
Danspace Project

Winter 2020

Saturday Afternoon Conversation #3: Saidiya Hartman, Simone Leigh, Okwui Okpokwasili, and the Voice & Body Research Group: Jasmine Hearn, Tendayi Kuumba, Benedict Nguyen, Samita Sinha, Tatyana Tenenbaum, and Asiya Wadud

March 7, 2020

Part of PLATFORM 2020: *Utterances From The Chorus*
co-curated by Okwui Okpokwasili
& Judy Hussie-Taylor

Please enter quietly.

10:30am: Doors Open

11am: A Conversation between Saidiya Hartman,
Simone Leigh, and Okwui Okpokwasili

12:15pm: A Response by Asiya Wadud

1pm: Voice & Body Research Group: An
Afternoon of Shared Practice, Jasmine Hearn,
Tendayi Kuumba, Benedict Nguyen, Samita
Sinha, Tatyana Tenenbaum, and Asiya Wadud

3pm: Reception

All times are approximate.

**@DanspaceProject
#PLATFORM2020**

This series of long form conversations unfolds over four Saturday afternoons during PLATFORM 2020: *Utterances From The Chorus*. They will allow for different ways to gather, talk, and share practice. Curators, artists, audience, writers, scholars, friends and family will take this slow time to process the lines of inquiry guiding the Platform to come together, across disciplines.

Saidiya Hartman, Simone Leigh, and Okwui Okpokwasili will open the day with readings from Leigh's *Chorus* (Courtesy of the artist) and Hartman's essay *The Plot of Her Undoing* (commissioned by the Feminist Art Coalition) followed by a conversation. The Voice & Body research group will follow in response, conducting an afternoon of shared practice. Research fellows are **Jasmine Hearn, Tendayi Kuumba, Benedict Nguyen, Samita Sinha, Tatyana Tenenbaum, and Asiya Wadud.**

Citations:

Simone Leigh, *Chorus*, 2019

<http://publications.risdmuseum.org/raid-icebox-now/simone-leigh-chorus>

Saidiya Hartman, *The Plot of Her Undoing, Notes on Feminisms*. Commissioned by the Feminist Art Coalition (FAC).

In 2018 Danspace Project Associate Curator Lydia Bell initiated *collective terrain/s*, a year-long process into "sounding in the body" led by artists Jasmine Hearn and Tatyana Tenenbaum with invited artists Tendayi Kuumba and Samita Sinha. In spring 2019, Danspace Executive Director and Chief Curator, Judy Hussie-Taylor, invited these artists back alongside writers Asiya Wadud and Benedict Nguyen to form a Research Group, Voice and Body. With facilitation from Assistant Curator, Public Engagement, Seta Morton, these Research Fellows have gathered threads

of individual practice, shared research, and collective reading to weave a lexicon of words and a transmission of ideas that reverberate in sound, somatics, language, and narrative.

The Research Group has focused its work on acknowledging personal and cultural patterns of carrying, ancestral and trans-generational trauma, joy, weight, and sacrifice. They troubled institutional systems of pedagogy and the authority of the archive while placing a high value on embodiment as knowledge. Vibrational frequencies were shared as acts of deep care in resistance to violence. These artists asserted a radical insistence: how many ways are there to say the same thing and how can we say it again? In conversation with Okpokwasili, Hartman, and Leigh, the Fellows will guide us through a day of gestures and shared practices as we gather in community to build a collective song.

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Saidiya Hartman is the author of *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford, 1997); *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007) and *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments* (Norton, 2019). She is currently at work on a new book project, *N Folio: An Essay on Narrative and the Archive*. She has published articles on slavery, history and the archive, and black women's lives, including "The Terrible Beauty of the Slum," "Venus in Two Acts," and "The Belly of the World." She was awarded a MacArthur Fellowship in 2019. She was a Guggenheim Fellow in 2018-2019, and has been a Cullman Fellow at the New York Public Library, a Fulbright Scholar in Ghana, a Whitney Oates Fellow at Princeton University, and a Critical Inquiry Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago. She received her B.A. from Wesleyan University and her Ph.D. from Yale. She has taught at the University of California at Berkeley and is Professor of English and Comparative Literature and Gender Studies at Columbia University. She is the former director of the Institute for Research on Gender and Sexuality.

Jasmine Hearn is a native Houstonian holding their BA in dance from Point Park University. A Brooklyn based performer, curator, director, choreographer, organizer, and teaching artist, she is currently a company member with Urban Bush Women and a 2019 Jerome Foundation Jerome Hill Fellow. She collaborates with Alisha B. Wormsley, Solange Knowles, BANDportier, and Vanessa German. They have also worked and performed with David Dorfman Dance, Alesandra Seutin's vocabdance, Kate Watson-Wallace, STAYCEE PEARL dance project, Marjani Forté-Saunders, will rawls, Tara Aisha Willis, Jennifer Myers, Helen Simoneau Danse, Lovie Olivia, Bill T. Jones/Arnie

Zane Company, and with Nick Mauss as a part of exhibition, *TRANSMISSIONS*, at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Jasmine has received a 2017 Bessie Award for her performance with Skeleton Architecture, and has also shared her work at Danspace Project, BAAD!, New York Live Arts, La Mama Theater, and The Camargo Foundation.

International dancer, singer, songwriter, **Tendayi Kuumba** is a graduate of North Atlanta High School of Performing Arts and Spelman College. Choreographic solo/collaborative past works include Prague Effects, Heroin'e, FLUXX & Unidentified Fly Objects. Formally a touring company member of Urban Bush Women, she has worked with ASE Dance Theater Collective, Marjani Forté Saunders, Jim Findlay's *Electric Lucifer* workshop & Philadelphia Operas' *We Shall Not be Moved* directed by Bill T. Jones. She's received acclads for music releases of Jazz EP "Just A Matter of Time" and single "Incog-negro." Recently she toured as 1 of 2 back up singer/dancers on the *American Utopia* World Tour for Grammy Nominated artist David Byrne, as well as debut as a band/cast member of David Byrne's *American Utopia*. She generates and co-creates artistic space "The Golden Ratio" in Brooklyn, NY alongside partner in life and art, Greg Purnell. She gives thanks and blessings for life, love, breath, and the pursuit of happiness through creativity.

Simone Leigh's practice incorporates sculpture, video, and installation; all are informed by her ongoing exploration of black female-identified subjectivity. Leigh works in a mode she describes as auto-ethnographic. Her objects often employ materials and forms traditionally associated with African art; her performance- influenced installations create spaces where historical precedent and self-determination comingle. Through her investigations of visual overlaps between cultures, time periods, and geographies, she confronts and examines ideas of the female body, race, beauty, and community. Simone Leigh's exhibition, *The Loophole of Retreat*, was presented by The Guggenheim Museum on the occasion of Leigh winning the 2018 Hugo Boss Prize, and was accompanied by an historic one-day symposium of the same name organized by Saidiya Hartman and Tina Campt (April, 2019) also at the Guggenheim.

Benedict Nguyen is a dancer, writer, and curator based in the South Bronx, NY. Their writing has appeared in the Brooklyn Rail, Dance Magazine, Culturebot, and Shondaland, among others. Benedict has recently performed in DapperQ Fashion Week and in works by John Jasperse, José Rivera Jr., Sally Silvers, and Monstah Black. As the 2019 Suzanne Fiol Curatorial Fellow at ISSUE Project Room, they developed a multidisciplinary platform "soft bodies in hard places." They provide administrative support for Donna Uchizono and Jennifer Monson and John Jasperse.

They publish a biweekly-ish newsletter "first quarter moon slush" and are sometimes online @xbennyboo. Composer and vocal artist **Samita Sinha** combines experimentation and tradition (North Indian classical music, embodied practices, and folk and ritual music in several languages) to create new forms of music/sound performance and collaboration, and a language of voice and body. Her work has been commissioned by Asia Society, Performance Space 122 and Invisible Dog Art Center, the Rubin Museum and presented at the Kitchen, Wexner Center for the Arts, Danspace, National Sawdust, and PICA, among others. She has collaborated with Ralph Lemon, Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born, Fiona Templeton, Sekou Sundiata, Daria Fain and Robert Kocik, and Robert Ashley, as well as Sunny Jain and Grey McMurray (with whom she is part of the "uniquely-aligned trio" (NPR) Tongues in Trees). Sinha teaches voice extensively.

Choreographer/composer **Tatyana Tenenbaum** works at the juncture of experimental music and dance. Raised in the hills of Western Massachusetts, her ancestors wove their voices into the tuneful stories of the Broadway stage. She draws from this lineage while grappling with sinews of American mythology buried its unseen anatomy. Her work has been presented by The Chocolate Factory Theater, Brooklyn Studios for Dance, Danspace Project, AUNTS, Temple University, School for Contemporary Dance and Thought, and Pliegues y Despliegues Festival in Bogotá, Colombia. She has worked with artists Yoshiko Chuma & the School of Hard Knocks, Daria Fain and Robert Kocik, Jennifer Monson, Levi Gonzalez, Emily Johnson/CATALYST, Andy Luo & Lily Bo Shapiro, Juliana May, DOING AND UNDOING collective, and Hadar Ahuvia, among others. She is a former organizer with CLASSCLASSCLASS and Brooklyn Studios for Dance. Most recently she collaborated with Jasmine Hearn and Danspace Project's Lydia Bell on the 2019 *collective terrain/s* and was a 2017-18 Movement Research Artist-in-Residence. She attended Oberlin College & Conservatory of Music.

Asiya Wadud is the author of *Crosslight for Youngbird, day pulls down the sky... a filament in gold leaf* (written collaboratively with Okwui Okpokwasili), *SYNCOPE*, and the forthcoming *No Knowledge Is Complete Until It Passes Through My Body*. Recent work appears in e-flux, BOMB Magazine, Social Text, and other publications. Asiya is a 2019-2020 Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Artist-in-Residence, a 2019-2020 writer-in-residence at Danspace Project, and a 2020 resident at the Foundation Jan Michalski. Asiya lives in Brooklyn, New York, where she teaches poetry at Saint Ann's School.

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About PLATFORM 2020

The Platforms were launched by Danspace Project in 2010 as "exhibitions that unfold over time" shaped by guest artist-curators. Marking 10 years since Judy Hussie-Taylor conceived of the series, this Platform is the centerpiece of Danspace's 45th anniversary year.

PLATFORM 2020: *Utterances From The Chorus* emerged from Okpokwasili and Hussie-Taylor's interest in creating containers for sharing artistic practices: "Could we create a Platform for artists to be in a conversation with one another and offer that to a broader audience?" The result is a program that will unfold over four weeks with multiple voices, artistic collaborations, and interdisciplinary juxtapositions.

Together, Okpokwasili and Hussie-Taylor developed these lines of curatorial inquiry for the Platform:

How do we weave a collective song?

How can the voice and body be a site of resistance and transformation?

How can we share artistic practices – between artists and between artists and audiences?

PLATFORM 2020 follows Okpokwasili's longstanding inquiries addressing the lives of young women of color. It borrows its title from Saidiya Hartman's introduction to her book *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*.

In addition to Okpokwasili and Hussie-Taylor, the Platform's curatorial team includes Danspace Associate Curator and Program Director, Lydia Bell, and Seta Morton, Assistant Curator, Public Engagement.

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Issue #10 of Danspace Project's Journal!

Listening to "How to Catalogue a Crisis: An Afterward to Lost and Found: Dance, HIV/AIDS, New York, Then and Now (2016)": Jaime Shearn Coan, iele paloumpis, and Samantha the robot screen reader.

New journal posts each Monday!
at danspaceproject.org/journal

PLATFORM 2020 Catalogue and Merchandise on sale at all Platform events and online

Okwui Okpokwasili, *day pulls down the sky* purple vinyl album (in-person: \$35 / \$30 Danspace members)

Asiya Wadud and Okwui Okpokwasili, *day pulls down the sky / a filament in gold leaf* (in-person: \$10)

PLATFORM 2020: *Utterances From The Chorus*, Volume I (in-person: \$20 / \$15 Danspace members)

Streaming on Amazon, Google Play, and Spotify!

The *day pulls down the sky* album is now streaming on Spotify, Amazon, and Google Play! Soon to be on Tidal and Apple Music!

Funding for PLATFORM 2020

PLATFORM 2020: Utterances From The Chorus is made possible with lead support from the Lambent Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Ford Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, the Howard Gilman Foundation, and Danspace Project's Leadership Circle: Alberta Arthurs, Barbara Bertozzi Castelli, Katie Dixon & Richard Fleming, George and Ellen Needham, Slobodan Randjelovic, Martha Sherman, Muna Tseng, and Helen & Peter Warwick

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About Danspace Project

Danspace Project presents new work in dance, supports a diverse range of choreographers in developing their work, encourages experimentation, and connects artists to audiences. For 45 years, Danspace Project has supported a vital community of contemporary dance artists in an environment unlike any other in the United States. Located in the historic St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, Danspace shares its facility with the Church, The Poetry Project, and New York Theatre Ballet. Danspace Project's Commissioning Initiative has commissioned over 540 new works since its inception in 1994.

Danspace Project pays respect to Lenape peoples. We acknowledge that this work is situated on the Lenape island of Manhahtaan (Mannahatta) in Lenapehoking, the Lenape homeland. We pay respect to Lenape land, water, and ancestors past, present and future.

Accessibility

Danspace Project's main entrance is wheelchair accessible via a ramp. The Parish Hall is accessible through the 11th street doors via one (8 inch high) step or a (28.5 inch wide) temporary ramp with assistance from our staff. Please request the use of the temporary ramp, ahead of the event date. All gender bathrooms are accessible via a stairway (24 steps that are all 7.5 inches high). A same-level, one stall restroom is available near Danspace Project's main performance space in the church Sanctuary. The doorway of that

bathroom is 33 inches wide. There is a small corridor to pass through when moving between the Sanctuary and Parish Hall, the narrowest corner of this corridor is 29 inches wide.

CART (Communication access real-time captioning) will be provided.

PLATFORM 2020 Performances & Events

FEB 22 | 12-5PM Saturday Afternoon Conversation #1: *Platform as Practice*: Lydia Bell, Maura Donohue, Judy Hussie-Taylor, Kristin Juarez, Seta Morton, Okwui Okpokwasili, Cecilia Vicuña, Asiya Wadud, Eva Yaa Asantewaa. Food installation by Spiral Theory Test Kitchen.

FEB 28, MAR 6, 13, & 20 | 6-10PM Okwui Okpokwasili & Peter Born: *SITTING ON A MAN'S HEAD*

FEB 29 | 12-4PM Saturday Afternoon Conversation #2: *Kin & Care*: Jaime Shearn Coan, Maura Donohue, devynn emory, iele paloumpis, and Angie Pittman

MAR 7 | 11AM-4PM Saturday Afternoon Conversation #3: *Voice & Body*: Saidiya Hartman, Simone Leigh, Okwui Okpokwasili in conversation with Jasmine Hearn, Tendayi Kuumba, Benedict Nguyen, Samita Sinha, Tatyana Tenenbaum, and Asiya Wadud

MAR 9-10 | 7PM Nacera Belaza and Meryem Jazouli: *A SHARED EVENING*

MAR 14 | 8PM Okwui Okpokwasili and Samita Sinha: *A SHARED EVENING*

MAR 19 | 8PM *Poetic Utterance #1*: Justin Hicks, NIC Kay, Tendayi Kuumba & Greg Purnell, Alice Sheppard, Pamela Sneed, and Ni'Ja Whitson

MAR 21 | 12-4PM Saturday Afternoon Conversation #4: *Slowness*: Okwui Okpokwasili, Tina Campt. Catering by YARDY.

MAR 21 | 8PM *Poetic Utterance #2*: Eisa Davis, Yves B Golden x Venison Man, Madeleine Hunt-Ehrlich, M Lamar, Ogemdi Ude, and Mariana Valencia

Buy your tickets now at danspaceproject.org!

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