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# Danspace Project

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Spring 2021

## Platform 2021: *The Dream of the Audience*

### Platform Launch

Ishmael Houston-Jones, Okwui Okpokwasili,  
Eiko Otake, Joan Jonas, and Reggie Wilson  
with Judy Hussie-Taylor

Saturday, May 15, 2021

**Ishmael Houston-Jones** is a choreographer, author, curator, and educator. His improvised dance and text work has been performed worldwide. Drawn to collaboration as a way to move beyond boundaries and the known, Houston-Jones celebrates the political aspect of cooperation. He curated Platform 2012: *Parallels*, an eight-week series of events at Danspace Project in New York that interrogated the intersection of dance makers from the African Diaspora with the aesthetics of postmodern choreography. In 2016, he co-curated, with Will Rawls, Platform 2016: *Lost and Found: Dance, New York, HIV/AIDS, Then and Now*, which queried the effects of the loss of a generation of artists to AIDS on current dance creation, also at Danspace Project. Houston-Jones' work as a writer has been anthologized in several books, recently in *Saturation: Race, Art, and the Circulation of Value* (2020) and *Writers Who Love Too Much: New Narrative Writing 1977-1997* (2017). His first book, *FAT and Other Stories*, was published in 2018. He is the recipient of four New York Dance and Performance Bessie Awards (1984, 2011, 2017, and 2020) and has received support from United States Artists (2021), the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation (2018), the Herb Alpert Awards in the Arts (2016), the Doris Duke Charitable Trust (2015), and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts (2013). Houston-Jones is currently an adjunct professor at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts' Experimental Theatre Wing; the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and a master lecturer at the University of the Arts School of Dance in Philadelphia.

**Okwui Okpokwasili** is a Brooklyn-based writer, performer, and choreographer who creates multidisciplinary performance pieces that seek to shape and amplify the shared psychic space the audience and performer inhabit, and, through centering the African/African American feminine, to illuminate universal human conditions. Her productions, created in collaboration with acclaimed designer Peter Born, are highly experimental in form, bringing together elements of dance, theater, and the visual arts. Okpokwasili and Born's first New York production, *Pent-Up: A Revenge Dance*, premiered at Performance Space 122 and received a 2010 New York Dance and Performance Award (Bessie) for Outstanding Production. Their second collaboration, *Bronx Gothic*, premiered at Danspace Project as part of Performance Space 122's COIL festival, and won a 2014 Bessie Award for Outstanding Production, toured nationally and internationally, is the subject of a documentary film directed by Andrew Rossi and was recently performed at the Young Vic Theater in London in a month long run in 2019. Currently touring work includes *Poor People's TV Room*, premiered at New York Live Arts in 2017; *Adaku's Revolt*, 2019, premiered at Abrons Art Center and *Sitting on a Man's Head*, appeared at the 2018 Berlin Biennale

and at the 2019 CounterCurrent Festival in Houston, as well as at Danspace Project's Platform 2020: *Utterances From the Chorus*, which Okpokwasili co-curated. Okpokwasili frequently collaborates with award-winning director Ralph Lemon. She has appeared as an actor in many productions including works by Nora Chipaumire, Julie Taymor, Young Jean Lee, Richard Foreman and Richard Maxwell. Most recently, Okpokwasili performed as the Lady in Green at the Public Theater in *For Colored Girls Who Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf*. Film credits include *Her Composition*, *Knut Åsdam's Abyss*, *The Interpreter*, *The Hoax*, *I Am Legend*, and *Madeline's Madeline*. Okpokwasili is a 2018 MacArthur Fellow. She is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships, including a 2018 Doris Duke Artist Award, a 2018 Hodder Fellow at Princeton University, a 2018 United States Artist Fellowship, and a 2018 Herb Alpert Award. Her performance work has been commissioned by the Walker Art Center, Danspace Project, Performance Space New York, Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA, the 10th Annual Berlin Biennale, Jacob's Pillow, and New York Live Arts, where she was a Randjelovic/Stryker Resident Commissioned Artist. Her first album, *day pulls down the sky*, was produced by Danspace Project and released in February 2020.

Born and raised in Japan and a resident of New York since 1976, **Eiko Otake** is a movement-based, interdisciplinary artist. After working for more than 40 years as Eiko & Koma, in 2014 Eiko began performing her own solo project *A Body in Places*, which was also the title of her 2016 Platform. Since 2014, Eiko collaborated with photographer William Johnston on creating *A Body in Fukushima* that documents places of nuclear contamination. Eiko has presented both photo exhibitions and film screenings of *A Body in Fukushima* internationally at museums, art centers, and conferences on environmental disasters. In 2017, she launched a multi-year *Duet Project*, an open-ended series of cross-disciplinary, cross-cultural, and cross-generational experiments with a diverse range of artists both living and dead. In addition to creating her works in her Virtual Studio during the pandemic, Eiko performed live for audiences at the Greenwood Cemetery and in Tokyo. Eiko & Koma have been honored with a MacArthur Fellowship, the Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award, and the first Doris Duke Artist Award. For her solo work, Eiko has received a Bessie's Special Citation, an Art Matters fellowship, the Anonymous Was a Woman Award, and the Sam Miller Award for Performing Arts.

**Joan Jonas** is a world-renowned artist whose work encompasses a wide range of media including video, performance, installation, sound, text, and sculpture. Joan's experiments and productions in the

late 1960's and early 1970's continue to be crucial to the development of many contemporary art genres, from performance and video to conceptual art and theatre. Since 1968, her practice has explored ways of seeing, the rhythms of rituals, and the authority of objects and gestures. Joan has exhibited, screened, and performed her work at museums, galleries, and in large scale group exhibitions throughout the world. She has recently presented solo exhibitions at Hangar Bicocca, Milan; NTU Centre for Contemporary Art, Singapore; the United States Pavilion for the 56th edition of the Venice Biennial; Tate Modern, London; TBA21 Ocean Space at the San Lorenzo Church, Venice; and Serralves Museum, Porto. In 2018, she was awarded the prestigious Kyoto Prize, presented to those who have contributed significantly to the scientific, cultural, and spiritual betterment of mankind.

**Reggie Wilson** founded Fist & Heel Performance Group, in 1989. Wilson draws from the cultures of Africans in the Americas and combines them with post-modern elements and his own personal movement style to create what he often calls "post-African/Neo-HooDoo Modern dances." His work has been presented nationally and internationally at venues such as Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York Live Arts, and Summerstage (NYC), Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (Lee, MA), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), UCLA Live, and Redcat (Los Angeles), VSA NM (New Mexico), Myrna Loy (Helena, MT), The Flynn (Burlington, VT), Contemporary Arts Center (New Orleans), Dance Umbrella (Austin, TX), Linkfest and Festival e'Nkundleni (Zimbabwe), Dance Factory (South Africa), Danças na Cidade (Portugal), Festival Kaay Fecc (Senegal), The Politics of Ecstasy, and Tanzkongress 2013 (Germany). Wilson is a graduate of New York University, Tisch School of the Arts (1988, Larry Rhodes, Chair). He has studied composition and been mentored by Phyllis Lamhut; Performed and toured with Ohad Naharin before forming Fist and Heel. He has lectured, taught and conducted workshops and community projects throughout the US, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. He has traveled extensively: to the Mississippi Delta to research secular and religious aspects of life there; to Trinidad and Tobago to research the Spiritual Baptists and the Shangoists; and also to Southern, Central, West and East Africa to work with dance/performance groups as well as diverse religious communities. He has served as visiting faculty at several universities including Yale, Princeton and Wesleyan. Mr. Wilson is the recipient of the Minnesota Dance Alliance's McKnight National Fellowship (2000-2001). Wilson is also a 2002 BESSIE-New York Dance and Performance Award recipient for his work *The Tie-tongued Goat and the Lightning Bug Who Tried to Put Her Foot Down* and a 2002 John Simon Guggenheim Fellow. He has been an artist advisor for the National Dance Project and Board Member of Dance Theater Workshop. In recognition of his creative contributions to the field, Mr. Wilson was named a 2009 United States Artists Prudential Fellow and is a 2009 recipient of the Herb Alpert Award in Dance. His evening-length work *The Good Dance-dakar/brooklyn* had its World premiere at the Walker Art Center and NY premiere on the Brooklyn Academy of Music's 2009 Next Wave Festival. In 2012, New York Live Arts presented a concert of selected Wilson works, *theRevisitation*, to critical acclaim and the same year he was named a Wesleyan

University's Creative Campus Fellow, received an inaugural Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, and received the 2012 Joyce Foundation Award for his successful work *Moses(es)* which premiered in 2013. His critically acclaimed work *CITIZEN*, premiered 2016 (FringeArts - World; BAM NextWave 2016 - NYC); both these works continue to tour. Wilson was curator of Danspace Project's *Dancing Platform Praying Grounds: Blackness, Churches, and Downtown Dance* (Platform 2018) and created the commissioned work *...they stood shaking while others began to shout*, specifically for the space at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery. Most recently, he curated *Grounds That Shout! (and others merely shaking)*, a series of performances in several Philadelphia historic sacred spaces. His newest work is titled *POWER*.

#### **About Platform 2021**

Platform 2021: *The Dream of the Audience* (May 15 - June 18, 2021), curated by Judy Hussie-Taylor, is a digital Platform featuring acclaimed artists and past Platform curators, each with longstanding relationships to Danspace Project: Ishmael Houston-Jones, Okwui Okpokwasili, Eiko Otake with Joan Jonas, and Reggie Wilson. Each of the artists are receiving residency time in St. Mark's Church and opportunities for live conversations. New short video works by the artists, created while in-residence at the church, will be screened during the Platform.

Each week of the Platform will feature:  
Monday Archives: Special Danspace archival footage released on the Online Journal, Issue 12.  
Friday Film Screenings: A new film premiere, filmed on site at Danspace Project. Film premieres on Zoom.

In two Conversations Without Walls, Lydia Bell and Kristin Juarez will activate these archives. The Journal will also include new written works by Writer-in-residence, Maura Nguyen Donohue.

Platform 2021 takes inspiration from a poem (see below)\* by the late Korean American artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, in which Cha addresses the audience "as a distant relative." "Although written in 1977, Cha's text resonates with our current condition," says Hussie-Taylor. "This Platform is an homage to audiences."

#### **\*Audience Distant Relative, Teresa Hak Kyung Cha (1977)**

you are the audience

you are my distant audience

i address you

as i would a distant relative

as if a distant relative

seen only heard only through someone else's

description

## Platform 2021 Schedule

**Saturday, May 15 at 7pm (ET):** Platform Launch with Ishmael Houston-Jones, Eiko Otake, Joan Jonas, Okwui Okpokwasili, and Reggie Wilson. Facilitated by Judy Hussie-Taylor.

**Monday, May 17:** On the Online Journal: Archival footage: Ishmael Houston-Jones and Miguel Gutierrez: *Variations on Themes from Lost and Found: Scenes from a Life and other works by John Bernd*

**Friday, May 21 at 5pm (ET):** Film Premiere: Ishmael Houston-Jones

**Monday, May 31:** On the Online Journal: Archival footage: Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born: *Sitting On a Man's Head*

**Friday, June 4 at 5pm (ET):** Film Premiere: Okwui Okpokwasili

**Monday, June 7:** On the Online Journal: Archival footage: Eiko Otake: *A Body in Places* & Joan Jonas' *Moving Off the Land*

**Monday, June 7 at 5pm (ET):** Conversations Without Walls: Revisiting Eiko Otake's *A Body in Places* and Ishmael Houston-Jones and Will Rawls' *Lost & Found* Platforms with Lydia Bell & Kristin Juarez

**Friday, June 11 at 5pm (ET):** Film Premiere: Eiko Otake & Joan Jonas

**Monday, June 14:** On the Online Journal: Archival footage: Reggie Wilson: *...they stood shaking while others began to shout*

**Monday, June 14 at 5pm (ET):** Conversations Without Walls: Revisiting Reggie Wilson's *Dancing Platform, Praying Grounds* and Okwui Okpokwasili's *Utterances From the Chorus* with Lydia Bell & Kristin Juarez

**Friday, June 18 at 5pm (ET):** Film Premiere: Reggie Wilson

RSVP at [danspaceproject.org](https://danspaceproject.org)!

## Funding for Platform 2021

Special thanks to the Howard Gilman Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts for their support for Danspace Project's 2021 Platform, and thank you to all our vital supporters.



## 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 over 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 570 new works since its inception in 1994.

## Land Acknowledgment

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.

## Site Acknowledgment

"Before we begin, let's take a moment to acknowledge that the construction of this building, Saint Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery, was completed in 1799. That same year, New York State enacted the Gradual Emancipation Act, so it is reasonable to assume that this building where we are when we stand, sit, dance, and some still worship, was built by en-slaved individuals on what was the homeland of the Lenape people." – Ishmael Houston-Jones (Read more at [danspaceproject.org/about](https://danspaceproject.org/about))

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# Danspace Project

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