# Danspace Project

Spring 2021

PLATFORM 2021:

The Dream of the Audience

# Danspace Project

# **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 1, so it is reasonable to assume that this building where we are when we stand, sit, dance, and some still worship, was built by enslaved individuals on what was the homeland of the Lenape people."

- Ishmael Houston-Jones

# **Danspace Project Presents**

# COME AND GO JUS' PIECE A' WAY

# A film by Reggie Wilson and Aitor Mendilibar

premiere & conversation

Friday, June 18, 2021 5pm (ET)

Part of PLATFORM 2021: *The Dream of the Audience* curated by Judy Hussie-Taylor

### COME AND GO JUS' PIECE A' WAY

A film by Reggie Wilson and Aitor Mendilibar Choreography: Reggie Wilson Cinematographer and Editor: Aitor Mendilibar All Movement Source Material provided by Performers of Fist and Heel Performance Group: Hadar Ahuvia. Rhetta Aleong, Paul Hamilton, Lawrence Harding, Michel Kouakou, Clement Mensah, Gabriela Silva, Annie Wang, Michelle Yard, Miles Yeung Cameraman: Lander Camarero Music: Fist and Heel Performance Group Vocalists: Rhetta Aleong, Thomeki Dube, Elaine Flowers, Lawrence Harding, Reggie Wilson Costume Approval given by: Naoko Nagata and Enver Chakartash Editing feedback given by: Raja Feather Kelly and Tamsir Sylla

Filmed at Danspace Project, St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, 2021. Commissioned and premiered by Danspace Project for Platform 2021: *The Dream of the Audience*.

Special thanks to the Howard Gilman Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts for their support of Platform 2021: *The Dream of the Audience*.

Many thanks to the St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery congregation and community.

Fist & Heel Performance Group is a Brooklyn-based dance company that investigates the intersections of cultural anthropology and movement practices and believes in the potential of the body as a valid means for knowing. Our performance work is a continued manifestation of the rhythm languages of the body provoked by the spiritual and the mundane traditions of Africa and its Diaspora, including the Blues. Slave and Gospel idioms. The group has received support from major foundations and corporations and has performed at notable venues in the United States and abroad.

Reggie Wilson (Executive and Artistic Director, Choreographer, Performer) 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 and workshops taught nationally and internationally at many venues. This list is a sample and by no means exhaustive: Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York Live Arts, Summerstage (NY), Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Summer Stages Dance @ ICA Boston (MA), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, UCLA Live, Redcat (CA), VSA NM (New Mexico), Myrna Loy (Helena, MT), The Flynn (Burlington, VT), Contemporary Arts Center (New Orleans), Dance Umbrella (Austin, TX). Linkfest. Festival e'Nkundleni (Zimbabwe), Dance Factory (South Africa), Dancas 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 the 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 UPENN, 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 eveninglength 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, the Revisitation, 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 *Mosess(es)* which premiered in 2013. His critically acclaimed work CITIZEN, premiered 2016 (FringeArts - World; BAM Next Wave 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. He curated Grounds That Shout! (and others merely shaking), a series of performances in Philadelphia's historic sacred spaces. Most recently he premiered *POWER* at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Aitor Mendilibar is a New York-based filmmaker and cinematographer. He is originally from Basque Country, where he received degrees in computer science, telecommunications and audiovisual production. In 2012, he moved to New York City (where he lived until 2020) to study documentary filmmaking at New York Film Academy. Since graduating, he has worked as a cinematographer for narrative films, documentaries, commercials, music videos, dance films, among other projects. His first feature film as a director of photography (*PROM* 

KING, 2010), won the New Vision Award at Cinequest Film Festival. He has worked with Oscar nominated director and producer Oren Jacoby and award winning choreographers Reggie Wilson, Raia Feather Kelly and Jonah Bokaer. Aitor also creates his own content and collaborates with artists across different genres. He has directed two narrative short films, LIMITS (2017) and IRTEN BARRURA (2020) and taken part in several notable film festivals. Among other awards, IRTEN BARRURA won the Best Director Award at Euskal Zine Bilera. He has filmed many commercials, the current noteworthy being for the UNITED NATIONS, STEVE MADDEN and JART SKATEBOARDS in the US and REAL SOCIEDAD, LABORAL KUTXA and EUSKALTEL in Basque Country. Aitor is currently directing his third short film, *HABANA GLASS* which is in production and to be released in 2021. He is also the co-founder and former bass player of the Basque punk rock band, Disorders, that played for 10 years and produced two studio albums. He is currently the bass player in the punk rock band which he co-founded in 2014, The Wilsons.

#### Contributors

Hadar Ahuvia (Performer) raised in Israel/ Palestine and the US, Ahuvia studied at Lines Ballet, the SF Conservatory of Dance and Sarah Lawrence College. She has worked with Sara Rudner, Jill Sigman, Donna Uchizono, Molly Poerstel, and Kathy Westwater, and has delighted in working with Fist & Heel since 2016. Ahuvia's work, deconstructing her Zionist cultural heritage, has been supported by Brooklyn Arts Council, DTW/NYLA, Movement Research, the 14th St. Y, CUNY Dance Initiative, EtM Choreographer + Composer Residency, Yaddo, and Baryshnikov Arts Center. She has presented her performative research at the 14th St Y, Art Stations Foundation, The James Gallery, Whitman College, and Danspace Project. Her work Everything you have is yours? earned her a Bessie nomination for Outstanding "Breakout" Choreographer.

Rhetta Aleong (Company administrator, performer) Her performance roots are grounded in community-theater, performance art, and a good Catholic allgirls high school in Trinidad and Tobago. She has a BFA in Journalism, with an art bent, from School of Visual Arts and is a 5th degree black belt. Rhetta began working with Mr. Wilson in '91 and began "wearing many hats" within Fist and Heel Performance Group. Creative Artists of special significance to Rhetta: Pat Akien, Michael Steele, Helen Camps, Noble Douglas (Trinidad), Anita Gonzalez, Ms. Hattie Gossett, Tiyé Giraud, Cynthia Oliver, and Lawrence Goldhuber. Respect to those before, after, above and below.

Paul Hamilton (Performer) is a Brooklyn based movement artist. He attended SUNY Purchase, where he trained with Kazuko Hirabayashi, Kevin Wynn and Neil Greenberg, and also studied at the Alvin Ailey school. He has performed with Elizabeth Streb, the Martha Graham Dance Ensemble, The Barnspace Dance, Mauri Cramer Dancers, Ballet Arts Theatre, Ralph Lemon(Bessie nominee Scaffold Room), Deborah Hay, David Thomson, Headlong Dance Theater,

David Gordon's The Matter 2019, Melinda Ring, Oren Barnoy, and The Museum of Modern Art, recreating Bruce Nauman's *Wall/Floor Positions*. He is a member of Reggie Wilson/Fist and Performance Group, Keely Garfield Dance, and Jane Comfort and Company.

**Lawrence A.W. Harding (Performer) was** born in Sierra Leone and now practices Physical Therapy in New York. He is the Director of Fitness at The Axis Project, a multidisciplinary center that serves people with physical disabilities and empowers them to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle. He is also the developer and President of Spinal Mobility, a novel manual technique that enables clinicians to improve their rehabilitative interventions for people with Spinal Cord Injury and other Neurological diseases. He has been a member of Fist and Heel since 1993 and continues to delight in discovering himself in Reggie's work. He gives continued thanks to Remi, D.Z. Martha. Samuel and all the dead ones. Big love to the 'rents and the family.

Michel Kouakou (Performer) is a choreographer and dancer from the Ivory Coast. He is the founder and director of Daara Dance. Michel received his MFA in Dance from Hollins University. He is the recipient of the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Dance (2012), a Jerome Foundation Fellowship for research in dance (2012), winner of a New York Foundation of the Arts Artist Fellowship (2008), and winner of the U.S. Japan Fellowship (2008) to conduct six months of research in Tokyo and Kyoto. In 2008 he was nominated for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative and in 2010

and was a finalist in The A.W.A.R.D. Show in New York City and Los Angeles. Mr. Kouakou moved to New York in 2004 and subsequently to Los Angeles, where he is now based and has been a lecturer at UCLA since 2009. He maintains an active touring and teaching schedule across the globe and continues to pursues his longterm goal of building an "artistic bridge" between his origins in the Ivory Coast and the US. Michel kouakou's company has moved to Minnesota due to a new job position at the University of Minnesota where he was an assistant professor in dance at the Barbara Darker Center for Dance for two years.

Clement Mensah (Performer) is also a choreographer and an educator. He is a third culture kid who was born and raised in Ghana, West Africa. After living and going to school in the Netherlands, U.S. and the U.K., where he did postgraduate degree at Trinity Laban conservatory, Mr. Mensah is humbled to have performed, taught and traveled with many dance companies to at least forty-nine countries. Mr. Mensah found Off the Radar creative project in 2015 to educate the young generation. Mr. Mensah joined Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance group in 2012.

Gabriela Silva (Company Logistics Coordinator, Performer) is a freelance Brazilian-American performer and choreographer based in New York City. She studied dance at the OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center, Boston Art Academy and University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Gabriela has performed with Selmadanse, Jean Appolon Expressions, Danza Organica, **Quicksilver** Dance and independent choreographers Peter DiMuro, Emily Beattie and Marina Magalhães. She has also worked as teaching artist for the Kroc Center, Community Art Center, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción. Boston Ballet, Boston Public Libraries and Boston Public Schools. In 2014, she co-founded Costasis Arts Collective with Terina-Jasmine Alladin to support collaborations between local artists of color and community partners and presenters in an effort to diversify and expand arts engagement in Boston. She and Alladin presented their collaborative works, "I've picked and I've picked and I've picked; let fall" and "Oyá and Mari Jiwe" at RAW Boston, EMW Bookstore, Green Street Studios, Dance Complex and Aeronaut Brewing Company. That same year. Gabriela was selected to participate in a creative residency at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston with choreographer Reggie Wilson. The following year, she was named an Associate Artist at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, where she began her first independent choreographic project inspired by her on-going studies of Afro-Brazilian culture, under the tutelage of Reggie Wilson. Most recently, Gabriela trained, taught and presented her work at Saravyet Ramallah in Palestine.

Annie Wang (Performer) trained at the Martha Graham School and the Boitsov School of Classical Ballet. She has had the pleasure of dancing for Carrie Ellmore-Tallitsch, Parijat Desai, Nicole Stanton, Pia Vinson, Asako Miyahira, Boitsov Classical Ballet Company, Dance Elixir, and MADart Productions. She has presented choreography at the 92Y,

BRIC, Brooklyn Studios for Dance, Five Myles Art and Performance Space, the WestFest Dance Festival, Triskelion Arts, Hot Wood Arts Gallery, Sky Gallery, and The Chocolate Factory Theater. Annie is a BRIClab 2016 resident artist, a 2015 Associate Artist at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and a 2014 artist-in-residence at the Marble House Project in Vermont. She was a 2017-2018 Brooklyn Arts Council grantee to develop *Marigram*, an international collaborative work inspired by mass protests.

Michelle Yard (Performer) was born in Brooklyn, New York. She began her professional dance training at Fiorello H. Laguardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. While in high school, she also studied at The Ailey School as a scholarship student. Michelle, graduated with a B.F.A in dance from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Ms. Yard was a longtime member of the Mark Morris Dance Group. Ms. Yard is a certified pilates instructor and teaches in New York City. Michelle is thrilled to be dancing with Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group. Mom, thank vou!

Miles Yeung (Performer) is originally from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Miles has been dancing since the age of 10 before relocating to Philadelphia, PA to continue his training at the University of the Arts. Here, he completed his BFA in Modern Performance with honors and was awarded for Excellence in Modern Performance. His performance credits include Brian Sander's *JUNK*, Stacey Tookey's *Still Motion*, Helen Simoneau Danse, La Biennale di Venezia's

Arsenale della Danza, and the New York production of the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. Miles recently completed his MFA in Dance through the University of the Arts and is currently based in Philadelphia, PA.

Naoko Nagata (Costumer Designer) started her career as a biochemist in Japan. Her evolution into costume making is a long story. With literally no formal training, she has been creating for a diverse group of choreographers and dancers non-stop since 1998. She has collaborated with David Thomson, Ralph Lemon, Reggie Wilson, Vicky Shick, Kyle Abraham for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Bebe Miller, David Dorfman, David Neumann, Doug Elkins, Gina Gibney, Jimena Paz, Liz Lerman, Nora Chipaumire, Urban Bush Women, Zvi Gotheiner and many, many others. Working closely with collaborators, Naoko helps bring to life what she herself calls, "the creation of a shared dream." She enjoys studying Alexander Technique with June Ekman. Working with Enver on this project has been truly "being in Heaven on earth."

Enver Chakartash (Costume Designer) is a New York based costume designer and wardrobe stylist. He has designed costumes for; Tony Oursler, The Wooster Group, Young Jean Lee, and Half Straddle. Enver began collaborating with Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group in 2016. Since then, he has designed costumes for CITIZEN and consulted on costumes for ...they stood shaking while others began to shout. Working with Naoko on this project has been one of the most rewarding

experiences of his life.

#### Fist & Heel Board

Ann-Marie Joseph (President), Rhetta Aleong, Carol Bryce-Buchanan, Joshua Sirefman, Jesse Wolfson, Reggie Wilson.

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### **Special Thanks**

GOD: Ancestors: Ira Sutton Ewing: Lois J. Wilson, A'ntie C, A'nt Jean, A'nt Wilma, Uncle Rev., Uncle Von, Uncle George, Aba, Abba, Saba, David Wilson, Jr., Elaine Flowers, Phyllis Lamhut, Jesse Wolfson, Sam Miller, Deb Thomas, Adrian, Nick, Merrit and the Fish Chasers, Kristina Zabala and Maia Mendilibar Zabala, Judy and the Danspace Project team and St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, Fist and Heel Board of Directors, members of the Advisory Council, the performers past and present for their time on this project, their commitment over the years, prioritizing and sacrificing and their relentless talent.

#### 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-inresidence, Maura Nguyen Donohue.

Platform 2021 takes inspiration from a poem 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

# **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.





#### 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: Ishmael Houston-Jones and Miguel Gutierrez: *Variations on Themes from Lost and Found...* 

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

Monday, May 31: On the Online Journal: 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: 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: 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 Owkui 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!

Journal Issue #12: The Dream of the Audience
visit danspaceproject.org/journal

# **Mission & History**

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.

Danspace Project's Choreographic Center Without Walls (CW²) provides context for audiences and increased support for artists. Our public programs (including Danspace Presents, Platforms, Food for Thought, DraftWork), Commissioning Initiative, residencies, guest artist curators, and contextualizing activities and materials are core components of CW² offering a responsive framework for artists' works. Since 2010, we have produced twelve Platforms, published thriteen print catalogues and five e-books, launched the Conversations Without Walls discussion series, and explored models for public discourse and residencies.

# **Follow Us**

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# **Danspace Project's Online Journal**

Ongoing with new posts weekly!

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### Thanks to our Funders

Danspace Project's 2020-2021 Commissioning Initiative and Residency Program receives generous support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The New York State Council on the Arts, as well as the generous individuals that support the Creation Fund.

Danspace Project's 2020-2021 season, including the DraftWork and Conversations Without Walls series, is presented, in part, with public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. Danspace Project programs are made possible in part through **public funds** from the National Endowment for the Arts: the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; the NYS DanceForce, a partnership program of the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council; and Materials for the Arts (a joint program of the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs and the Department of Sanitation).

Danspace Project extends special thanks to City Council Majority Leader and Cultural Affairs Committee Chair Jimmy Van Bramer, City Council Speaker Corey Johnson, New York State Senator Brad Hoylman, and State Assembly Member Deborah J. Glick for their advocacy and support.

Danspace Project gratefully acknowledges the private support of Anonymous; The Joseph and Joan Cullman Foundation for the Arts: Barbara Bell Cumming Foundation; Cultural Services of the French Embassy; Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation: Doris Duke Charitable Foundation: FUSED (French U.S. Exchange in Dance), a program developed by FACE Foundation and the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the United States with support from the Florence Gould Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Institut français- Paris, the French Ministry of Culture

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Danspace Project is also appreciative of the support of individuals, including donors, Members at every level, and its 2020-2021 Leadership Circle, which includes Carol Bryce-Buchanan; Barbara Castelli; Terry Creach; Valleio Gantner: Allyson Green: Gary Hattem & Frazier Holloway; Dorothy Lichtenstein; Glenn Ligon; Ellen & George Needham; Derek Sands: Martha Sherman: Christina Sterner: Lena Stringari; and David and Monica Zwirner.

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# **Danspace Project Gratefully Acknowledges the Following Individuals**

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