waheedworks

BODIES AS SITE OF FAITH AND PROTEST

Wednesday, February 28, 2024
7:30 p.m.
Bovard Auditorium
SECTION I: Roderick Phifer & Company
SECTION II: song aziza tucker
SECTION IV: Breyanna Maples & Company
SECTION V: Zoe Miller & kira shiina
SECTION VI: The Company

The performance will be followed by a conversation with Tommie-Waheed Evans and members of the company, moderated by USC Kaufman professor Thomas Ford.

THE COMPANY
Ankhtra Maa Brivett-Battle  Breyanna Maples  kira shiina
Isabelle Cattie  Zoe Miller  song aziza tucker
Aliyah Clay  Sloan Pearson  Antonio C. Wright
Jameel Hendricks  Roderick Phifer

CREDITS
Artistic Director/Choreographer: Tommie-Waheed Evans
Costume Design: Martha Chamberlain
Lighting Design: Calvin Anderson
Rehearsal Associate: Roderick Phifer
Original Music: Greg Smith
Sound Design Elements: Jon Baldwin & Raphael Xavier

MUSIC CREDITS
“Dona Nobis Pacem,” performed by the Latvian Radio Choir, composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, under exclusive license to Decca Label Group, United States, 2007
“Walk with Me Lord,” performed by Martha Bass & The Harold Smith Majestics Choir, written by Ralph Bass, courtesy of Geffen Records, 1970
“Wholy Holy,” performed by Aretha Franklin, written by Al Cleveland, Marvin Gaye, and Renaldo Benson, courtesy of Atlantic Records, 1972

For booking info, contact lamar@baylorartistsmgmt.com.
MISSION STATEMENT
wheelworks’ mission is to create a radically collaborative body of work through movement that speaks to human life. Grounded in artistic director Tommie-Waheed Evans’s upbringing in the church, the goal of the movement is to offer a path to liberation. The work intertwines an urban street style and contemporary dance vocabulary with an emphasis on gospel music and polyrhythmic sounds. The dancers of waheedworks are unapologetically diverse with bold and raw movement.

ABOUT WAHEEDWORKS
Philadelphia-based waheedworks was established in 2006 by artistic director Tommie-Waheed Evans. Working collaboratively, Evans has led the company in creating an extensive repertoire that propels new contemporary movement work into the next era. waheedworks has collaborated with composers Greg Smith, Darryl Hoffman, and the poet Gregory Smith, and has received generous support from the Princess Grace Foundation, National Endowment of the Arts, Philadelphia Cultural Fund, New Music USA project grant, Center of Ballet and the Arts at NYU, and Dance/USA. The company has also had the pleasure of being presented by SummerStage NYC, The Painted Bride Arts Center, Plays and Players Theatre, Long Island Theatre, the Dance Boom Festival, the Coming Together Festival, The International Association of Blacks in Dance, and Philadelphia Dance Projects.
TOMMIE-WAHEED EVANS
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CHOREOGRAPHER

2021 Guggenheim Fellow Tommie-Waheed Evans is a queer Black dance maker, born and raised in Los Angeles, CA, amidst racial divide, gang warfare, and earthquakes. His work explores Blackness, spirituality, queerness, and liberation. He began his formal training with Karen McDonald before receiving a fellowship at the Ailey School, and an MFA in Choreography from Jacksonville University. He has toured and performed nationally and internationally as a company member of Lula Washington Dance Theatre, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, and PHILADANCO! Since 2004, he has created more than 50 original dance works that range widely in scope, length, tone, and subject matter. waheedworks, his Philadelphia-based dance company, is the primary vehicle for his creative research. The company’s mission is to create a radically collaborative body of work that speaks to the human condition. His work brings together urban street dance styles and contemporary dance vocabulary through bold and raw movements propelled by gospel music and polyrhythmic sounds. He has also been commissioned to create works for BalletX, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, PHILADANCO!, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Verb Ballets, Ballet Memphis, the University of the Arts, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Lula Washington Dance Theatre, and Louisville Ballet, among others. Accolades and honors include Resident Fellow at the Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University, Princess Grace Honoraria Award in Choreography, New Music Project Grant, Howard Gilman Foundation Fellowship, Joffrey Ballet Winning Works, and Dance Research Fellowship at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Tommie is currently an artist-in-residence at PHILADANCO! and on faculty at the University of the Arts.

CALVIN ANDERSON
(HE/HIM/THEY/THEM)
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Calvin is a lighting and projection designer, as well as a production manager. They have a strong pull towards the devised, the radical, and the risky, all while leaning towards projects with heart, vulnerability, and trust. Some favorite genres Calvin has worked in include dance, musical theater, opera, cabaret, and drag. Some favorite works in New York have been seen at Brooklyn Academy of Music, HERE Arts, The Joyce, NYLA, Judson Church, Park Avenue Armory, and Symphony Space. Career highlights include designing The Method Gun (Wesleyan University), Late Night Snacks 2019 (Bearded Ladies Cabaret/Philadelphia), Oscar at the Crown (The Neon Coven/NYC), Orchid Receipt Service (Mirror/Fire Productions/NYC), Old Man and the Sea (Pittsburgh Playhouse, PA), the Strings & Serpents Tour with Andy Milne, and Flipzoids (Generator Theater/Alaska). Calvin was the lighting director for Ailey II and production manager for Do You Want a Cookie? (Bearded Ladies Cabaret/Philadelphia). He is the resident lighting and projection designer and production manager for FJK Dance in New York, and has had the privilege to tour the world over with various projects. Calvin is also an educator, mentor, and proud member of the Wingspace Theatrical Design collective’s Mentorship Committee and United Scenic Artists Local 829. MFA UConn. #blacklivesmatter
MARTHA CHAMBERLAIN  
(SHE/HER)  
COSTUME DESIGNER

Martha Chamberlain joined Pennsylvania Ballet as an apprentice in the fall 1989 and rose through the ranks to principal dancer. She retired from the company in 2011. Martha began designing costumes in the early 1990s and continued throughout her dancing career. Among the choreographers she has created work for are Christopher D’Amboise, Matthew Neenan, Jodie Gates, Claudia Schreier, Meredith Rainey, Jorma Elo, Darrell Moultrie, Helen Pickett, Brian Sanders, Nicolo Fonte, Tommie-Waheed Evans, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Gary W. Jeter II, and Sidra Bell. She is currently on the dance faculty and wardrobe supervisor in the Dance department at the University of the Arts. She is founder of Chamberlain Goods, a dancewear company specializing in custom-made leotards, tights, and warm-ups.

Tania “T” Saiz Perez  
(THEY/THEM)  
STAGE MANAGER

tania “T” Saiz Perez is a queer immigrant dance artist and stage manager based on Lenape Land, known today as Philadelphia, PA. They graduated from the University of the Arts with a BFA in Dance under the direction of Donna Faye Burchfield in 2021. They are currently the production coordinator and a stage manager for the School of Dance at UArts, working alongside David Ferri, James McGinn, and Niall Jones on the school’s Festival of Senior Thesis Works and Winter/Spring Dance Series. Other stage management credits include works by Bill T. Jones, Doug Varone, Helen Simoneau, Jesse Zaritt, Joanna Kotze, Jordan Lloyd, Mark Caserta/BigKid Dance, Mark Haim, Sidra Bell, Tommie-Waheed Evans, and Ulysses Dove, amongst others.

Photo: Kira Shiina in Anthem
ANKHTRA MAA BRIVETT-BATTLE
(HE/HIM)

Ankhtra Maa Brivett-Battle is a Black dance artist born in Newark, NJ, and raised in Springfield, NJ. He was introduced to dance by a friend’s mother who was a ballet teacher. He began his training at the age of 8 at the Dance Theatre of Harlem Summer Intensive in NYC. He went on to train at Peridance Capezio Center and, shortly after, he trained with Manhattan Youth Ballet under the direction of Deborah Wingert. After graduating high school, Ankhtra started dancing with D/2, PHILADANCO!’s second company, from 2017-2020. In summer 2021, he trained at the B12 Berlin Workshop Festival in Germany where he worked with artists including Micaela Taylor and Nadine Gerspache. Ankhtra is a 2022 BFA graduate of the University of the Arts School of Dance (directed by Donna Faye Burchfield). Ankhtra had the pleasure of performing in works by Tommie-Waheed Evans, Sidra Bell, Merce Cunningham, Shayla Vie-Jenkins, and Thom White. Ankhtra also received an award for Expressivity upon graduation in May of 2022. Ankhtra is currently researching the different roles and relationships between identity and voice and what that could look like in movement and as a practice.

ISABELLE CATTIE
(SHE/HER)

Isabelle Cattie is a dance artist based in Philadelphia, PA. She is currently pursuing a Dance BFA at the University of the Arts under the direction of Donna Faye Burchfield. She previously studied Anthropology and Dance at Bard College in Hudson, NY. Her formative years were spent training at the Koresh Dance School under the direction of Melissa Rector and Roni Koresh, and she was a member of the Koresh Youth Ensemble from 2015 to 2018. Isabelle is a recipient of the President’s Fund for Excellence from the University of the Arts. She is also a current member of Sheer Spectacle, a Philadelphia-based dance collective directed by Lily Mello and Kali Petrizzo. Currently, she is working with Albert Quesada and Katie Vickers in restaging their improv-based, Flamenco-inspired work titled Flamingos. She is also currently working closely with Roni Koresh, Melissa Rector, and Shayla-Vie Jenkins.

ALIYAH CLAY
(SHE/HER)

Aliyah Clay is a professional dance artist and entrepreneur from Newark, DE. She graduated in December 2022 from the University of the Arts with a BFA in Dance, under the direction of Donna Faye Burchfield, with a minor in Business. Her dance studies began at Christina Cultural Arts Center under Dara J. Meredith and Dance4Life School of the Arts and Training Institute under Chauntee D. Andrews. Aliyah has trained intensively in ballet, pointe, modern, contemporary, jazz, tap, improvisation, and Umfundalai. During her collegiate training, Aliyah worked closely with many prominent artists including Christine Cox, Dwight Rhoden, Helen Pickett, Mark Caserta, Tommie-Waheed Evans, Kim Bears-Bailey, Kara Wilkes, Courtney Henry, Sarah Hillmer, and Milton Myers. She has also taught classes and private lessons in ballet and contemporary dance, and recently received her Pilates mat certification. Her summer studies to further her artistry include Alonzo King Lines, Jacob’s Pillow Contemporary Program, Eric Underwood Program, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Dance Creating New Stars, and BalletX. Aliyah believes in multiplicity and versatility, and strives to work within multiple mediums while finding ways to blend them.
JAMEEL HENDRICKS

Jameel Hendricks is a graduate of the Philadelphia High School for the Creative & Performing Arts (CAPA), where he received his early training as a Dance major and was appointed the position of Dance Captain entering his senior year. Upon graduating from CAPA, Jameel was presented with the Dance/Humanitarian/Congeniality Award. Jameel attended Eleone Dance Unlimited as a scholarship student and was appointed the title of Dance Captain for the training company, Eleone Connections. Jameel has also had the opportunity to attend the Rock School for Ballet as a full scholarship student, and other local dance intensives such as Dance Creates New Stars (DCNS) and Anthony Burrell’s Breaking Barriers. After graduating from CAPA, he went on to continue his training in dance at Rutgers University at the Mason Gross School of the Arts, majoring in Dance Education. Following his duration at Rutgers University, Jameel became a touring company member of Eleone Dance Theater. Jameel has extensive experience in collaborating with the School District of Philadelphia using dance as a way to contribute to artistic and communal endeavors amongst the youth in the city. As a result of his years training extensively in various styles of dance, Jameel has been able to gain commercial dance experience such as choreographing for Philadelphia’s annual 6abc Thanksgiving Day Parade and the 2021 Made in America Music Festival. Throughout his tenure at PHILADANCO!, Jameel has been able to work with a vast number of choreographers, teach numerous masterclasses, speak on panel discussions, and restage classic works such as Talley Beatty’s A Rag, a Bone, and a Hank of Hair. He currently teaches at several dance schools and is working on furthering his artistic abilities as a member of PHILADANCO! while also venturing into an entrepreneurial journey with his new athletic apparel line, M3 (ME).

BREYANNA MAPLES (SHE/HER)

Philadelphia native Breyanna Maples is an alum of the University of the Arts School of Dance under the direction of Donna Faye Burchfield. As a freelance artist, her practice is through but is not limited to dance. Her practices extend into theatre, gallery performance, and design. Maples’ work scrapes internally through unworn moods, untapped emotions, and the untold stories of her fantastic innermost world. Her work ...reset, which premiered in 2017, was built through this lens. Breyanna is an inaugural recipient of the Mural Arts Philadelphia Fellowship for Black Artists. Her performance credits include Solange Knowles, Okwui Okpokwasili, Peter Born, Gerard and Kelly, Dara Meredith Stevens, Tommie-Waheed Evans, and more.

ZOE MILLER

Zoe Miller is a performer, collaborator, and choreographer who began her training at the Charlotte Performing Arts Academy in North Carolina. She has served as an assistant for DanceMakers, Inc., a dance convention that tours nationally providing classes from acclaimed choreographers such as Josh Smith, Kathryn McCormick, and Robert Roldan. Miller has choreographed works paying homage to ancestral lineage and highlighting the Black body that have been performed at Jacob’s Pillow and Philly Story Fest. Miller pursued her BFA in Dance at University of the Arts under the direction of Donna
Faye Burchfield, where she studied modern, jazz, contemporary, hip hop, and ballet technique as well as choreography. At University of the Arts, she performed in works by noted choreographers Sidra Bell, Juel Lane, and Mark Caserta, along with numerous student works. Outside of college, she has worked with artists, such as Tommie-Waheed Evans of the Philadelphia-based company waheedworks, that have performed in venues such as the Joyce Theater in New York and Jacob’s Pillow.

**SLOAN PEARSON**
(SHE/HER)

Sloan Pearson is a dancer, professor, and model currently based in New York City. Originally from Charlotte, NC, she began studying at Charlotte Ballet under the direction of ballet luminaries Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux and Patricia McBride. She graduated from Northwest School of the Arts. She received her BFA with a Modern Dance focus from Point Park University Conservatory of Performing Arts. While at Point Park, Sloan was offered an apprenticeship with the August Wilson Dance Ensemble. Sloan has danced with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Kybele Dance Theater, and Debbie Allen. She was honored to dance with the Paul Taylor 2 Dance Company, where she was Paul Taylor’s last chosen dancer. During her four seasons at Paul Taylor, she worked with Ron K. Brown, Larry Keigwen, and Peter Chu, before joining chuthis after Taylor. Sloan has most recently worked with Princess Grace recipient Tommie-Waheed Evans for a new creation entitled *Sermon on the Mount* in residency with waheedworks at the NYU Center for Ballet Arts, Holly Blakey for Puma New York Fashion Week, and Yin Yue Dance Company.

**RODERICK PHIFER**
(HE/HIM)

Roderick Phifer is a Charlotte, NC, native whose artistic passion is realized through choreography, dance education, and performance. His experience ranges from commercial and concert dance training, which heavily influences his personal style in movement. He received early training from the North Carolina Dance Theatre, under the direction of Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux and Patricia McBride, and Dance Productions, under the direction of Lori Oxendine and mentorship of the late Denise Britz-Clark. As a young artist, expanding and exploring the language of dance outside of his home was always a major priority, which led to him training with the Debbie Allen Dance Academy and Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. He continued his education and earned his BFA from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. Shortly after, he joined Philadelphia’s contemporary company BalletX as a company artist for five seasons. During the pandemic, he shifted roles by joining Philadelphia’s Chocolate Ballerina Company as their rehearsal director, where he was also a part of creating Philadelphia’s first all-Black cast of *The Nutcracker*. Roderick is currently a company artist with BigKid Dance, founded by Mark Caserta, and a company artist with waheedworks, founded by Tommie-Waheed Evans. Roderick has earned the opportunity to teach and perform on an international level, while also pouring his knowledge and passion back into the new generation of rising dance artists.
**kira shiina**  
(SHE/THEY)

Kira Shiina is a freelance dance artist based in the land of the Lenape people, known today as Philadelphia, PA. Kira Shiina received their dance education at Pittsburgh Creative and Performing Arts 6-12, going on to receive their BFA in Dance from the University of the Arts under the direction of Donna Faye Burchfield. She has performed in works by Andrea Miller, Beth Gill, Bobbi Jene Smith, Doug Varone, Mark Caserta, Sidra Bell, slowdanger, and Tommie-Waheed Evans, among others. In 2019, they presented their first solo work, *DID YOU/FALL APART*, at Pittsburgh Center for the Arts. Kira Shiina is currently a creative associate of choreographer Tommie-Waheed Evans, and has been a collaborator with his project-based company waheedworks since 2019. They are a company member and rehearsal director for BigKid Dance under the direction of Mark Caserta. She is also currently in collaboration with multidisciplinary performance entity slowdanger for their new evening length work, *SUPERCELL*. Kira Shiina holds an adjunct assistant professor position at the UArts School of Dance.

**song aziza tucker**  
(SHE/HER)

Song Aziza Tucker is a project-based movement and writing artist whose works have spiraled out of her love for Black women, music, and poetry. Her latest work, *After the Flood*, honors the inspirations of many Black femme creators she holds close. Placing herself alongside these artists reminds her that dance is not only an expansive and visceral experience, but an intimate and integral way of communication for historically and systemically hushed bodies. Alongside these inspirations, song has collaborated with Katie Swords Thurman, Jesse Zaritt, Shayla-Vie Jenkins, Tommie-Waheed Evans, Jordan Lloyd, Niall Jones, Mark Caserta, Doug Varone, and Abby Zbikowski, among others. Song is constantly inspired and in conversation with folks who bring their most voluminous selves to the forefront and allow collaborators to be seen with open and soft eyes.

**ANTONIO C. WRIGHT**

Antonio C. Wright, multidisciplinary artist and native of Baltimore, MD, began his formal dance training at the George Washington Carver Center for the Arts and Technology with Elizabeth Ahearn, Maria Royals, and Stephanie Powell. To follow, Wright attended the University of the Arts under the direction of Donna Daye Burchfield as a Suzanne B. Glazer Full Scholarship recipient. During his studies, Wright worked with various artists such as Douglas Becker, Netta Yerushalmy, Katie Swords Thurman, Helen Simoneau, and Tommie-Waheed Evans of waheedworks, with whom Wright is a creative collaborator and dance artist. Wright graduated from the university in 2018 with a BFA in Dance and a minor in Creative Writing and then moved to New York City, where he got his MS in Fashion Marketing with a focus in Consumer Analytics at LIM College. During his time in New York City, Wright performed as a freelance dance artist while simultaneously acting as the head of VIP relations for a luxury fashion house, where he worked with artists such as Beyoncé, Maluma, Rihanna, and many more. The resources and notoriety gained during this time allowed Wright to merge his backgrounds in dance, creative writing, and fashion to build a roadmap for his own art-focused creative agency based in Los Angeles, Ask Antonio.
KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

- waaheedworks is a Philadelphia-based dance company led by choreographer and artistic director Tommie-Waheed Evans, who was born and raised in South Central Los Angeles.
- This is the West Coast premiere of Bodies as Site of Faith and Protest.
- The performance will be accompanied by a conversation with Tommie-Waheed Evans and members of the company, moderated by USC Kaufman professor Thomas Ford.

THE HISTORY IN BODIES AS SITE OF FAITH AND PROTEST

Bodies as Site of Faith and Protest represents a pivotal moment in the U.S. civil rights movement.

“Bloody Sunday” was March 7, 1965. On that date, a civil rights march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, was met with brutal state violence. The community in Selma was already deep in struggle for voting rights. Peaceful demonstrations and attempts by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to register Black voters were ongoing. In February, Jimmie Lee Jackson, a 26-year-old activist and deacon, was shot by police during a demonstration in a nearby town. He died eight days later.

Civil rights leaders decided to march to the state capital, Montgomery, to protest law-enforcement violence and demand civil rights. The segregationist governor, George C. Wallace, ordered law enforcement to prevent the march. The march was led by John Lewis, representing SNCC, and Hosea Williams, representing the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, another leading organization of the civil rights movement. About 600 people participated. On the Edmund Pettus Bridge, they were met with state violence: law-enforcement officers attacked the marchers. More than 50 marchers were hospitalized.
The violence was televised, bringing national attention to the civil rights cause and the violence with which it was being met. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been pressing President Lyndon B. Johnson to push forward legislation to enforce the Fifteenth Amendment of the Constitution, which said citizens’ right to vote should not be denied or abridged based on race. Now, with the eyes of the nation watching the civil rights movement, President Johnson finally advanced the Voting Rights Act, a landmark piece of legislation that removed racial barriers to voting by outlawing literacy tests, requiring jurisdictions with a history of disenfranchising voters to get approval before making any changes to voting practices, required election examiners and observers in jurisdictions with a history of voter intimidation, and enabled the U.S. Attorney General to investigate the use of poll taxes. President Johnson made a speech in support of the legislation that echoed the civil rights movement phrase, “We shall overcome.”

On March 21, Martin Luther King, Jr., led thousands of demonstrators on what would become a 4-day march from Selma to Montgomery. In Montgomery, King delivered his “How Long, Not Long” speech, which included the now-famous phrase, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.”

The Voting Rights Act was signed into law on August 6, 1965.

_Sources: National Archives, National Museum of African American History and Culture, Britannica, NAACP_

**ABOUT THE MUSIC**

“*Dona Nobis Pacem (Grant Us Peace)*” is a canonical hymn used in the Latin mass that probably originated from folk music. The recording used in this performance is by the Latvian Radio Choir.

“*Walk with Me*” is a spiritual that evokes the power of faith during a challenging moment or journey. The recording here is a performance by Martha Bass and the Harold Smith Majestics Choir, and is also featured on the motion picture soundtrack for _Selma_.

“*Wholy Holy,*” performed by Aretha Franklin, was written by Renaldo Benson, Al Cleveland, and Marvin Gaye. Franklin’s version of this song “is about black togetherness, a political declaration, a call to meet the needs of the nation” (_Boston Review_, 2019).

“*Eros,*” from the 2009 album _Nightbook_ by Ludovico Einaudi, is a piece that showcases Einaudi’s signature blend of contemporary classical and electronic elements.
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Are speeches an important element of today’s social movements? Can you think of any speeches that have moved you to action?
- What connections do you see between the history represented in the show and the present day?
- Reflect on the relationship between dance and sound in this piece: how are music, text, and silence used? How does sound affect your experience of the dance performance?
- What does the medium of dance bring to your intellectual or emotional understanding of this history? What is dance able to communicate or express that might be different if you read about this history, or watched a play or a movie about this? Consider what each form of art and communication is uniquely able to do.

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- @waheedworks
- Civil Rights Movement Archive | crmvet.org
- Classes and performances at the USC Kaufman School of Dance | kaufman.usc.edu
- Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs | cbcasa.usc.edu
- Upcoming Visions and Voices Events:
  - 3/2/24 Cypher Summit Block Party
  - 3/23/24 CHRISTEENE: The Lion The Witch And The Cobra, with Peaches & Shannon Funchess
  - 4/6/24 The Great Wall of Los Angeles at 40: A Conversation with Judy Baca and Screening of Murs Murs
  - 4/27/24 Rhythms + Visions / Expanded + Live 4
KELSEY VUKIC of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about this event. Electronic resources are accessible through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu but may require the user to log in using their USC credentials.

BOOKS

DATABASES
- African American Music Reference
- American Music
- Alexander Street Music and Dance Online
- Dance Online: Dance in Video
- Performing Arts Periodicals Database
- ProQuest History Vault: Black Freedom Struggle in the 20th Century

JOURNALS
- Dance Magazine
- Dance Online: Dance Studies Collection

STREAMING MEDIA
- Soundtrack for a Revolution: Freedom Songs from the Civil Rights Era (Goldcrest Post Productions, 2009).