

CU ★ PRESENTS



2020-21 Season
Digital program



Theatre & Dance
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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2020-21 Digital Programs

October-December 2020

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Jack Dorfman, Jessica Lee, Ian McMorran,
Amanda Tipton



Theatre & Dance season **interrogates** urgent crises

By Becca Vaclavik

In a typical year, the Department of Theatre & Dance plans its season well in advance, choosing events long before audiences experience them live. Of course, 2020 is anything but a typical year. So when COVID-19 shut down campus in March, leadership was forced to scrap a nearly complete season and envision something new for 2020-21.

“COVID-19 left us in a space of doing some deep thinking around how we can use this platform as a vehicle to continue to hold together and nurture a

sense of community,” said Associate Chair of Dance Helanius J. Wilkins.

In the months since, the department has put together an abbreviated virtual season, featuring *The Laramie Project*, *She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms*, and *[un]WRAP*. The new fall lineup interrogates many of the long-simmering crises 2020 has brought to a boil.

In October 1998, two men brutally murdered 21 year-old Matthew Shepard because he was gay. *The Laramie Project* is an investigative play created through 200 real-life interviews with the residents of Laramie, Wyoming, in the years that followed. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the first production and 22 years since Matthew’s death.

“In recent years, hate crimes have been on the rise,” said Elise Collins, who directs the production. “*The Laramie Project* serves as a litmus test to assess how far we’ve come as a nation and how far we still need to go.”

She Kills Monsters: Virtual Realms is an action-packed, hilarious homage to geek culture that tells the story of Agnes, a girl playing Dungeons & Dragons to better understand the world of her

recently deceased sister Tilly. Its themes resonate personally with director Amanda Rose Villarreal.

“I have played D&D since I was in seventh grade, and it was the one place where I could explore my own identity. The queer space of D&D allows for a utopic reinvisioning of one’s self that growing up in conservative areas, as I did, doesn’t allow for ... This play issues a challenge for the ‘average’ person, whether that’s white, cis-, or hetero-.”

Finally, this year’s *[un]WRAP* event, titled *(un) doing and (re)making*, features forums with and performances by renowned guest artists who are exploring inequities in dance.

“Artists have started to create a blueprint for the undoing of the field by looking deeply at how it exists right now. And then the remaking of it,” said Wilkins, who curated the symposium. “We’re expanding our conversations. Going forward, what do we want our world to be?”

Photo credit: Building a Better Fishtrap: from the river’s mouth—Oceana James and Jaimé Yawa Dzandu. Photo by Jessica Lee.

There’s more to this story! Read the expanded features at cupresents.org.

More on Theatre

More on Dance

[un]WRAP: (un)doing and (re)making

Nov. 13-19, 2020

Building a Better Fishtrap / from the river's mouth (excerpts)

Conceived and Directed by **Paloma McGregor**

Created in collaboration with performers: **Jaimé Yawa Dzandu, Audrey Elaine Hailes, Oceana James, Christine King, Jessica Lee, Stephanie Mas, Nina Angela Mercer, Alethea Pace, Joya Powell, Erica Saucedo**

Sound Design by **Keith Obadike**

Production Stage Manager: **Emma Rivera**

Technical Director: **Pope Jackson**

Project Advisor: **Damian Griffin**

Video by **André M. Zachery**

Video edited by **Rosa Navarrete**

Choreographer's note by Paloma McGregor:
Building a Better Fishtrap / from the river's mouth
was a performance ritual that honored and embodied the stories and spirit of the Bronx River. Created through collaboration with dozens of artists and community members, the work took audiences by boat on a 1.5-mile stretch of the once embattled waterway; along the way, passengers encountered installations that drew from the river's rich past and

present, as well as hopes for her future. The boats were piloted by docents from Bronx-based partner organizations—The Bronx River Alliance, Rocking the Boat and Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice.

Brother General Gabriel

Conceived and Co-directed by **Free Egunfemi and MK Abadoo**

Produced by **UntoldRVA**

Choreographic Direction by **MK Abadoo**

Choreography: **in collaboration with the Roots Performers**

Performers: **ROOTS**

Amena Durant / General #1

Meoleake “Monte” Jones / Lieutenant

Julinda Lewis / General #3

Karlito Richardson / General Gabriel

Christine Wyatt / General #2

Performers: **TRUNK—THE QUEEN MOTHERS**

Mama Judy Lynn Edwards, Mama Dharah Marcus, Mama Pamela McMullen, Mama Shakila Maharani Abena Nuit, Mama Queen Nzinga, Mama Monique Olomidun, Mama Faye Walker, Sister Okomfo Afia Pɔmaa, Sister Melendona

Performers: **BRANCHES & LEAVES**

Olivia Alsamadi, Sabrina Borneff, Melisa Raja Gopal, Kayla Schiltz, Sadé Toombs

Narrator: **Yemima Davis** / Gabriel’s Beloved Wife Nan

Vocalists: **Sister Nickey McMullen, Jamela Bullock**

Libation and Chant: **Mama Shakila Maharani, Abena Nuit, Mama Dharah Marcus**

The Opening of the Way: **Shayola YeYe Sekhemet**

Sound Foundation and Live Drumming: **Risegun Olomidun and Members of Richmond's Community Drum Circles**

Trumpeter: **Victor Haskins**

PRODUCTION

Production Manager (Performative), Sound Board Operator: **Keara Dial**

Production Manager (Logistical), Sound Design: **Nickey McMullen**

Production Assistant: **Katina Moss**

Production Administrator: **Megan Rickman Blackwood**

Production Accountant: **Tierrie Jones**

Rehearsal Assistant: **Christine Wyatt**

Sound Design: **Gavin "Dolomic" Brown**

Headphone Sound Production: **Niel Joshipura / Hear No Evil**

Audio Design: **Atari Gems**

Projection Design: **Kate Sicchio**

Lighting Design: **MK Abadoo with Keara Dial and the Roots Performers**

Costume and Prop Design: **Kamala Bhagat, Mama Dharah Marcus, Melendona Wisdom**

Wardrobe Assistant: **Xiaolin Lan**

Videographers: **Torian Ugworji, Christopher Risch Photography**

Crew: **Kayla "Kaykay" Connelly, Jenna Beardsley, Taylor Bonadies, Sydney Wiggins**

This film excerpts an evening-length site-based dance and commemorative justice work, *Brother General Gabriel*, that premiered at the Richmond African Ancestral Burial Grounds on the 219th remembrance of General Gabriel's transition towards the ancestors. On Oct. 10, 2019, more than 400 people gathered to resurrect Gabriel's indomitable spirit and deliberately submerged narrative. A 24-year old Black liberator, this self determined son of American born African ancestry was a brilliant young community strategist, inspired visionary and guiding light. We shall never allow his legacy to be forgotten.

Brother General Gabriel was commissioned by the University of Richmond Tucker Boatwright Festival of Literature and the Arts. It was co-produced by Untold RVA, University of Richmond, Department of Theatre and Dance and Virginia Commonwealth University Department of Dance + Choreography.

Choreographer's note by MK Adaboo:

Buried deep within the soil of Richmond's African Ancestral Burial Ground, the countless graves of African American ancestors once enslaved, hold space and bear witness to what was once Richmond City Gallows. Upon this once-troubled ground we honor Brother General Gabriel, our timeless messenger whose physical life ended in the year that both Nat Turner and John Brown were born. It is here, in the presence of our elders, children, family and friends, that we have come to reclaim a site where two realities occupied the same space at the same time; the state may have ended Gabriel's life, but his people ushered him across the threshold. Join us as we usher in a new era of people-powered Black leadership and Commemorative Justice. It is our birthright and our legacy to continue the struggle of thousands of Black people who subverted their circumstances on this ground centuries ago.

CELL

Created by **Headlong in collaboration with the performers**

Performers, too numerous to name, included in this instance: **McKenna Kerrigan, Keila Cordova, Janice Im, Jonathan Stein, Ky Mettler, Kate Watson-Wallace, Olase Freeman and David Brick**

Sound design and original music by **Rick Henderson**

Costume design by **Kelly Cobb**

Lighting design by **Paul Moffitt**

Video and visual design by **Jennifer and Kevin McCoy**

Choreographer's note by Amy Smith:

CELL (2006) was a performance journey for one audience member at a time. A dispatcher leads the audience member on a mission through city streets and abandoned buildings. Who is part of the performance? Why is everyone always on their phone? Am I being watched? The journey ends with the audience member engulfed in a private dance that is all their own.

Additional note:

My collaborators and myself have long been interested in making work for tiny audiences or for one audience member at a time. Now that the pandemic has necessitated change in how the 'delivery systems' of dance might operate, I am very curious to see if and how there might be a flourishing of work for tiny audiences in the future.

The Fragmentation Series

Concept, Performance, Video Design, Editing, Compositing,
Lighting, Sound by **Bill Shannon**

Choreographer's note by Bill Shannon:

Fragmentation Series was born of a desire to take away the overwhelming sense of flattening that dance on video tended to manifest in my previous dance for video works. My approach was inspired by the European abstract painting movement known as Cubism which, upon more research, was a derivative (uncredited) of West African abstract figurative sculpture. The Cubism movement approach was to represent all sides of a subject simultaneously, which for my dance on video practice meant building an eight-camera video rig and wiring it all to projectors to compose the shots at the angles I needed.

The resulting imagery, composited together into a single screen for this piece, is of me dancing on my “rocker bottom” crutches (due to a lifelong physical disability) while also trying to stay within the narrow channels of camera angles that defined the video capture space.

W*LM*RT Nature Trail

Created by **Headlong** in collaboration with the performers

Performers: **John Cherney, Eun Jung Choi, Keila Cordova, Miko Doi-Smith, Justin Jain, Christy Lee, Mike Mayo, Scott McPheeters, Jo Vito Ramirez, Amy Smith, and Christina Zani**

Visual Designer: **Markéta Fantová**

Sound Designer: **Robert Kaplowitz**

Dramaturg: **Mark Lord**

Stage Manager: **Elaina DiMonaco**

Music credit: *Coumba*

Written by Rudolph Gomis/ Barthelemy Attisso

Performed by Orchestra Baobab

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Choreographer's note by Amy Smith:

*W*LM*RT Nature Trail was an experiential journey for one audience member at a time, exploring the relationship between “civilization”/the human built world and the natural world.*

Let 'im Move You: This Is a Formation (theatrical version)

Artistic Direction by **jumatatu m. poe**

Choreography and Styling by **jumatatu m. poe and Jermone Donte Beacham**

Performance by **Jermone Donte Beacham, jumatatu m. poe, LaKendrick Davis, Maria Bauman-Morales, Nikolai McKenzie, Sanchel Brown, William Robinson**

Sound, Text and Vocal Compositions by **jumatatu m. poe**

Sound Design and DJ performance by **Zen Jefferson**

Video Installation by **Mx. Oops**

Lighting Design and Technical Direction by **Juan “Coel” Rodriguez**

Panel Design and Costume Consultation by **Precious Lovell**

Provocation by **Thomas F. DeFrantz**

Ethical Artistry Guidance by **Shani Akilah**; additional Workshop Support from **Abdul-Aliy Muhammad**

Producing and Tour Management by **Maryá Wethers**

Choreographer’s note by jumatatu m. poe:

THIS IS A FORMATION is the latest project in the *LET ‘IM MOVE YOU* series and is a performance work being designed to tour to sidewalk and alleyway sites within historically Black neighborhoods, institutional art spaces and queer niteclub spaces. The project is the only larger group project in the current series, bringing together seven Black dancers, a DJ and a lighting designer as performers for the work. Audiences travel within performance spaces with relative freedom, sharing the same spaces as performers. Live captured video design elements will focus on close-up capture of the performers to reference both hyper-surveillance of Black people’s bodies and pop-star scale megalomania.

Fragmentation

Created by **Suzon Fuks with James Cunningham & Rob Tannion**

Direction, Camera, Editing, Sound: **Suzon Fuks**

Choreography: **James Cunningham, Suzon Fuks and Rob Tannion**

Performers: **James Cunningham and Rob Tannion**

Production: **Igneous + Iain Court, Jill Webster**

Choreographer's note:

Even though technology links people, it can also fragment their lives. Two guys, absorbed in their morning paper and their personal space “bubble,” somehow manage to find a disjointed connection with one another.

Edited using footage shot during a residency at Dance4, Nottingham.

Excerpts of MOMENTUM

Created by **TheBBoyBallet**

Vulture Invocation Realness

Choreographed and Performed by **randy reyes**

Videographer: **Chani Bockwinkel**

Environment: **Stern Grove Park aka Yelamu/Ramaytush Ohlone Territory**

Choreographer's note by randy reyes:

The choreographic structure for *Vulture Invocation*

Realness started coming together during a residency I was doing in Portugal earlier this year that was cut short due to COVID-19. This cutting short created a series of transitions within transitions and waves of disorientation and reorientation towards where I ultimately needed to land and arrive, which was safely back home into my own arms and into a new geographic and metaphysical environment.

The work itself is the beginning of a grief ritual honoring my time in the Bay Area which was the landscape through which I began my personal healing journey (back in 2016) where I came face to face with my own inherited and accumulated traumas. My choreographic work is inseparable from my healing processes and is a channel/medium that supports me with shape-shifting, integration, metabolizing, transforming and creating apertures towards liberation, pleasure and Brown boi joy.

Bamboula is Not Bamboozled

Produced by **Kyle Sahadeo**

Written, Directed, Choreographed by **Millicent Johnnie**

Director of Photography: **Bryionna Flowers**

Production Designer: **Joshwa Walton**

Original Costume Design by **December Mathinsen (CU Boulder Alum), Curry Leggoe and Millicent Johnnie**

Composers: **Charles Vincent Burwell and Longineu Parsons**

Production Company: **Florida State University College of Motion Picture Arts**

Choreographer's note by Millicent Johnnie:

A Black dancer finds herself struggling to perform a work examining minstrelsy. Faced with a personal decision to continue the work or leave, she wrestles with how to apply its fraught history to her rehearsal process.

Guest artists

MK Adadoo's creative work exist at the crux of dance theater, anti-racist cultural organizing and critical education studies. Called a "breakout star" by Dance Magazine's 2018 "25 to Watch," her creative practice is rooted in the justice work of Urban Bush Women, Gesel Mason, Angela's Pulse and the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. Her choreography has been commissioned by the Kennedy Center Millennium Stage, the University of Richmond, the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center with Joe's Movement Emporium and has been shown in Washington, DC, and Accra, Ghana. Abadoo is an assistant professor in the Department of Dance + Choreography at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), and in the Racial Equity, Arts, and Culture Core of VCU's ICubed, the Institute for Inclusion, Inquiry & Innovation.

Dom-Sebastian Alexis is a hip-hop and contemporary fusion artist trained in various degrees of street dance, social grooves and contemporary dance techniques. He's battled amongst B-Boys, shot commercials for Samsung and NatGeo, done blogs for Verizon and is a part of an elite dance community known as the Red Bull Beat Riders. He is trained in multiple forms of improvisation techniques and is by far the most decorated dance instructor in the triad. On top of studio teaching, Alexis works with local stores to produce social media content to promote their businesses.

Suzon Fuks is a Belgian-Australian intermedia artist, choreographer and director exploring the integration and interaction of dance and moving image through performance, screen, installation and online work. She is the founder of the Waterwheel interactive performance platform. She is also co-founder of Igneous with James Cunningham—a company working across dance, new media, disability and activism.

A child of South Louisiana and daughter of dance, **Millicent Johnnie** is a culture bearer, scholar and world citizen, following in the footsteps of her immediate ancestors as well as her dance heroines. As a teenager, she hosted a local social justice TV show met by protests and objection from the local KKK; she traces her professional determination and commitment to social issues in black culture to this early opposition. Former associate artistic director of Urban Bush Women, she has also served as a choreographer for Walt Disney Creative Entertainment's *Frozen: Live at the Hyperion*, has worked A & R in the music industry through Marvelous Enterprises, performed at the 2016 Opening Ceremonies of the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, choreographed the feature film, *Scary Movie 5* and collaborated with Academy Award-winning director Tiffany Rhynard on the short film *Ma Negresse: Blood Memories* (2020 release), featuring four-time Grammy Nominee, Cedric Watson. Then, with 20 years experience working as a choreographer, director and assistant professor in the performing arts, Johnnie applied to film school at the Florida State University. Knowing that filmmaking would be the natural evolution of her artistic work, Johnnie recently completed her MFA, having also just choreographed *Thoughts of a Colored Man*, a Broadway-bound play produced by Syracuse Stage and Baltimore Center Stage. **Facebook** | **Instagram**

Paloma McGregor (Director, *Angela's Pulse/Dancing While Black*) is a Caribbean-born, New York-based choreographer and arts leader. McGregor

has spent more than a decade centering Black voices through collaborative, “community-specific” performance projects. A former newspaper editor, McGregor brings a choreographer’s craft, a journalist’s urgency and a community organizer’s framework in the service of big visions. Working at the forefront of her field, she has been a recipient of several major awards including: Open Society Foundations’ Soros Arts Fellowship (2020), Dance/USA’s Fellowship to Artists (2019), Urban Bush Women’s Choreographic Center Institute Fellowship (2018) and Surdna Foundation’s Artists Engaging in Social Change (2015/2017). McGregor won a “Bessie” Award for Performance with skeleton architecture in 2017 and she is currently an artist in residence at Columbia University/Barnard College’s Movement Lab.

jumatatu m. poe: I am a choreographer and performer based between Philadelphia and New York City who grew up dancing around the living room and at parties with my siblings and cousins. My early exposure to concert dance was through African dance and capoeira performances on California college campuses where my Pan-Africanist parents studied and worked, but I did not start “formal” dance training until college with Umfundalai, Kariamuwelsh’s contemporary African dance technique. My work continues to be influenced by various sources, including my foundations in those living rooms and parties, my early technical training in contemporary African dance, my continued study of contemporary dance and performance, my movement trainings with dancer and anatomist Irene Dowd around anatomy and proprioception, my sociological research of and technical training in J-sette performance with Donte Beacham. Through my artistic work, I strive to engage in and further dialogues with Black queer folks, create lovingly agitating performance work that recognizes history as only one option for the contextualization of the present, and continue to imagine options for artists’ economic and emotional sustainability.

randy reyes (they/them) is a queer, Afro-Guatemalan (with interrupted Mayan ancestry) choreographer, performance artist and healer born in New Jersey (Lenape territory) and based between there and San Francisco (Ramaytush Ohlone, Yelamu territory). reyes frames choreography as a process of excavation, as edging and incremental gesture, task as meditation; they activate their work using psychosomatic state werq, Qi energetics, contemporary dance, club dancing and structures of improvisation. They love getting messy by conjuring choreographic rituals and casting spells within quotidian, natural,

subliminal and imaginary landscapes. Their performances open portals for reclaiming, re-memembering and communing with their ancestral lineage whilst interrogating and shifting patterns of intergenerational trauma. As a survivor, reyes deepens their relationship to their body through somatics, prayer, divination, meditation, writing and resting.

Bill Shannon is an interdisciplinary artist and maker who explores body-centric work through video art, installation, sculpture, linguistics, sociology, choreography, circus arts, dance and politics. Shannon has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in Choreography, a Foundation For Contemporary Art Fellowship in Performance Art, a United States Artist Award in Dance and has worked as a choreographer and performer for Cirque Du Soleil among many others. Shannon's contributions to dance include a very specific movement vocabulary evolved through his creative use of crutches as a child after the discovery of a physical disability that effected his ability to bear weight in his hips. Shannon's movement on crutches evolved through his childhood immersion in skateboarding and hip-hop to manifest a singular form of mobility, performance art and dance that became his signature style on a the global stage. Shannon currently resides in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with his three children and large extended family.

Amy Smith co-founded **Headlong** in 1993 in Philadelphia/Sakimauchheen Ing. She co-directed and performed with the company, a collaborative dance theater group that transformed over the years into a community arts organization. Since 2019 she has been working freelance as a dance and theater artist, educator and facilitator.

Special thanks

From jumatatu m. poe: Thank you to Yeman Brown for his participation in the creative process of this work. Thank you to Black queer youth (younger than us), peers, elders and ancestors who hold our hands while we practice life alongside others. And thank you to the Black femme innovators, whether in the HBCU stadiums or on the gay club floors, who graced the world with this intricate form. *Please visit the [artist's website](#) for additional production and funding credits.*

From Millicent Johnnie: Cleo Parker Robinson and the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, Florida State University College of Motion Picture Arts, Florida State University School of Dance and University of Colorado Boulder Department of Theatre and Dance.

From Bill Shannon: Special thanks to Kate and DNA Dance NYC who donated the space and provided the time for this video to become a reality. Shout out to my brother Ben for carrying the eight camera tree and dolly and all the other heavy stuff all the time.

From MK Adaboo: Our Ancestors, Known and Unknown, upon whose shoulders we stand. Lonta and Asé!; The BGG front line squad of collaborators, performers and designers. You are a conspiracy of good people: Alicia Díaz, University of Richmond, Tucker Boatwright Festival, University of Richmond, Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Richmond, Virginia Commonwealth University, (VCU) Department of Dance + Choreography, VCU Institute for Inclusion, Inquiry, and Innovation (ICubed), Virginia Commonwealth University, Mayor Levar M. Stoney, Osita Ioregbu, City of Richmond, Virginia, Six Points Innovation Center, Library of Virginia, Visual Arts Center of Richmond, CultureWorks Richmond, Virginia Department of Humanities, Open Society Foundations, The Students of the Fall 2019 “Dance and Commemorative Justice” Course, Shenandoah University

From randy reyes: Special Thank you to tt owen for being my transition doula / soul sister since heading back to the United States from my residency in Portugal; to my inner little one: i see you, i hear you, i welcome you home, i love you; to momma earth and my actual momma for sustaining me through warm embraces and warm food since day one.

From Amy Smith:

For *W*LM*RT Nature Trail*: Special thanks to Pam Morris, the audience member who agreed to be filmed going through the experience, and the MAP Fund, who supported the project. For *CELL*: Special thanks to Pam Reilly, the audience member who allowed us to film her journey, and Mahalia Cohen for creating the film.

CU Theatre & Dance Production team

DANCE PRODUCTION

Technical crew: Nathan Bala, Aleighya Dawkins, Xaalan Dolence, Brealyn Hager, Sam Morin, Viktoria Padilla, Olivia Sander, James Solis-Gutierrez

COSTUMES

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Fall 2020 at CU Theatre & Dance



[un]WRAP:

(un)doing and (re)making

Curated by CU Dance faculty and ED&I

Nov. 13-19

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She Kills Monsters:

Virtual Realms

A play by Qui Nguyen

Nov. 13-20

[Learn more](#)



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*The Department of Theatre & Dance acknowledges that the University sits upon land within **the territories of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho** peoples and are grateful to have the opportunity to be here. Further, we acknowledge the 48 contemporary tribal nations that are historically tied to lands that make up Colorado. We recognize and pay our respects to these Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. We pay our respects to the ancestors, elders, relations past, present and emerging.*

CU PRESENTS

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