**Previous work supported by the Research, Scholarship and Creativity Fund**

Over the past 25 years I have sought to balance my need for on-going professional development as a dancer and choreographer with the demands of developing the dance program and chairing the Department of Theatre and Dance at Gustavus. Living in St. Peter adds a few more limitations to the mix. First of all, it is difficult to work with other professional dance artists. Second, until just recently I have no studio space available to me during the academic school year. The way I have addressed these challenges is by working intensively over the summer to produce a new dance, and at times a full-length concert, during the following academic year.

In 1990, I received a Research Scholarship and Creativity grant to assist with the creation of one of three new dances. One of these I choreographed as well as performed. The second dance featured my choreography and was danced by Becky Heist, a professional dancer from the Twin Cities. The third was choreographed by professional choreographer, Janice Haws, at that time based in Salt Lake City, and re-staged for Michael Engel, a professional dancer who was working with the Minneapolis-based New Dance Ensemble, and me. The funding I received primarily supported the expenses related to this third dance and was used for the of hiring a choreographer, paying for studio rental in the Twin Cities, and rehearsal and performance fees for Michael Engel. All of these pieces were performed in a concert titled *Collaborations: Michele Rusinko and Friends*, September 14 and 15, 1992, in Anderson Theatre.

In 1992, I received a second grant from this fund to work with 12 professional dancers to re-stage an older work of mine entitled *Angel Over the Left Shoulder*, and to create three new works. These dances were presented September 11 and 12, 1992, in the Hennepin Center for the Arts, and September 18 and 19, 1992, in Anderson Theatre.

In 1994, I decided to focus on solo work and received funding to participate in a number of choreographic "exchanges." I would create a new solo for another dance artist and in exchange, this individual would create a new solo for me. Cathy Young, at that time a member of Danny Buraczeski's JAZZDANCE, and Wynn Fricke, a dancer with the Zenon Dance Company, had both expressed interest in working with me. (Wynn had worked with me in *Angel Over the Left Shoulder*, in 1992). Unfortunately, these collaborations did not work out. Both of these dancers had heavy national touring schedules and in the end were not able to devote the time necessary for this project during that summer. With the permission of the Dean and the Faculty Development committee, my project shifted in a new direction. Janice and Anthony Roberts, dancers with the Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company of Salt Lake City, had just accepted teaching positions in Minnesota. Janice was teaching full-time at St. Olaf and Anthony was teaching part-time at both St. Olaf and Gustavus. I created a duet for the two of them, titled *After a Bone Breaks,* which was presented as a work in progress in an informal Kresge Dance Concert April of 1995, and premiered as part of the Spring Dance Concert in May of 1995.

In the spring of 2001, I received a Research, Scholarship and Creativity grant to create a new solo for myself inspired by the "femmages" created by artist Miriam Shapiro in the 1970's. The term "femmage" was a play on the words "feminine" and "collage". Shapiro often combined acrylic paint and fabric pieces into a type of collage that incorporated stereotypical feminine imagery such as aprons or kimonos. Her work was always double-edged - celebrating women's lives but also pointedly illustrating their absence from history. Unfortuntely, surgery on my foot that summer resulted in a detour in the direction of this project. However, all was not lost. I later returned to the research I had done for this piece, and used this research to choreograph and premiere, a quintet entitled *Collage,* in 2009.

While recovering from foot surgery in 2001, I happened to hear an MPR story about the 15th Century mystic, Julian of Norwich. What fascinated me the most at the time was not so much her revelations, but that she was an "anchoress" or "anchorite" - an extremely cloistered nun that lived in a walled-in cell in a church. Being hobbled by a walking cast I started researching Julian of Norwich and working on a dance that would be dependent on small movements - not the large sweeping space consuming movement that is more characteristic of my choreography. This research resulted in the solo, *All Shall Be Well*, which was included in a concert, entitled *Refuge, Mostly Solos by Michele Rusinko*, which was performed in Anderson Theatre at Gustavus Adolphus College in September of 2003.

During this period of time, my college roommate also died from leukemia. My choreography almost always emerges from a very personal, intuitive place. As much as I tried to return to the Shapiro piece, the work that was emerging was that of processing grief. This investigation was the basis for my solo piece *The Way Home*, which was performed in my 2003 concert and again in June of 2004 at the Barbara Barker Center for Dance at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

So the 2001 RSC grant intended to provide support for the creation of one new piece ultimately resulted in the creation and production of three new dance works.

**Purpose. What are the intellectual, conceptual, or artistic issues?  How does your work fit into other endeavors being done in this field?**

I am seeking funding to support the research, development, and production costs, for the first section of a larger work for music and dance centered on the life of Brazilian fashion designer Zuzu Angel (1921-1976).

My collaborators for the initial phase of this project are composer Linda Tutas Haugen, operatic soprano, Dorothy Maddison, and flutist, Jane Estenson

Strauman.

Zuzu was an internationally acclaimed fashion designer during the tumultuous 1960-70s. She became famous for opposing the Brazilian military dictatorship after her son Stuart disappeared in 1971 at age 25. Stuart Angel Jones was a student at the University of Rio de Janeiro who had become an activist protesting the Brazilian military. He was taken prisoner, tortured, and murdered by the regime. Because of Stuart’s dual citizenship (his father was American), Zuzu contacted the U.S. Embassy, Senator Ted Kennedy, and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. She also transformed a fashion show in the United States into a venue to protest the Brazilian government’s actions. She later died in a car crash in Brazil that the succeeding government later admitted had been caused by the military dictatorship. Stuart’s body was never found. While this project focuses on the events of one woman’s life, it has much broader implications. Specifically it affirms the necessary role of perseverance and courage to honor the sanctity of all life and confront the immorality of the use of torture.

How this work “fits into other endeavors being done in this field” is a difficult question to answer when working in the field of artistic creation. There are certainly many other artists working in the area of integrating issues of social justice into artistic outcomes. While the story of Zuzu Angel, the horrific death of her son, and her utilization the fashion runway as a means of political protest are well known throughout Brazil, it is not a story that is well known in the U.S. This is one reason Zuzu’s surviving daughters are so interested and supportive of this project.

**Feasibility.  What qualifications do you bring to this project?  What have you done/will you do to prepare for this project?  What is the time period, i.e. summer, summer and academic year, academic year only?  Is the work’s scope commensurate with the time period of the project?**

In researching and developing this concert work we (my collaborators and I have been meeting and corresponding since April 2012) have already benefited from access to a wide range of resources. They include historical documents and preliminary interviews with Zuzu’s two surviving daughters, journalist Hildegard Angel and Ana Cristina Angel. Of special note is the fact that our flute soloist is the niece of Zuzu Angel and cousin to Hildegard and Ana Cristina. As a result Zuzu’s family has given us permission to use *My Way of Death*, Zuzu’s unpublished memoir, and access to the families private papers. We have also had a preliminary conversation with Dr. James, N. Green (Brown University) an expert in Brazilian history, politics, and human rights violations.

Taking advantage of these resources, we will create a 40-45 minute

multi-artist concert work. The entire work will premiere in Minneapolis or St. Paul, Minnesota in January of 2015, and have two additional performances elsewhere in Minnesota. In addition, subsequent performances are planned for James Madison University in Virginia and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

For the larger project, we have applied for a $60,000 MAP fund grant, and our project has made it through the first two rounds of eliminations. We have also applied for a Minnesota Composer’s Forum *Live Music for Dance* grant for $5000. While the scope of the project will most likely need to be altered if we do not receive this funding, we are committed to completing this work though it might need to be on a smaller scale.

As noted above, this request is for funding the research and development the first of three sections. (Details below).

 **Project Design.  This should include a specific description of the project design and activities, including location, staff, schedules or itineraries, and desired outcomes**

The first section, I. Bahia/Roots, will portray the earlier years of her successful career, where her designs featured the native style of Bahia, borrowing from Brazilian folkloric images, bright colors echoing colorful flowers and tropical birds.

This summer, from June – August, composer Linda Tutas Haugen (who lives in Burnsville, MN) and I propose to research and collaboratively study Brazilian music and dance forms. We are fortunate to have Marciano Silva dos Santos, a native of Brazil and recognized expert in the field of traditional Afro-Brazilian dance and music, living and working the Twin Cities. It is not our intention to imitate traditional Brazilian dance or music, but to use it as a springboard for our own creative processes.

Because Zuzu Angel was a fashion designer, the visual design component of this work is very important. I would also like to hire a student research assistant (most likely Jessica Van Kempen, ’14, who will most likely go to graduate school in costume design) to spend significant amount of time researching Zuzu Angel’s design work from the 1960’s – and 70’s. This research will inform the final costume design choices made for this section of the dance.

From October – February, Tutas Haugen and I will meet regularly to improvise collaboratively, and develop an outline for the first section. October - April we will work independently, and then come back together for the final rehearsals. We plan to premiere a 5 – 8 minute piece (Section I) in May of 2014 in Anderson Theatre at Gustavus Adolphus College.

In many ways this first section is a pilot study for the larger project. We do not know at this time, what musicians and designers will be involved in the final product. Primarily, this first section is the opportunity for composer Linda Tutas Haugen and me, as a choreographer, to do additional in-depth research into Brazilian music and dance forms, and to create both musical and choreographic scores in response to the research.

The second two sections of the piece are not included in this grant, and will most likely be the subject of a 2014 RSC grant. In brief, the second section, II. Torture/ Grief/Protest, will relate the nightmare Zuzu’s life became with the disappearance of her son, Stuart. For her, “the flowers lost their color, and the birds went crazy.” Her work became political and consisted of shades of black and gray. The music and dance during this section will become more fragmented.

The third section’s working title is, III. Redemption. The color palette of this section will shift to white. The Brazilian New Year’s eve tradition of millions dressing in white and throwing white flowers into the sea as an offering to *Imanje*, the Queen of the Ocean, will be explored as a theme, as it relates to Zuzu.

**My own artist statement**

The story of Zuzu Angel contains every mother’s worst nightmare - the abduction, torture and murder of her child. Horrifically, there are parents all over the world who have also lived through this nightmare. As an artist and as a storyteller I believe it is possible to communicate the larger story by telling the very specific story.

Having spent over twenty-five years as a choreographer I find myself returning to certain themes. My work has focused on female "voices," often those of women artists, whose voices have been marginalized because of their gender. The vocabulary of my “voice” is movement. It has taken me years to become more comfortable in the world of words. Prior to her son’s abduction, Zuzu’s “voice” was known throughout Brazil through her design work. The circumstances of her life brutally pushed her into the world of words and politics and while she lived, she refused to be dismissed, marginalized or silenced by the Brazilian military regime. She also refused to be invisible.

I am particularly interested in working with composer Linda Tutas Haugen, who also works from a foundation rooted in the belief that the arts are a powerful tool for social and cultural transformation. Joined by operatic soprano Dorothy Maddison and flutist Jane Estenson Strauman, the four of us (composer, choreographer, soprano and flutist) are committed to bringing the story of Zuzu Angel’s passionate quest on behalf of all parents of those “disappeared” to a wider audience.