

## **-DRAMATURGICAL NOTES-**

*Baltimore Observed* is an experiment in collaboration.

Over the past semester, a group of Towson University graduate students delved into the nature of the city of Baltimore, collecting photographs, videos, soundscapes, newspaper articles, interviews, court transcripts, radio excerpts, old Baltimore TV footage, musical recordings, city documents, and material from *Sun* obituaries to create an impressionistic performance piece about the city based on this “found” material.

Most of the text in the show is verbatim; snippets are imagined; all of it is based on actual events or conversations.

We began the project with eight students, but along the way we sucked in as many talented grads and undergrads as we could muster to help us shape this show. We also collaborated with a group of UMBC grad students who were working with Professor Steven Bradley there; their images and soundscapes are both part of the performance and part of the lobby installation pieces.

Here at Towson, the students worked with Towson professor Stephen Nunns, journalist & playwright Karen Houppert, and New York City-based director Eric Nightengale to sift through the material, grapple with diverse sensibilities, and develop ways of performing this unconventional material.

We tried to resist the temptation to tidy this script into a simple linear plot or monolithic viewpoint since—it seems to us—this work-in-progress that is the city of Baltimore resists such tidy resolutions itself.

In the end, we hung the script on then-Mayor Martin O’Malley’s Believe Campaign, drawing heavily on documents from the actual marketing presentation made to the mayor in 2002, because we thought the exhortation to believe—part bravado based on the notion that change can come through the sheer willpower of sloganeering and part, a last resort desperate plea for salvation—exemplified the curious mix of conflicting feelings folks have for this city: love, frustration, pride, anger.

As O’Malley grew as a character, we incorporated the story of the Dawson family. The Dawsons, who took the mayor at his word when he urged them to call 1-866-B-E-L-I-E-V-E to report drug dealers in their neighborhood, paid a high price for their belief. After making 109 calls to report drug activity, their house was fire-bombed. Twice. The first time, they survived. The second time, on October 16 at 2:18 a.m. local drug dealer Darrell Brooks kicked in the door, splashed gasoline on the stairs while the Dawsons slept, and lit a match. The family of seven perished.

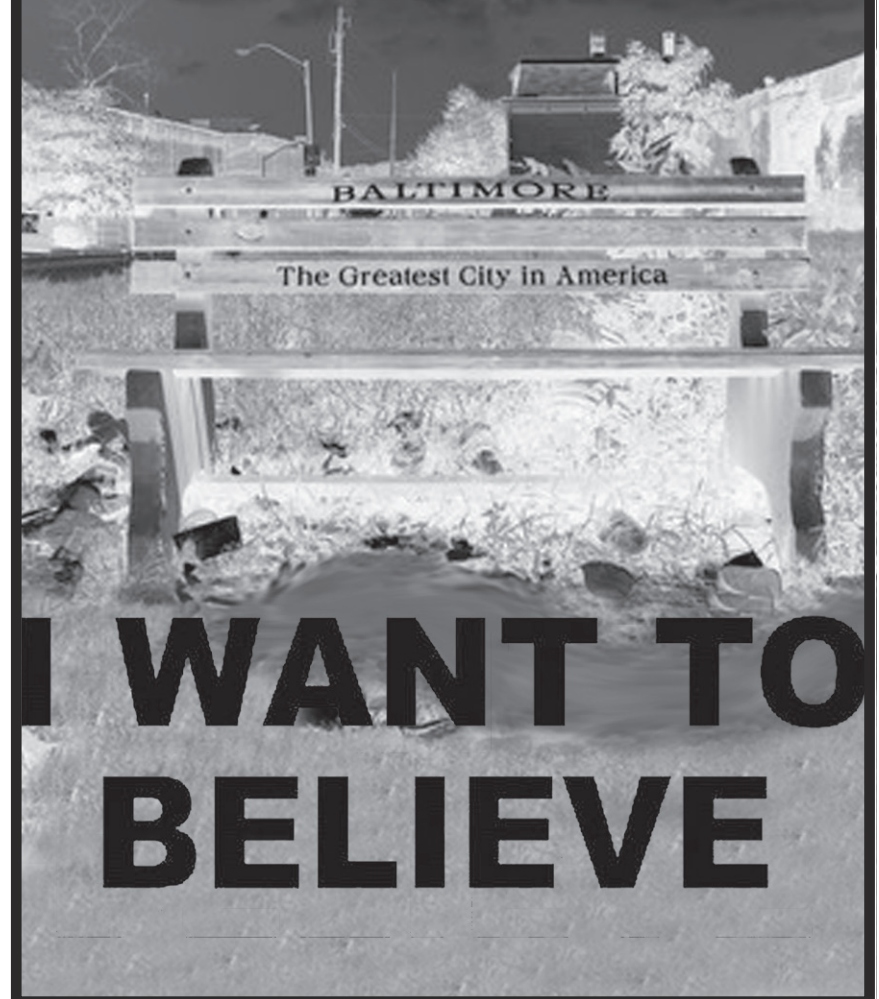
What that incident meant for the mayor, who championed the cause through the Believe campaign and repeatedly urged citizens to report drug activity, is unknown—although we do know that he lashed out at WBAL shock jocks who blamed him for the Dawson deaths. As the mayor struggled with the repercussions of this, so too does the city continue to struggle with how to best solve its myriad of problems without growing jaded or complacent: We want to believe.

--Karen Houppert

TU GRADUATE THEATRE DEPT PRESENTS:

# **BALTIMORE -observed-**

Towson University Center for the Arts  
Fri & Sat, Dec. 14 & 15 @ 8pm in the Dreyer Theatre  
Free Admission



Towson University MFA Program in Theatre Arts presents

# BALTIMORE -observed-

**Created by**

Deletta Gillespie\*  
David Gregory\*  
Robert Scott Hitcho  
Jessica Knoerl\*  
Carmela Lanza-Weil\*  
KT Peterson\*  
Lane Pianta\*  
Carolynne Wilcox\*

**With**

Rich Buchanan  
Tony Byrd  
Kate Lilley  
Caroline Reck\*  
Tamika B. Roland  
William Shelton  
Chassi Elizabeth Courtney Slappy

**And**

Karen Houppert and Stephen Nunns

Directed by Eric Nightengale

Assistant director: Carmela Lanza-Weil

Light and set design and technical direction by David J. Glover

Costume Coordination by Jessica Knoerl

Poster and Program Design by Carolynne Wilcox

Keyboards: Ernest Swift

Drums/Sound: Alexander MacSween

In collaboration with Steven Bradley and MFA students from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County's Imaging and Digital Arts Program:

John Farrell  
Christine Ferrera  
Susan Main

Jaimes Mayhew  
Eric Smallwood  
Kathryn Williamson

## -SONGS-

"Baltimore" - words & music by Randy Newman

"Potato Chip" - words & music by Arlene Joy

"Traffic Jam" - words & music by James Taylor

"Baltimore" - words & music by Lyle Lovett

"Believe in Yourself" - words & music by Charlie Smalls

"Believe in Something" - words & music by Norman Whitfield

\*MFA candidate in Theatre Arts

## -CAST-

<b>Rich Buchanan</b>	<i>Singer, Shock Jock</i>
<b>Tony Byrd</b>	<i>Darrell Brooks; Larry D. Scott</i>
<b>Deletta Gillespie</b>	<i>Ms. Aurora Sweet (Singer)</i>
<b>David Gregory</b>	<i>Linder Rep 2</i>
<b>Robert Scott Hitcho</b>	<i>Martin O'Malley</i>
<b>Jessica Knoerl</b>	<i>Arlene Joy; Nancy Rogers</i>
<b>Carmela Lanza-Weil</b>	<i>The Professor</i>
<b>Kate Lilley</b>	<i>Unknown Junkie</i>
<b>KT Peterson</b>	<i>911 Operator; Pole Dancer 1</i>
<b>Caroline Reck</b>	<i>Pole Dancer 2; Judy Rausch</i>
<b>Tamika B. Roland</b>	<i>Angela Dawson; Priscilla A. Wilson</i>
<b>William Shelton</b>	<i>Carnell Dawson; Shock Jock</i>
<b>Chassi Elizabeth Courtneie Slappy</b>	<i>Mary Jones</i>
<b>Carolynne Wilcox</b>	<i>Linder Rep 1; Elizabeth Patterson Bonaparte</i>

## -SPECIAL THANKS-

Marc Steiner  
Jessica Phillips  
Laura Wexler  
The cast of *Truth in Translation*  
Patrick Stewart and the Atlas Performing Arts Center  
Alex Klinier  
Pamela Gross  
Jay Herzog  
Tony Rosas  
Tomi Casciero  
Naoko Maeshiba  
Barry Dove  
Steve Bradley  
Xpose Fitness  
Cheryl Partridge and the TU Costume Shop