



Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born

- adaku, part 1: the road opens

Theater

MAY 25 - 27, 2023

8:30 PM

PRESENTED BY

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney

CalArts Theater

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California Institute of the Arts

We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandefño, and Ventureño; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born

• adaku, part 1: the road opens

Conceived and Written by OKWUI OKPOKWASILI

Directed by PETER BORN, OKWUI OKPOKWASILI

Performed by MAYFIELD BROOKS, MCKENZIE FRYE, AUDREY HAILES, SAMITA SINHA,
STACY LYNN SMITH, AJ WILMORE, OKWUI OKPOKWASILI

Music by OKWUI OKPOKWASILI, PETER BORN

Choreography Conceived by OKWUI OKPOKWASILI, PETER BORN in collaboration with the cast
Set/Lighting/Video Design: PETER BORN

Sound Design: PETER BORN, WILL JOHNSON

Production Manager and Technical Director: MICHAELANGELO DESERIO

Costume Co-Design and Fabrication: JAMES GIBBEL

Dramaturg: KATHERINE PROFETA

REDCAT Technical Director: BILL BALLOU

Associate TD, Sound and Video: PETE PACE

Associate TD, Lighting: CHU-HSUAN CHANG

Audio Engineer: OLIVIA POPEJOY

Audio Assistant: JOSHUA HILL

QLab: SCOTT GARNER

Lighting Board Operator: CHRISTA TROESTER

Deck: JERREL MILAN

Wardrobe: BRITTANY WHITE

Special thanks to John Andress, Julie Streeter, Maggie Moore, Shane Silverstein and ICA Boston; T. Lax, Stuart Comer, Ana Janevski, Kate Scherer, Gee Wesley, Aminah Ibrahim, Kayva Yang, Paul DiPietro and the Museum of Modern Art; Emil Kang, Emily Waters and the Mellon Foundation; Pam Tatge and Jacob's Pillow; Weeksville Heritage Center; Lili Chopra and Crossing the Line Festival at French Institute Alliance Française; Melanie Kress, Constanza Valenzuela, and The High Line; Barbara Bryan and Movement Research; Niegel Smith, Martin Meccouri, and the Flea Theater; Maurine Knighton, Lillian Osei-Boateng, and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; Edgar Miramontes, Rolando Rodriguez, Bill Ballou, Chu-Hsuan Chang, Pete Pace and REDCAT; Joseph Silovsky and Silovsky Studios; Ryan Kasle and Kasle Customs; Jen, Nima and Pia Brogle; Omer Leibovitz; Christopher Brown; Mitchell Leitschuh; Chaesong Kim; Orestis Tsonopoulos; Anaís Maviel; Bernice Brooks; Brittany Engel-Adams; NIC Kay; Kathy Halbreich; Elisa Holland; Jill Medvedow; Katie Dixon; Adrienne Almeida; Ed Oliver; Neva Oliver; Saidiya Hartman; Tina Camp; Simone Leigh; Ralph Lemon; John Born; Jessica Wasilewski; Marc Warren; Gregory Picard; Shawn Tavares; Avery Willis Hoffman; Lauren DiGiulio; Kearra Amaya Gopee; Richard Colton; Sunil Bald and special thanks to Umechi Born.

adaku, part 1: the road opens was commissioned by the Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston and co-commissioned by the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

adaku, part 1: the road opens was developed in a Studio Residency at The Museum of Modern Art, as part of the Hyundai Card Performance Series, and a 2023 Summer Stages Dance @ ICA/Boston residency. Summer Stages Dance @ ICA/Boston is made possible, in part, with the support of Jane Karol and Howard Cooper, George and Ann Colony, David Parker, The Aliad Fund, and Stephanie and Leander McCormick-Goodhart. adaku, part 1: the road opens was also developed during a residency at the Brown Arts Institute at Brown University and a residency at the Mercury Store in Brooklyn, NY.

This REDCAT production is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.



Runtime: Approx. 75 minutes, no intermission

ABOUT THE WORK

In this chapter of a larger speculative mythology, a precolonial African village is at the cusp of a major upheaval. The community is entangled in an argument that could shape the future of all of their lives. This collective reckoning explores the fraught relationship between ancestors, future generations, and the role of ritual. A sonic and visual landscape of reflective textures, contouring shadows, and thrumming facilitates an intimate exchange between performers and the audience.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Okwui Okpokwasili is a Brooklyn-based performer, choreographer, and writer creating multidisciplinary performance pieces. The child of immigrants from Nigeria, Okpokwasili was born and raised in the Bronx, and the histories of these places and the girls and women who inhabit them feature prominently in much of her work. Her highly experimental productions include “Bessie” Award winning *Pent-Up: A Revenge Dance*, “Bessie” Award winning *Bronx Gothic*, *Poor People’s TV Room*, *When I Return Who Will Receive Me*, and *Adaku’s Revolt*. Recent works include installations in the exhibitions: “Grief and Grievance, Art and Mourning in America” at the New Museum, “Witchhunt” at The Hammer Museum in LA, and “Sex Ecologies” at Kunsthall Trondheim in Norway. Commissions include the performance *On the way, undone* at the Highline in New York City and at Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn as part of FIAF’s Crossing the Line Festival, the film *Returning* for Danspace Project, and the site-specific performance *Swallow the Moon* at Jacob’s Pillow. She has worked with film and theater directors: Carrie Mae Weems, Ralph Lemon, Arthur Jafa, Terence Nance, Josephine Decker, Mika Rottenberg, Mahyad Tousi, Charlotte Brathwaite, Jim Findlay, Annie Dorsen and Peter Born.

Okpokwasili’s residencies and awards include The French American Cultural Exchange (2006-2007); Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography Choreographic Fellowship (2012); Baryshnikov Arts Center Artist-in-Residence (2013); New York Live Arts Studio Series (2013); Under Construction at the Park Avenue Armory (2013); New York Foundation for the Arts’ Fellowship in Choreography (2013); Lower Manhattan Cultural Council’s Extended Life Program (2014-17, 2019-20); ICPP at Wesleyan

(2015), The Foundation for Contemporary Arts' artist grant in dance (2014); BRIClab (2015); Columbia University (2015), the Rauschenberg Residency (2015), the Mellon Creative Futures Fellowship at Carolina Performing Arts, UNC-Chapel Hill (2018-2021). Okpokwasili was the 2015-2017 Randjelovic/Stryker New York Live Arts Resident Commissioned Artist (RCA.) She was a 2018 Princeton University Hodder Fellow, a 2018 Herb Alpert Awardee in Dance, an Antonyo Awardee, a 2018 Doris Duke Artist Awardee, and a 2018 MacArthur Fellow. She was the inaugural artist for the Kravis Studio Residency program at MOMA in 2022.

Peter Born works as a director, composer and designer of performance and installation, often in collaboration with Okwui Okpokwasili, with whom he has created the installation *repose without rest without end* in Trondheim (2021), *Swallow the Moon* at Jacob's Pillow (2021), *on the way, undone* at the High Line (2021), *Poor People's TV Room (SOLO) installation* at the New Museum and the Hammer Museum (2021), *Sitting on a Man's Head* (2019) at Danspace Project, *Adaku's Revolt* (2019) at Abrons Arts Center, *At the Anterior Edge* (2018) with the Barnard Dance Department, *Poor People's TV Room* (2017), *when I return, who will receive me* (2016), *Bronx Gothic (The Oval)* (2014), *Bronx Gothic* (2013) and *pent-up: a revenge dance* (2009), as well as an album they produced together "day pulls down the sky" (2019). Their work has also appeared in the Berlin Biennale and at the Tate Museum, London. He has collaborated with David Thomson as a director, designer and writer on *The Venus Knot* (2017) and *he his own mythical beast* (2018), and as a set designer for Nora Chipaumire's *rite/riot* (2014) and *El Capitan Kinglady* (2016). His work *Poor People's TV Room (SOLO)*, created in collaboration with Okwui Okpokwasili, is in the collections of the Hammer Museum and the Whitney Museum. Four of Peter's collaborations have garnered New York Dance Performance "Bessie" Awards. His work as an art director and prop stylist has been featured in video and photo projects with Vogue, Estee Lauder, Barney's Co-op, Bloomingdales, Old Navy, 25 magazine, The Wall Street Journal and No Strings Puppet Productions. He is a former New York public high school teacher, itinerant floral designer, corporate actor-facilitator, video maker and furniture designer.

mayfield brooks improvises while black and is based in Lenapehoking, the unceded land of the Lenape people, also known as Brooklyn, New York. brooks is a movement-based performance artist, vocalist, urban farmer, writer, and wanderer. brooks teaches and performs practices that arise from Improvising While Black (IWB), their interdisciplinary dance methodology which explores the decomposed matter of Black life and engages in dance improvisation, disorientation, dissent, and ancestral healing. brooks is the 2021 recipient of the biennial Merce Cunningham Award from the Foundation for Contemporary Arts, a 2021 Bessie/New York Dance and Performance Award nominee for their dance film, *Whale Fall*, and a 2022 Danspace Project Platform artist. They are currently a Hodder Fellow at Princeton University. To learn more about their work go to improvingwhileblack.com.

McKenzie Frye is a multidisciplinary performing artist, songwriter, and choreographer from Detroit, MI. She is also a Howard University graduate with a B.F.A. in Musical Theatre. Frye's Broadway credits include the 2022 revival of *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*. Her Off Broadway and Regional credits include: *The Bluest Eye* (Huntington Theatre), *Syncing Ink* (Alley Theatre/The Flea), *Wig Out!* (Vineyard Theatre), *Harriet's Return* starring Debbie Allen (Kennedy Center), *Dreamgirls* (Arkansas Rep), *River Deep* (Peter Jay Sharp Theater), *Damn Yankees* (The Black Rep). Film & TV credits include: *wishing...*, *The Stronger, My Brother* and *Law & Order*. @mckenziefrye

Stacy Lynn Smith is a neurodivergent, mixed race/Black performance artist, choreographer, director and Green Circle Keeper at Hidden Water (by and for those affected by CSA). Smith has collaborated with an array of talented artists such as: DeForrest Brown Jr., Anna Homler, Karen Bernard, Thaddeus O'Neil, Vangelina Theater (2008-2017), Michael Freeman (2010-2016), Saints of an Unnamed Country, Salome Asega, GENG, Bradley Bailey, Michele Beck, Jasmine Hearn, mayfield brooks, thinkdance, Kathy Westwater, Josephine Decker, Emily Johnson and more. Member of jill sigman's artist/activist cohort, Body Politic. Selected by Eva Yaa Asantewaa as part of the curatorial board for Black Womxn Summit. Psychic Wormhole (their research platform) reckons with the devastations of trauma and its relationship to memory and the body through the development of their abstract memoir, RECKONING, a film being created in collaboration with Alex Romania. Smith is a 2022-2024 Movement Research Artist-in-Residence.

AJ Wilmore is a Philadelphia based, interdisciplinary artist working with sound, voice and movement to question language and propose foolishness while contending with identity and visibility. Making love to her fears is the engine driving her creative practice and her work spans the terrain of her tongue while investigating the quality, degree and stakes of her social and sexual life.

Audrey Elaine Hailes (she/we) is a dance-theatre artist based up and down the Eastern Seaboard. She currently works with Maria Bauman as the associate artistic director of MBDance and is a producing fellow with Urban Bush Women's Choreographic Center Initiative. They have had the privilege of performative and collaborative relationships with Paloma McGregor, Ebony Golden, Nina Angela Mercer, Okwui Okpokwasili, Ani Taj and others. Audrey has served as movement consultant for institutions such as New York University Abu Dhabi, The Kennedy Center and Atlantic Theatre Co. Our own choreography has been commissioned by Gibney Dance, Dance Theatre Etc, Movement Research, BAAD! and New York Live Arts. We are always grateful to be able to tell stories that honor ancestors and reflect the bright black future.

Samita Sinha is an artist, composer, and educator who works with the material of the body and sound, voice and vibration to make multidisciplinary performance works. She embraces the profound precolonial root of the Indian vocal traditions she has studied while releasing their rigidities to create a liberatory language and performative poetics of the voice and body that is emergent, contemporary, and ancient.

She has received commissions from Asia Society, Performance Space, Danspace, Rubin Museum, Gibney Dance, and Western Front, and awards from National Endowment of the Arts, Fulbright Foundation, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, National Performance Network, and New York State Council on the Arts. In recent years Sinha has taught embodied sound at Dartmouth College, Princeton University, Swarthmore College, and Movement Research.

James Gibbel makes clothing for performing artists. Their work has been worn on performers at Art Basel Miami, the Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival, REDCAT, the Boston Lyric Opera, as well as basements and the mall. James is based in Brooklyn and is on the web at jamesgibbel.fyi

Michaelangelo DeSerio is very happy to work with Okwui and Peter again. He has worked with both them on various projects for the last seven years and as a company member for the last five. Hailing

from Brooklyn but based in Malmö, Sweden, Michaelangelo is a multi-disciplinary technical theater artist, father and adventurer actively working in dance and theater both Stateside and in Europe. He has been fortunate enough to collaborate with many amazing companies including Judith Malina's The Living Theatre, Early Morning Opera, Meg Wolfe Dance, The New Wild, Theatre Three Collaborative and Irondale Ensemble Project. Currently, he serves as the Master Electrician at Skanes Dansteater in Malmö.

Will Johnson is a multimedia artist and composer from New York City. Themes from his work include the black radical tradition, phantom archives and the latent poetics of digital signal processing. He is the recipient of the Jerome Foundation Fellowship for Sound Art/Composition and the McKnight Foundation's Fellowship for Musicians. His commercial work includes licensed sound and original composition for Acura, GAP, Beats Electronics, HBO and vocal contributions to 2016 Grammy-winning best electronic album Skin. Live performances by Johnson have been commissioned by Lincoln Center, the Kitchen, 92Y and Mass MoCA. He is currently a doctoral candidate and researcher at Brown University.

Sweat Variant describes the collaborative practice of Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born. We are partners in our work and our lives. Since 1996, we have been working at the intersection of dance, theater, and visual art to make challenging and rigorous work that explores the many meanings entangled in the bodies of Black women.

We are interested in building a spectacle of radical intimacy, where both performers and audience are acknowledged as being locked in a mutual gaze. We build gestural vocabularies and narrative frameworks that are concerned with the problem of memory in the inherent instability of the construction of a persona.

We hope to activate a space that allows the audience to question who they are looking at and how they are looking. We hope this creates a critical space of wonderment, of uncertainty, and of mystery. It is in this space that we believe we can see each other anew.

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

inti figgis-vizueta: *Music for Transitions*

June 3

inti figgis-vizueta writes magically real music through the lens of personal identities, braiding a childhood of overlapping immigrant communities and Black-founded Freedom schools—in Chocolate City (DC)—with direct Andean and Irish heritage and a deep connection to the land. In *Music for Transitions*, she is joined by collaborators to present new arrangements of previously remote works and a new co-composed piece for mixed ensemble. Her music has been described as “the sounds of nature with what I imagined as the soundtrack of a dream.” (*Blogcritics Magazine*)



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