

POETRY

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December's Featured Artists:
**KRYSTAL COLLINS
& ELL EMADIAN**

PLUS
Letter from the Editor
Submitted poetry

Photo by Jeff Taylor (edited by Charlie Maybee)

Description: A glitched image of a single tap dancer split into three differently colored bodies standing on the tips of their shoes with their arms making a small circle over their head

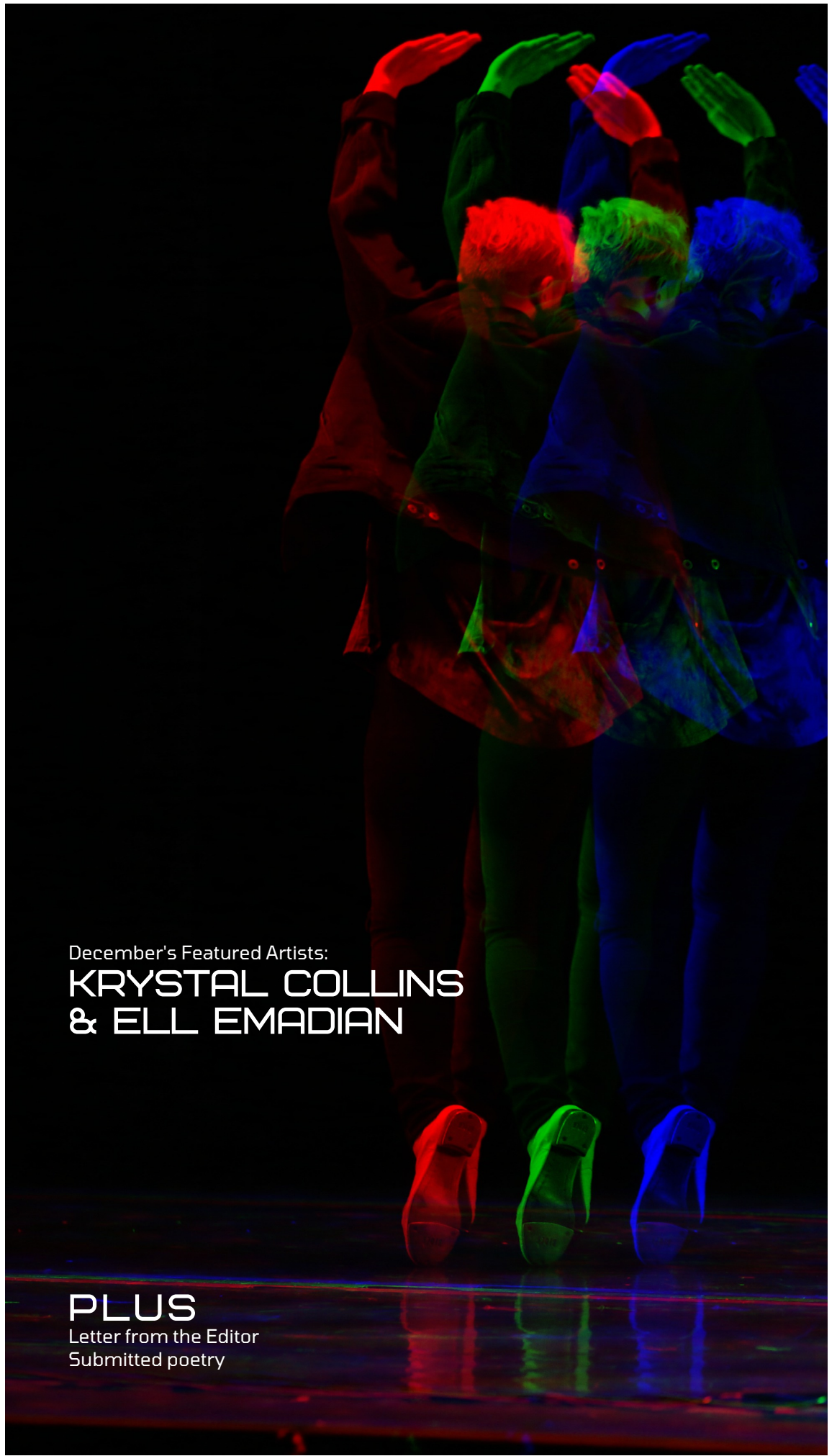


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Letter From the Editor

Dear Readers,

Welcome to POLYzine.

I'm still working towards a 100% understanding of what this project is, but I'm excited to be here and happy to be able to communicate in this way.

As a choreographer, musician, and writer who specializes in the genre of tap dance, the underlying philosophy of my work stems from the idea that tap dancers are inherent polymaths – that they activate multiple forms of knowledge simultaneously being both dancers and musicians (hence my company's name, Polymath Performance Project, and subsequently POLYzine). I have always been drawn to artists and makers who are cross-pollinators of different genres and mediums. So, I conceptualized this zine as a way to celebrate and seek out those who are also betwixt and between; to offer a platform for misfit perspectives that allude easy categorization, while also making space for artists to confront the troubles of colonization and late-stage capitalism within their lives, and their work by extension.

When I first pitched POLYzine, it was truly on a whim, but I've known for some time that I wanted to be a part of a project that highlights artist voices as directly and bluntly as possible. Too often, artists are subjected to the criticism of journalists who craft mythos around them through their writing and I believe it's important for artists to be provided opportunities to add to that mythos with little-to-no editorial intervention. I also believe strongly in the artist's ability to self-identify both themselves and their artistic concepts. Regardless of their background in writing, I want this zine to serve as a reminder that insider and outsider perspectives of any process constantly negotiate with each other – neither should monolithically define one's body of work. Artists should have the opportunity to publicly write about what they do from the inside.

I'm very happy that our pilot issue will be featuring two dear friends of mine (both of whom are incredibly thoughtful polymath makers), Krystal Collins and Eli Emadian. My prompt for them was very simple: to give us a peek into their current artistic research. From there, they chose what they wanted to share and what they wanted to withhold for themselves and ultimately offer us a glimpse into the mechanisms of their artistic practices and perspectives. I have found both of their pieces to be riveting, and I hope you will as well.

If you, dear readers, are interested in responding to anything in POLYzine's pilot issue, I hope that you will consider dropping us a line. Any correspondence can be sent directly to me via email (charliemaybee@gmail.com). I look forward to hearing about your experiences interacting with all our collected content.

Thanks for tuning in.

Sincerely,
Charlie Maybee
POLYzine Editor

half baked

by krystal collins

riffing

a tease

is and isn't

excerpting

brain splatter

verbal edging

thought splatter

too many thoughts

a commodity of oddities

stream of unconsciousness

opinions, opinions, opin, onions

when you purposely take the cookies out of the oven early so they're gooey in the center.

Can any non-dancer you know name 3-5 dance companies currently making work that you personally have not been involved with/danced for?

At the height of his career, Alvin Ailey was a renegade. We as a society are finally able to digest his work in all of its variance and hold multiple truths about Ailey (well...some people can). Among other things, he used dance as a medium to discuss spirituality, queer aesthetics and death/dying rituals. Queer erasure from history is the reason why homophobic/queerphobic people can revere Ailey without acknowledging that his work was...how do you say? GAY AF

Circus - Summer Walker

Black women and femmes are studied and looked upon without regard but how often are we understood? Understood and validated with ferocity and urgency? When do our eyes get to glimmer in awe of our portrayed radiance instead of our trauma? How often do we look at a piece of artistic work and weep joyfully at the mirror (the work) being cast upon us? I'd argue not enough.

Bruh, we all just tryna get some sleep, idk man. Grind culture is grinding our asses into the ground. I want Black women and femmes to be soft with one another, to hold space for each other and to do right by one another. I want people to stop shitting on us and treating us like dogs bc we are def not. There's so much constant abuse and violence and vitriol in our faces. This peace/piece is about reciprocity, it is about being and not having to be excellent, but also being excellent by design.

Wouldn't We Be Better...So Much Better?

I wonder about you, artist. Are you important? Do your contributions mean anything? Does your work need an ascribed meaning? Does your work want an ascribed meaning? How are you bending and twisting perception? Are you making propaganda? Who told you your explorations were worth it? Are you a pessimist? Are you eating? Are you sleeping okay? Does anyone care about you? Are you hurt? Who told you that? Do you believe in impact? Are you trolling us?

Anti-Blackness Is...

Inherent to the art making process, even yours.
How we define aesthetics.
Telling us whose art we should value.
Tapping you on the shoulder and telling you where to look.
Consuming you.
Funding the future.
Not going to stop simply because you started a conversation

yeah yeah YEAH

As an artist, I want you to know that Toni Morrison's prolific depiction of art remains true: "Art invites us to know beauty and to solicit it from even the most tragic of circumstances. Art reminds us that we belong here. And if we serve, we last." For me, Morrison's words are a reminder that as artists, we are service leaders. Our responsibility to the communities we serve vastly outweighs the need to produce work devoid of, or in misalignment with said communities. In 2020, we witnessed the eruption of many compounding tragedies in conjunction with the emergence of new ones; and as an artist, the call for action was guttural and arose from deep down in my core. Meeting the moment of these uncertain and unprecedented times requires a deep and painful excavation of the self. It means ripping up what was, healing open wounds and arising from the ashes ready to do more ripping, more uncovering. This excavation is only made possible in tandem with those we hold close to us; those who will hold space for our tattered being and dust off our ashes so that when we arise anew, we are engulfed in sacred and held space. This is simultaneously why I am an artist and what I want to accomplish: to take space and to hold space.

The artist has a difficult task and a great responsibility, and to fumble that power does a disservice to the world. But also, we live in a society that often does not value that power. Art has the potential to radically shift our society as we know it. It also has the potential to maintain the status quo and serve totalitarianism. So, we have to know both sides in order to avoid the trap of making art in service of elitism. Artists are constantly fighting for recognition and to be seen, and I think we are often in the shadows because to see us is to see society in all of its iterations. To see the artist as an agent of radical thought, in their totality, is to see the peaks and valleys of ugliness in conjunction with beauty--where there is no hierarchy between the two.

what tries to hinder me

your formulated syntax
is a direct replication
of the institution that sculpted you
into a fabrication of deceit

gaining you as another investor
rather than valuing your soul
as something more than lucre

when actions repeat same cycles
inflicted onto my brown body
I cannot choose but to laugh and bear
wicked weight that's attempted to depress me

spewed at a smaller dose
I hold it up stronger
because I am stronger
and no person place or thing
can take away the pain I've endured
or the muscles I've maintained
to ensure

I will never be
what has made you
into the same thing as them.

Melody Contreras

One, Two, Three Swing Time and the Nonlinear

by Eli Emadian

*This reflection is deeply influenced by the writing of Dr. Michelle M. Wright in *The Physics of Blackness: Beyond the Middle Passage Epistemology**

I remember being amazed at the possibility that there could be an infinite number of numbers between 1 and 2 when I first learned about decimals. Not just .1, .2, .3 but then .11, .21, .31 and then .111, .212, .313, and so many other repeating and unrepeating sequences of numbers. There is somehow infinite space between two consecutive integers—two numbers which are ostensibly right next to each other are simultaneously, infinitely far apart.

I'm introducing my Tap 1 students to the sonic difference between straight [1] meters and swing time. One day in class, we attempt our shuffle warm up in both. A simple brush (or strike) forward and back on the toe tap becomes the key to unlocking a whole new level of complexity in our form.

out in // out in // out in // stamp *hold*

and out in // *and* out in // *and* out in // *and* stamp *and*

I begin to have them attempt different sequences from class first with a straight time and then in a swing time. They're amazed at themselves as they quickly hear the difference and are able to send it from their ears to their feet.

The next class period, I ask the students to describe the difference using words. One student offers a description involving dotted musical notes—a description that would undoubtedly have made her music theory teacher incredibly proud. However, I glance around the room, which does have a large population of academically-trained musicians, and I see that these words have confounded an understanding that was so sonically obvious.

"Well, the common time is subdivided by two and swing time is divided by three..." another student proffers.

I demonstrate.

AND ONE AND TWO AND THREE AND FOUR

and ONE *breath* *and* TWO *breath* *and* THREE *breath*

And the sound reaffirms their understanding.

[1] I have heard quite a bit of discrepancy with how these meters are described. "Common" and "even" are some other nomenclatures. While I'm sure music theorists would have more informed opinion about which (or even another) name most accurately describes a meter of this style, I choose to respect the colloquial dialects of tap dance and introduce my students to all of the names that I have heard.

One, Two, Three Swing Time and the Nonlinear

[Continued]

I was trained as a mathematician almost as much as a dancer. I remember feeling so frustrated by the idea of trying to construct a non-linear temporality for a dance.

It's such a presence in the everyday: the linear. Linear narratives overwhelm the genres of theatre, books, television, movies, even classical ballet. Even a large swath of "non-linear" artworks only claim these roundabout machinations in the service of piecing together a puzzle that, in the end, feels like a complete, linear story.

This is a fallacy, though. Despite our theorizations and ideations, time has been constructed for us, moving forward and only forward, one second lost to the next.

But what if this simple explanation of straight time versus swing time offers an insight into the truth of what we see as linear temporality: There is no tempo(ral) shift in changing the subdivision from duple to triple. The downbeat persists. Yet, I find the infinitesimal space to gasp a breath, to demonstrate to the class that there is space. Rhythm lily pads and lindy hops from the e of 1 to the and a of 2 before taking a rest stop on some triplet between 3 and 4: each subdivision carries its unique space and rhythm emerges. The magic, though, lies in this simple fact: whether or not I accent the e, and a, or any other subdivision of a given measure, each potential syncopation is present in each new moment, and I, or you, will see and hear and feel the presences and absences differently.

I'm reviewing the break [2] for a soft shoe time step during class review and a student points out that we've changed rhythm between our review day and the previous class—I didn't notice. I stop to listen to myself.

and a THREE and a FOUR *breath* and **E** a FIVE – shuffle hop shuffle step shuffle hop step

and a THREE and a FOUR **E** and a *breath* FIVE – shuffle hop shuffle step shuffle hop step

Perhaps the nonlinear is not, as I classically conceived, the winding and unwinding line that circles back on itself into knots, still with some beginning and ending, but so raveled that they are nearly indistinguishable as such. Some swinging consideration of time is inherent to movement. And perhaps, here is where language fails: to capture the complexity of the body, the infinities and in-betweens. It is the renegotiation of balance between a dancer's first and second initiation. It is the anticipation of a resolve in choreographic tension for an audience member. It is the prediction and subsequent choice to lean into and/or confound expectation in a choreographic process. Choice inflects onto time which is physicalized in potential which begets choice, reaction, anticipation, etc. It is not quite this cyclical—it is folded and branching and woven. Each thread that separates reveals another woven layer to untangle. The nonlinear simply is, if we are open enough to listen for it.

[2] Quite common in the tap canon, the "break" occurs in the midst of a sequence quite literally to break up the repetition of a pattern. It is often associated with time steps, but can be used in a number of circumstances to break up any repetitive rhythmic pattern.

Children of the Spectacle

by Charlie Maybee

We are the children of the spectacle
Commodified, collectible
Reducible, inscrutable
Our freewill is refutable

Did you let yourself in?
Or did you scuffle through the noise?
The spectral image somebody
Concocted with such poise

It fractures qualities to quantities
Reduces messages to images
Selling all our experiences
To passive digital witnesses

Competitive consumption
Poisoned collaboration

It keeps us locked in place
As we subjugate
Ourselves to isolation
In this simulation
Of imaginary mobility
The illusion of subjectivity

Labor terraforming into augmented survival

But what is really progressing,
Humans or the system,
When rage and rebellion have been commodified as well?

If you did not inherit your success
It can be measured in exploitation

The architect is one of us
The architect is all of us
Moving through the screen
Don't know how long we've wasted
In this spectacular machine