembering and connection. Ali was recently recognized with a 2022 Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship in Choreography. She was honored to be a part NEFA'S New England Regional Dance Development Initiative 2021/22, and was a 2019 artist-in-residence (Croft: Ground for Art), 2018/19 Catalysts artist (Dance Complex), 2016 Emerging Choreographer in Residence (Bates Dance Festival), 2014 recipient of the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts Choreography Fellowship, and a 2003/04 artist-in-residence at Joyce SoHo. She has received support from NEFA's New England States Touring and Dance Fund, and from the Arts & Cultural Alliance of Newport County.

With David Henry, Lila Hurwitz and Andy Russ, Ali co-founded Motion State Arts, which presents innovative dance films and live performances from local, national and international artists. She is on the Board of New England Presenters, which provides leadership and support for the presentation/development of the NE performing arts. She also works as a dance advisor and curator to the Zeiterion Theater in New Bedford, MA. Ali has designed award-winning choreography for The Wilbury Theater Group (Providence), and worked as a rehearsal director/dancer with the national touring company Lostwax Multimedia Dance (2012–15). She graduated with honors in dance from Skidmore College. A Rhode Island native, AKB her makes home in Dartmouth, MA with her husband, two children and five chickens. For more information visit [alikennerbrodsky.com](http://alikennerbrodsky.com) or find Ali on Instagram @akbandco.

**Sam Brodsky** (he/him) is a teacher and woodworker in Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

**Anna Highsmith** (she/her) is a ceramic artist and teacher based in Rhode Island. Her work is handbuilt, inspired by the connections between people and the connections between people and nature. Sustainability is a key part of her studio processes, which are low-waste, low-water, and fueled by renewable energy. Her work and process can be seen on Instagram [@highsmithanna](https://www.instagram.com/highsmithanna).

**Cyrus Highsmith** (he/him) is a letter drawer, teacher, author, and graphic artist. He teaches type design at Rhode Island School of Design. He wrote and illustrated the acclaimed primer *Inside Paragraphs: Typographic Fundamentals*. In 2015, he received the Gerrit Noordzij Prize for extraordinary contributions to the fields of type design, typography, and type education. In 2017, he became Creative Director for Latin Type Development at Morisawa USA.

**MorganEve Swain** (she/her) is an independent musician living in a barn in the woods of New England. A violinist since the age of three, she uses strings primarily to compose original music for dance, story, film, and her band *The Huntress and Holder of Hands*. When she's not playing them, MorganEve repairs violins and bows at her home-shop and teaches violin to children using the Suzuki methodology. MorganEve also works as a freelance studio and touring musician and manages the affairs of her late-band Brown Bird. She can be found on Instagram [@swain.morganeve](https://www.instagram.com/swain.morganeve) and on the web at [morganeveswain.com](http://morganeveswain.com)

## notes from ali

Upon moving back to Rhode Island in 2009, I had the great fortune of connecting with the Highsmith family shortly after arriving. Cyrus & Anna & I had children the same age, and so our families connected around library story-time and walks in Lincoln Woods. As my dance practice began to take shape in Providence, Cyrus provided graphics for promotional purposes. As an art lover, these early contributions got my wheels turning about how I could incorporate Cyrus's visual art work into my dance pieces. The scrolls that are part of *moments*, and typography for *creating moments* are the latest example of how our artistic practices intersect.

Anna is an exceptional ceramic artist. I was a fan of hers as soon as our paths collided. Not only is my house filled with her wares, but I have collaborated with Anna on nesting tea cups for a quirky duet I performed with Andy Russ. I'm continually inspired by Anna's process, her insights, and her presence in my life. It only felt fitting that I collaborate with Anna on *creating moments* as I am continually inspired every time I walk into Anna's studio. The movement of her patterns, the textures of her creations, and the care with which she creates, engages and delivers her designs.

In late 2012, I met MorganEve Swain and David Lamb outside of the WholeFoods in Providence. Then known as Brown Bird, I asked MorganEve and Dave if they would consider making music for my piece often referred to as "The Bench Piece." Even though they had never made music for dance before, they agreed. Our collaboration continued until Dave's passing from leukemia in 2014. Together they scored four pieces for akb & co. Since then, MorganEve and I have continued to collaborate on music for performance and film. With *creating moments* you will get an insight into how it feels to move with and be inspired by MorganEve's beautiful music.

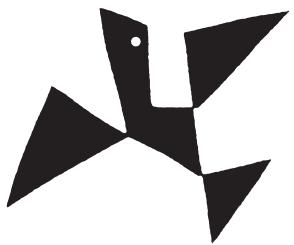
This chance meeting with Dave and MorganEve, and with Cyrus and Anna, through our children have proven to be three of my longest and greatest collaborations. I feel incredibly lucky to collaborate with these exceptional artists. They continually help to bring my work to life. We nourish each other from our unique vantages as artists of different disciplines with a shared interest and aesthetic.

I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the contributions and continual life collaboration of my husband, Sam. I met Sam in 2004 when he dazzled me with his imagination and carpentry skills! Since that time, he's created several set pieces for my dance and film works. For *moments*, he created the mechanism which the scrolls hang from. For *creating moments* he created the wooden boxes which house the ceramic trays.

I'm one lucky girl to have a partner and collaborators who support and ground me in my artistic endeavors. I hope you enjoy the infinite possibilities that this collection offers.

*-ali*

notes from readers



*[alikennerbrodsky.com](http://alikennerbrodsky.com)*