



# MOVEMENT OF THE PEOPLE DANCE COMPANY

Joya Powell, *Artistic Director/Choreographer*

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# About the Company



Founded in 2005 by Joya T. Powell, **Movement of the People Dance Company** is dedicated to unearthing historic and present sociocultural issues and addressing them through the healing elements of dance. Primarily a Dance Theater company, their choreography blends dynamic Contemporary Dance with traditional world folk dances, and develops a sensitive balance of pedestrian gestural phrases with grounded visceral movements that use breath and musicality at its core. The company is comprised of dancers from diverse multicultural backgrounds and international experiences. Over the years MOPDC has performed in various celebrated dance festivals and venues including: Lincoln Center, The Performance Project @ University Settlement (AIR 2012-2013), Amnesty International's Human Rights Art Festival (Maryland), SummerStage, York University (Toronto, ON), Casita Maria (AIR 2015), FLICfest (AIR 2015-2016), Riverside Theatre, Huntington Arts Festival (Long Island), Dance New Amsterdam, The FLEA Theater, BAAD!, Hammerstein Ballroom, Dixon Place, The TANK, Evoke's Celebrate Dance Festival (San Diego), Triskelion Arts Theater, WOWcafe, White Wave's John Ryan Theater, The Wild Project, Suffolk Community College, and the Children's Museum in Brooklyn. Site-specific performances have included: Dance on the Greenway (commission), The Southern Vermont Dance Festival, White Wave's DUMBO Dance Festival, FIGMENT Arts Festival, ChEck Us OuT Dance Festival and The Outlet Dance Project at the Grounds for Sculpture (Hamilton, NJ). MOPDC is dedicated to connecting cultures through dance, composing socially conscious choreography, exploring the similarities and nuances of traditional world dances, and finding ways for underserved communities to empower themselves through dance.



# Artistic Director/Choreographer

## Joya T. Powell

A native New Yorker, Joya T. Powell received her M.A. in Dance Education from New York University, and her B.A. in Latin American Studies and Creative Writing from Columbia University. Throughout her career she has danced with choreographers such as Neta Pulvermacher, Jacquelyn Buglisi, Katiti King, Donlin Foreman, Paco Gomes, Marcia Daiter, Marsha Parrilla and Megan Minturn. Her choreography has been performed at venues such as: SummerStage, Lincoln Center, York University in Toronto, Casita Maria (AIR 2015), FLICfest (AIR 2015-2016), The Performance Project @ University Settlement (AIR 2012-2013), Amnesty International's Human Rights Art Festival in Maryland, The Southern Vermont Dance Festival, The FLEA Theater, BAAD!, Dixon Place, The Riverside Theatre, The Casa del Prado Theatre in San Diego, Schwab Auditorium in Pennsylvania, Hammerstein Ballroom, Triskelion Arts Theater, Chapin Rainbow Stage, White Wave's John Ryan Theater, The Lion Theatre, The Wild Project, Suffolk Community College, and the Children's Museum in Brooklyn. Site-specific performances have included: Dance on the Greenway (commission), White Wave's DUMBO Dance Festival, FIGMENT Arts Festival, ChEck Us OuT Dance Festival, and The Outlet Dance Project at the Grounds for Sculpture in New Jersey. She has also choreographed such Off-Broadway plays as: the critically acclaimed

*JOB* by Thomas Bradshaw (The FLEA Theater), *True Bible Tales* by Robert Askins (E. 14<sup>th</sup> St. Y – The Jewish Plays Project), *The Brothers Size* by Tarell Avlin McCraney (Luna Stage, NJ), *Are You Not Entertained?* by Dennis A. Allen II, *The Minstrel Show* by Amina Henry (13<sup>th</sup> St. Theatre), *Ducklings* by Amina Henry (The National Black Theater), *Oud Player on the Tel* by Tom Block (E. 14<sup>th</sup> St. Y – The Jewish Plays Project), and *Gilgamesh and The Mosquito* by Sam Chanse and Bob Kelly (47<sup>th</sup> St. Theater). She has also been a Guest Artist at Penn State (commission), Hobart Williams-Smith Colleges, Columbia University Teachers College, Kean University, Queens College and Brooklyn College. She has presented at such national and international conferences as: The American College Dance Festival, The National Dance Education Organization (2008, 2012-2015), Society of Dance History Scholars, New York State Dance Education Association, Critically Kinaesthetic: Performing Bodies of Political Engagement in Toronto, and O Encontro Tribo Joven in Brazil. Ms. Powell lived in Salvador Bahia, Brazil, for four years where she worked and studied dance with the first Afro-Brazilian Carnival group Ilê Aiyê. She has taught and studied internationally in Brazil, Puerto Rico and Cuba. She is currently an Adjunct Lecturer of Dance at SUNY Old Westbury. Ms. Powell also is a part of the Artistic Resource Group for The FLEA Theater and is the choreographic collaborator of Table Theater.





# Highlights:

## NYC Metro Area / National / International

### **2016**

FLICfest, Brooklyn

### **2015**

The Atrium at Lincoln Center, New York

Casita Maria, The Bronx

University Settlement, New York

The Winter Garden, New York

The Southern Vermont Dance Festival, Vermont

### **2014**

Dance on the Greenway, New York

York University, Toronto

City College, New York

National Black Theatre, New York

Dixon Place, New York

### **2013**

Dixon Place, New York

City College, New York

Grounds for Sculpture, New Jersey

University Settlement, New York

Hammerstein Ballroom, New York

BAX: Brooklyn Arts Exchange, Brooklyn

### **2012**

Suffolk Community College, Long Island

Grounds for Sculpture, New Jersey

Chapin Rainbow Stage, Long Island

The Flea Theater, New York

FIGMENT Arts Festival, Governor's Island

### **2011**

The Wild Project, New York

John Ryan Theatre, Brooklyn

Grounds for Sculpture, New Jersey

Suffolk Community College, Long Island

Chapin Rainbow Stage, Long Island

### **2010**

Amnesty International Human Rights Arts Festival, Maryland

BAAD!, The Bronx

Webster Hall, New York

Triskelion Arts, Brooklyn

### **2009**

Movement Research, New York

Triskelion Arts, Brooklyn

WOW Cafe, New York

### **2008**

Riverside Church Theatre, New York

Casa del Prado Theater, San Diego

Dance Theater Workshop, New York

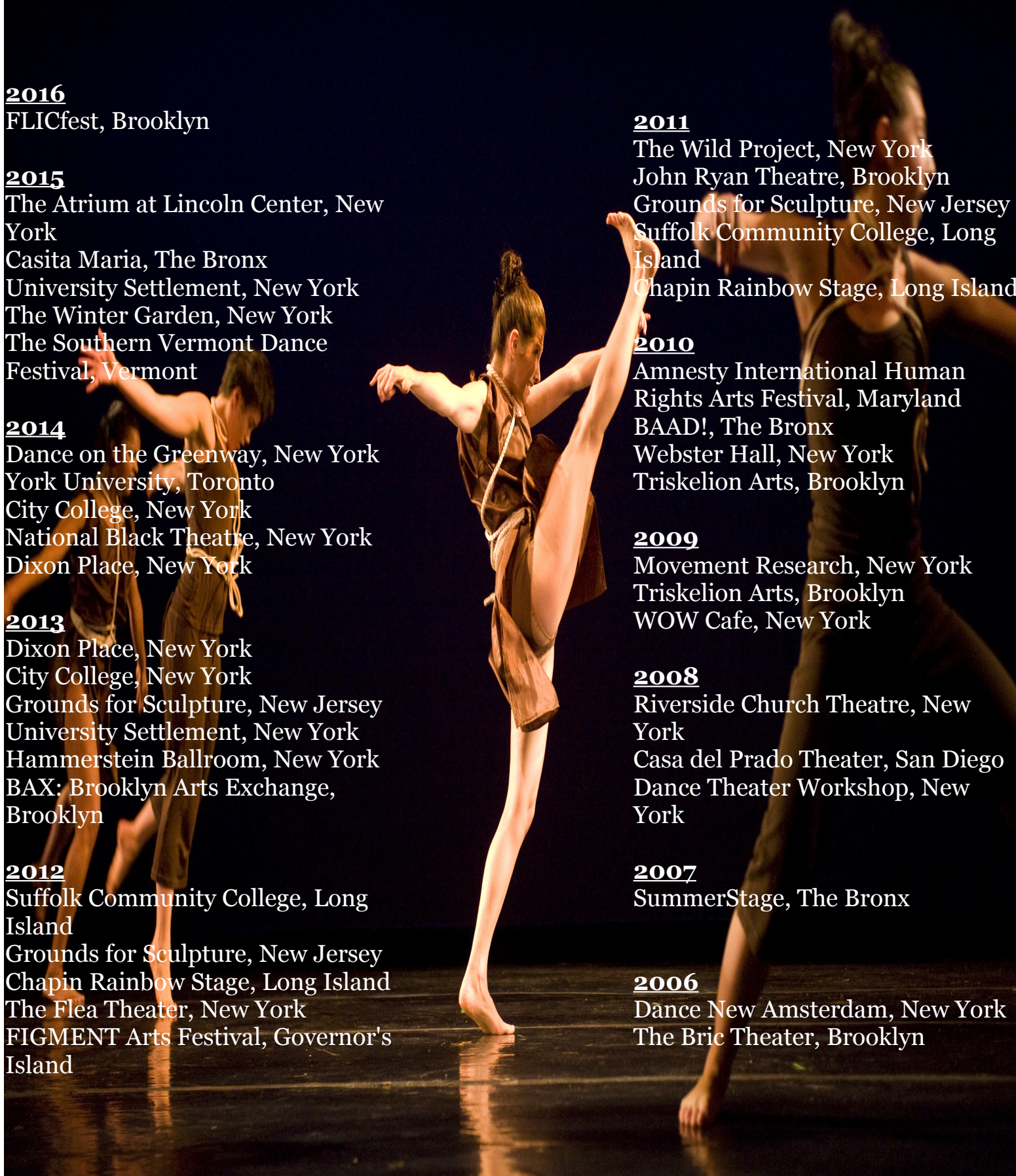
### **2007**

SummerStage, The Bronx

### **2006**

Dance New Amsterdam, New York

The Bric Theater, Brooklyn





# Commissions + Residencies + Teaching + Conferences

## Commissions

2014

Dance on the Greenway / Dance Theatre Etcetera

Penn State University / Ambitions Dance Company

## Residencies

2016

FLICfest

2015

Casita Maria

2012-2013

The Performance Project @ University Settlement



## Teaching

New York University

Barnard College

Columbia University Teacher's College

Penn State

SUNY Old Westbury\*

Stony Brook University\*\*

Hobart Williams-Smith Colleges

Queens College

Kean University

\*Adjunct Lecturer of Dance, Joya Powell

\*\*Adjunct Lecturer of Dance 2008-2015, Joya Powell

## Conferences/Workshops

National Dance Education Organization: 2008, 2012-2015

NYCDOE: Professional Development Day for Dance

Teachers

Festival of the Moving Body: 2012, 2014

Critically Kinaesthetic: Performing Bodies of Political Engagement

American College Dance Festival

Society of Dance History Scholars

Left Forum

New York State Dance Education Association 2007 + 2016

World Learning School for International Training

Encontros dos Tribos Jovens

MOPDC's Winter Intensive: Dance, Choreograph, Envision





# Current Repertory

## ***Song and Dance You (2016)***

9 Dancers, 1 Musician, RT: 50min

Music: original score by Zoë Aqua, Adele, Carolina Chocolate Drops, Kendrick Lamar, St. Germain, Nicki Minaj, Soho, Louie Vega

Wordsmith: Amina Henry

Premiere: The Irondale Center



*Song and Dance You* is a provocative, no holds barred multidisciplinary evening length performance in collaboration with musician Zoë Aqua, Playwright Amina Henry, and MOPDC's SADY workshop participants. The choreography balances comedy and tragedy, makes parallels with Minstrelsy and our modern society, and looks to answer the question: what will it take for Black Lives to Matter to all people? Based in Contemporary Dance Theater the movements fluctuate between Contemporary Dance, Traditional Jazz, and House. MOPDC also provides SADY choreography workshops that explores the Black Lives Matter Movement in relationship to the history of racism in the United States, and includes movement phrases and gestures created in these workshops within our choreography.

## ***Her Veiled Reflections (2013)***

8 Dancers, 3 Musicians, 1 Singer, RT: 70min; also performed as excerpts 8-20min

Music: improvised live accompaniment and original scores by Thea Little and Whitney George

Premiere: University Settlement Speyer Hall



*Her Veiled Reflections* is MOPDC's first evening length performance created during their Artist-in-Residence at The Performance Project @ University Settlement. This choreography explores the secrets women keep and carry. It investigates how secrets shape the ways women move through their lives, view themselves and each other. The piece is a dynamic dialogue between movement, live music, video, and anonymous contributors who have dared to share their secrets in writing. Women unite and empower each other across culture, class, religion, and age. It shows how secrets can be transformed from what keeps us separate into what keeps us connected. MOPDC also provides Reflections Workshops for women in the communities of our presenting venues as a means to involve them in our creative process, give back to communities at large, and include their voices in our choreography.

## ***Alma Liberada (2011-2015)***

8-11 Dancers, 3 Musicians, 1 Singer, RT: 40min; also performed as excerpts 5-20min

Music: Traditional songs from the Afro-Brazilian religion Candomblé, Sergio Mendes, Filhos de Jorge, Conexão Negra, Tony Mola, Ilê Aiyê, Erminia Apolinario

Premiere: Chapin Rainbow Stage, Heckscher Park, LI



Made up of four sections: *Solte Sua Samba*, *Beleza Bahia*, *Natureza Viva!*, and an excerpt of *Aconteceu*. This bouquet of choreography represents traditional community building dances of Brazil, including: Dances of the Orixás, Samba Afro, Samba de Roda, Pagode/Samba, and Contemporary Dance Theater. These colorful pieces express the Afro-Brazilian experience through folkloric and interpretive choreography. This vibrant work in engages the audience with moments of learning Portuguese phrases, and songs that include both movement and vocal call and response.



### ***Movimento do Povo (1999 - 2014)***

6 Dancers, RT: 18min, also performed as excerpts 7-8min

Music: Nana Vasconcelos

Section 1 & 2 Premiere: Minor Latham Theater

Section 3 Premiere: York University, Toronto



*Movimento do Povo* depicts the effects of the Portuguese conquistadors, Catholicism and slavery had on Brazil. It is a fusion of Contemporary Dance Theater, Afro-Brazilian dance, Capoeira and Dances of the Orixás. Section 1: Efeitos da Conquista/Effects of Conquest (quintet) – shows the dual effect colonialism had on both the indigenous people of Brazil and the colonizers; section 2: Veneno do Catolicismo/Venom of Catholicism (solo) – explores the struggles of the Indigenous people of Brazil to keep their traditions alive; section 3: Quebrando as Correntes/Breaking the Chains (quartet) – follows the plight of runaway enslaved Africans trying to find the safety of the quilombos. The choreography uses percussive movements juxtaposed by a corporal melodic line that seamlessly shows the importance of faith and religion in the perseverance of the African Diaspora in Brazil.

### ***Paint the town red Hook (2014)***

6 Dancers, Site-Specific, RT: 15min, may also be performed on stage

Music: Nico Muhly

Premiere: Dance on the Greenway (commission)



*Paint the town red Hook* is a collaborative compilation of diverse stories that are rooted in the research and history we uncovered about the populations that call Red Hook home. It is inspired by strong familiar bonds, struggles, separation, magnetism, and the carefree nature of what it means to be home. This Contemporary Dance piece weaves in and out of personal reflections of life within these various communities, from longshoremen, to project housing, and it's current reconfiguration due to gentrification. Commissioned by Dance Theatre Etc., *Paint the town red Hook*, was created as a site-specific piece to be seen 360° around based on the site chosen and used the trees of the site as additional characters rather than obstacles. The choreography also includes various folk and popular dances from the aforementioned communities. This piece spans a century of life in Red Hook Brooklyn.

Choreography was made possible in part by a Harkness Space Grant from the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Center. This work was originally commissioned by Dance Theatre Etcetera for its 2014 Dance on the Greenway performance.

### ***(For) Those We Left Behind (2010)***

5 Dancers, 1 Musician, Site-Specific, RT: 12min

Music: Live Accompaniment

Premiere: White Wave's DUMBO Dance Festival in Brooklyn Bridge Pier 1



This Contemporary Folk Dance fusion is an exploration of families who fought for the opportunity to immigrate to the US, and in turn settled in Brooklyn. The story is told through the haunting imagery and voices of family members stuck in their native lands. The choreography delves into the recognition of our vulnerability, a surrender of our desire to control events, and concept of morphing transformation. Live musical accompaniment by violinist Sean Devare, who's musical artistry has composed a new work inspired by Klezmer and Gypsy Folk music.



### ***Las Madres (2005)***

7 Dancers, RT: 15min, also performed as an excerpt 7min

Music: Astor Piazzolla

Premiere: The Frederick Lowe Theater



*Las Madres* is a modern dance/Tango influenced composition based on the history of the sociopolitical organization of Las Madres de la Plaza de Mayo: a group of women whose family members had “disappeared” during the Military Dictatorship in Argentina. These women took action by protesting in the Plaza de Mayo against the governments' cruelty, and who have since continue to bring justice and humanity to Argentina. This piece addresses the perils of a military regime and the strength of unity.

### ***Aconteceu/It Happened (2012)***

11-23 Dancers, RT: 25min

Music: Siri, Gilberto Gil, Naná Vasconcelos

Premiere: Stony Brook University, Performance Dance Ensemble @ The Center for Dance, Movement and Somatic Learning



*Aconteceu/It Happened* is a dance exploration of the tragic events surrounding the 1993 Candelária Massacre in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The Candelária Massacre occurred when police opened fire on a makeshift community of homeless street children, resulting in the death of 8 young people, the wounding of many others, and the intensification of class inequality in Brazil. This is their story which has fueled our plight. Told through the form and function of a Greek Tragedy, this Contemporary Dance Theater choreography includes Afro-Brazilian dances including Dances of the Orixás, Capoeira, and Samba.

### ***Understand Your Ground – Trilogy (2012-2014)***

13 Dancers, RT: 16:16min; also performed as excerpts 7min

I. *Taste the Rainbow* (2012) – quintet – Premiere: ChEck Us OuT Dance Festival in Central Park

II. *Knock, Knock? Who's Scared* (2013) – duet – Premiere: The Outlet Dance Project @ Grounds for Sculpture in NJ

III. *A Trial of Your Fears* (2014) – full cast – Premiere: Stony Brook University

Music: Break of Reality arranged by Dylan Glatthorn



*Understand Your Ground* is inspired by the Trayvon Martin case, which addresses racial stereotypes and prejudices found throughout our American society. The multicultural cast weaves in and out of emotions stemming from the case, including movement representations of the viral reactions people have included on the internet, and look to find humanity in our humanity. The trilogy follows the initial reaction to the murder of Trayvon Martin, the trial proceedings of the case, and the outrage that followed the courts' decision. Both *Taste the Rainbow* and *knock, knock? who's scared* were originally created as site-specific pieces. Choreography blends Contemporary Dance Theater with Hip Hop undertones for an aggressive yet contemplative piece.



# The Company

## Candace Tabbs ASSISTANT CHOREOGRAPHER/DANCER



A native of White Plains, New York, Candace began her dance training at The Masters School and continued her study at summer programs with Steps on Broadway. Before joining the professional dance community, Candace majored in Neuroscience and minored in Dance at Barnard College in New York. At Barnard, Candace performed in modern and contemporary works choreographed by esteemed artists such as Nora Chipaumire (“bismillah”), Brian Brooks (“Relay”) and Gwen Welliver (“A Sheet of Pictures”). Additionally, while at Barnard, Candace created and performed works with CoLab Performing Arts Collective. Recently, Candace had the pleasure of performing as an Amalgamate Dance Company guest artist in Aubrey A. Strickland’s “Letters From New York” and as ensemble in Poetic License Presents “Underground: Vignettes from a Manhattan Bound Train.” Candace is also a dancer and workshop facilitator at Dances for a Variable Population, and is a certified Personal Trainer.

## Tyrone Bevans DANCER



A native New Yorker, Tyrone began his dance training at the Mark Morris Dance Group and Martha Graham School for Contemporary Dance. While attending these institutions he studied techniques such as Horton, Graham, Limon, Dunham and Ballet. He later broke out into new styles while study at Broadway Dance center. Since then he has added House, Waccking, Vogue and other Hip Hop styles to his movement vocabulary. Recently, Tyrone had the pleasure of performing as an Amalgamate Dance Company guest artist in Alana Marie Urda’s *Gestures*. In the past Tyrone has performed for choreographers and artist such as Funkanometry Dance Company, Enforced Arch Dance Company, Sons of Kick, Neil Schwartz, and Ricky Hinds. Prior to his professional dance career, Tyrone majored in communication arts at The Pratt Institute. In his free time he enjoys creating textiles and knitwear.

## Jenny Efremova DANCER



Jenny Efremova is from Russia, and moved to Sweden when she was ten years old. She has a B.A. in Dance Theater and Production from Edna Manley College of Visual and Performing Arts, Kingston, Jamaica, and completed her studies at the University of Ghana. She has studied and researched the Fon, Ewe and Yoruba traditional and ritual dances in Jamaica, Cuba, Ghana, Togo, Benin and Nigeria. Her studies focus on the retention and the fusion of these traditions both in the Americas and in West Africa. In New York Jenny has worked with Kotchegna Dance Company, Mamachee International Dance Company, Oyu Oro Experimental Dance Ensemble, Balasole Dance Company, Azul Dance Theatre and has presented her own work with Expressions Dance Company. Jenny is also a Teaching Artist with Urban Arts Partnership.

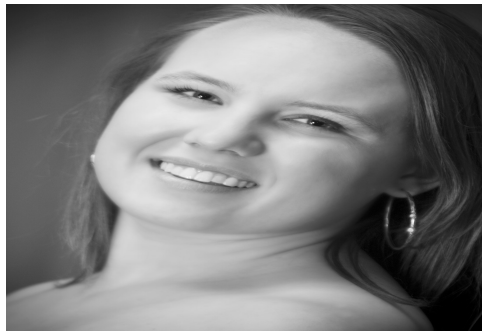
## Samantha Garvin DANCER



Samantha Garvin grew up in beautiful western Washington and came to New York to attend Barnard College. There she majored in Environmental Science, minored in Dance, and graduated in 2012. Sam has studied many forms of dance including: Graham, Taylor, ballet, Sengalese Djembe dance, Ivorian dance, Afro-Cuban, Cabaret Bellydance, Argentine tango, and Lindy Hop, and she has performed works by Vado Diomande, Donlin Foreman, Larry Keigwin, Jacqlyn Buglisi, Leandro Silva, and Keomi Tarver. Sam is also a member of Kotchegna Dance Company, and when she’s not dancing, she works at the International Research Institute for Climate and Society as a research assistant. She has had the joy of working with MOPDC since *Her Veiled Reflections* in 2013. Sam is dedicated to using dance and movement as a tool for expression and storytelling, and is excited to continue dancing for social justice.



## Megan Minturn DANCER



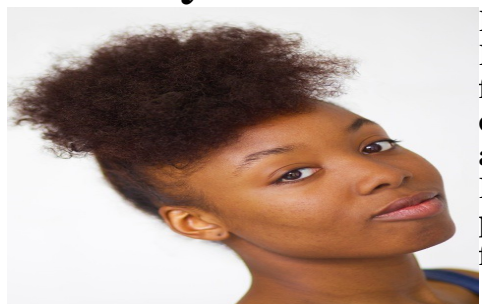
Megan Minturn, HYI, RYT loves sharing her passion for movement with students of all ages. She received her B.A. in Philosophy, African and French Studies from Fordham University and her MA in Dance Education from New York University. Megan has studied in Senegal, West Africa, and Havana, Cuba. She also worked with the non-profit Fonkoze in Haiti. Aside from teaching yoga, Megan has worked with the ARTery and Charles Ahovissi's African Culture Connection. She has previously worked as a Teaching Artist for Notes in Motion and Dance Theatre of Harlem. She currently teaches at Brooklyn International High School and The School at Peridance. Her dance company MJM Dance has performed at venues such as BAAD! and Dixon Place.

## Belinda A. Sáenz DANCER



Belinda A. Sáenz is Adjunct Faculty and Assistant Director of Kaleidoscope Dancers at NYU Steinhardt's Dance Education program. At NYU, Belinda earned an MA in Dance Education with Institute Honors as recipient of The Western Scholarship and served as Administration Assistant, Teaching Assistant, NDEO-NYU Student Chapter Co-chair, and faculty for the Summer Dance Intensive 2014. Belinda is native of the El Paso-Juárez border area where she earned a Master of Education as Instructional Specialist and a BFA (Magna Cum Laude) in Music Theatre and Dance from the University of Texas at El Paso. She has also studied, taught, and/or performed in Mexico, England, Eastern and Central Europe. She is currently performing professionally with Calpulli Mexican Dance Company and Movement of the People Dance Company and has collaborated with El Paso Opera, and Theatre Arts Center/NY. She has performed works by Martie Barylick, Sean Curran, Deborah Damast, Diane Duggan, Kim Elliott, among others.

## Brittany Grier APPRENTICE



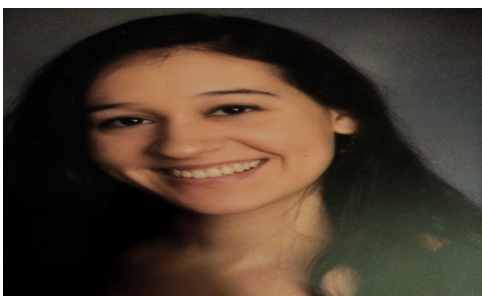
Born and raised in Brooklyn, Brittany Grier began her formal dance training at Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Dance Theater. After attending Lehman College for her B.A. in dance, she was invited as a guest choreographer for their production of *In The Heights*. Performance credits include Lincoln Center, Danspace Project at St. Marks, Dance Africa at B.A.M., Dance New Amsterdam as well as Dixon Place. A member of Ase Dance Theater Collective under Adia Whitaker, she is also part Movement of the People Dance Company under Joya Powell. She is grateful for the opportunities to be part of community through dance.

## Jhia Jackson APPRENTICE



Jhia Jackson is a Bay Area native and earned a B.A. from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles in Dance, Sociology, and Ethics. She has also earned a M.S from Columbia University in Bioethics. As a dance educator, performer, and choreographer, she has had the privilege of working in diverse styles and with a variety of people, including those with chronic pain illnesses, LGBT populations, and those with a disability. Some of her performance credits include Keshet Chaim Dance Ensemble, Push Dance SF, and Project Tremolo.

## Rachel Moore APPRENTICE



Rachel Moore was born but not raised in New York City. She trained at the Princeton Ballet School until returning to New York to attend Barnard College, where she graduated in 2013. She has studied ballet, Horton, Taylor, Salsa, and Djembe Dances from Senegal, Ivory Coast, and Guinea. She has trained with and performed works by Ilana Suprun, Sabrina Pillars, Karla Wolfangle, Vado Diomande, and Maguette Camara. Rachel is also a member of the Kotchegna Dance Company, and tutors Math and Spanish when she is not dancing. Rachel is excited to work with MOPDC to blend her passions for dance, education, and social justice.



# Residency + Educational Outreach

Movement of the People Dance Company provides dynamic holistic workshops, classes, performances, assemblies and lectures to diverse populations with a clear understanding of the power of kinesthetic artistic expression. Over the years we have facilitated residencies at universities and cultural organizations, we have worked in homeless shelters, with children in foster care, with adults with mental illness, in impoverished communities in Brazil, and public schools throughout NYC with a long standing relationship in the South Bronx. Our performances and residencies are versatile for various locations and venues. We have built partnerships with organizations such as: Flushing Town Hall, The Bubble Foundation Ltd., Casita Maria, City Harvest and University Settlement. We have also presented at such conferences as: National Dance Education Organization, American College Dance Festival, Society of Dance History Scholars, and The Festival of the Moving Body. MOPDC also facilitates an annual community Free Day of Dance open to all levels.



**Master Classes/Workshops** – Joya Powell and MOPDC Company Members are interested in the holistic experience of everyone who participates in our Master Classes and Workshops. We offer training for teens and adults of all levels of dance experience. Our Master Classes and Workshops are rooted in utilizing technique as a means for self expression, our connection to the earth/being grounded, accentuating and defying rhythm, momentum, improvisation and creating community. Master Classes/Workshops offered in: Afro-Brazilian Dance (Samba, Dances of the Orixás, Samba Afro), Contemporary Dance, Afro-Modern, Simonson Jazz, Socially Conscious Dance Theater, Afro-Cuban Contemporary, Mexican Folkloric, Afro-Contemporary Floorwork, Socially Conscious Choreography, Improvisation, Site-Specific Choreography and Composition.

**Lecture Demonstrations** – MOPDC's lecture demonstrations are audience centered discussions based on present and historical sociocultural issues and or the creative process that have been the foundation for our company repertory. Discourse may include live performance excerpts of company repertory, video, slideshow, or short movement explorations lead by company members.

**Reflections Workshops (Community Engagement)** – An integral part of MOPDC's evening length repertory piece *Her Veiled Reflections* is to provide community workshops for women as a way to stimulate movement material and allow for diverse voices to be integrated in our global choreography. Connect deeply with your center and other women from around the world through warm-ups, meditation and improvisational movement exercises. Investigate how the secrets women keep shape the way we feel in our bodies and the ways we move through our lives. Connect with the power that comes from collectively and creatively sharing our truths about being 21st Century women. Workshops catered to teens and adults. Movement gestures and phrases explored in our Reflections Workshops are incorporated in our performance choreography.

**Weekend Winter Intensive** – MOPDC's weekend Winter Intensive is an annual intensive that offers intermediate/advanced dancers the opportunity to explore and connect with various dances of the African Diaspora, tools for creating socially conscious choreography, and experiential insight as to ways in which Dances of the African Diaspora are incorporated in Contemporary Dance Theater. The intensive includes: 8 Master Classes, Choreography Lab and a Studio Showing. Past Guest Artists have included: Nia Love, Jennifer Archibald, Katiti King, Maguette Camara, Sekou Heru, Dandha da Hora and Benny Simon.



# PRESS

"Protesting isn't the only way to show support for Trayvon Benjamin Martin... Movement of the People Dance Company have another way to highlight the injustices brought against the slain teenager: performance... The dance troupe has continued to take their act on the road to inspire, encourage, and inform those about Trayvon Martin's shooting...and the action we need to take to prevent it from happening again."

– **Global Grind Staff, The Global Grind**

"These horrors, punctuated by lively ritualistic dances on both heaven and earth (choreographed by Joya Powell), are given unflinching and unwinking life by the Bats, the Flea's company of young resident actors."

– **Ben Brantley, The New York Times**

"*Love Against The Rocks*, choreographed by Joya Powell/Movement of the People Dance Company offered the percussive sound and undulating movement of the islands with heavy ritual connotations."

– **Elisa Kimble, BWW Dance World**

"While 'The Brothers Size' here and there looks to the mythic at the expense of the dramatic... in a production that's very often exciting. Sure, you can see its power onstage. But better than that, you can feel it in your bones."

– **Ken Jaworowski, The New York Times**

"Choreography by Joya Powell lends grandiosity and verisimilitude to family events and humor to those angelic."

– **Alix Cohen, Woman Around Town**

"In Movement of the People Dance Company's *30 Going on HAG*, Joya Powell explores feminine norms and the glorification of marriage. The dance features four wedding-dress clad women with arms bound by the sleeves of their outfits. In one striking moment, the women — gagged by bridal veils, which earlier they flaunted — confront the audience with terror."

– **Theo Boguszewski, The Dance Enthusiast**

"Joya Powell's fashions a thought-provoking piece examining society's preoccupation with women who defy expectations in *30 Going on Hag*. A quartet of females, attired in lacy white frocks and bridal veils, begin with their arms wrapped around their bodies, a literal straight jacket. Hunching against the traditional roles adopted by women of a certain age — marriage, children, and stable job — the foursome rebels. They smack their chest, curl on the floor, and find comfort in their friendships, as they lean against each other to the haunting strains of Purcell's "Dido and Aenas." Ultimately, they chart their own path, removing their wedding dresses and spitting out their veils, united in their rejection of other-imposed values."

– **Erin Bomboy, FitEngine**



# STUDIO TALK

**Conversations  
on Dance  
Education**  
ADVICE  
SOLUTIONS  
SUCCESSSES

A SUPPLEMENT TO DANCE & DanceTeacher<sup>®</sup>

“Her Veiled Reflections” by Ashley Rivers, *Dance Magazine* & *Dance Teacher Magazine*, 2015

MAGAZINE  
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magazine



Educators Marilyn Berrett, Bill Evans and Joya Powell each recently developed a dance work in collaboration with students and/or community populations. Here is an account of the three very unique projects that resulted.

# Her Veiled Reflections

JOYA POWELL

Movement of the People Dance Company, New York, NY

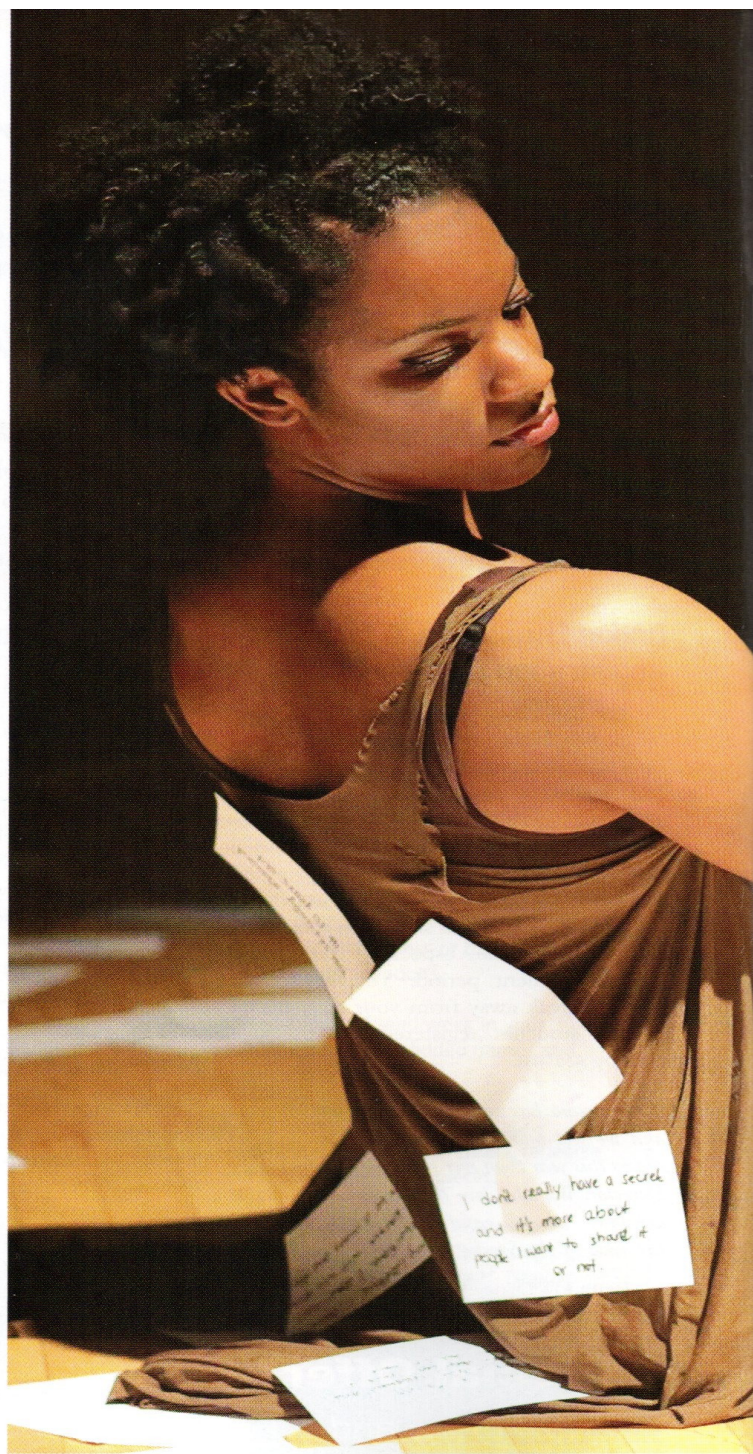
A lone dancer lies on a dimly lit stage, covered in index cards. On each card is written a secret—a confession that a woman somewhere in the world has, until now, hidden. Slowly, the dancer rolls to emerge from the secrets, several index cards still clinging to her body. This is a scene from *Her Veiled Reflections*, conceived by Joya Powell as 2012–2013 artist-in-residence at The Performance Project at University Settlement in New York City.

The work drew inspiration from an online survey that Powell conducted, in which she invited friends all over the world to share their secrets. They in turn told their friends, until Powell had collected almost 200 responses. “There were a lot of secrets about body image and women’s perceptions of themselves,” says Megan Minturn, a dancer with Powell’s Movement of the People Dance Company. “And a range from really powerful things like abuse or abortion, to others that seemed silly, like, ‘I secretly like Britney Spears.’ I saw in all of them that desire to divulge.”

“What I gravitated toward was how women all over the world are having similar experiences,” says Powell. “No matter how old we are, what race or religion, there are recurring themes. The experience of being a woman in this day and age is very universal.”

Powell and her company used the secrets as foundation material for the solos and group work that form *Her Veiled Reflections*. She was so taken with the movement responses to the secrets that she opened the process to the community through free workshops for dancers and nondancers alike. “It was really incredible to see how the community members who didn’t have a lot of formal dance training really embraced the idea of moving and exploring their experiences through their bodies,” says Minturn.

In the sessions, each woman wrote one of her own secrets on an index card and placed it anonymously in a box. After



a basic warm-up, Powell led a guided improvisation. At first, prompts were simple: Think about how the secret makes you feel, then explore that feeling with simple movements and gestures. Then, imagine a part of your body where the secret resides, and hold that part still, as if stuck. See how it affects the rest of your movement.

“I ended up creating movements I hadn’t before,” says Minturn. “Maybe one part of my body was stuck to the floor

Photo by Steven Schreiber, courtesy of Movement of the People Dance Company





"No matter how old we are, what race or religion, there are recurring themes. The experience of being a woman in this day and age is very universal."  
—Joya Powell

Pictured, dancer Candace Tabbs

and I moved around it. I was finding almost contortions, some twisting, floor work I hadn't done before."

*Her Veiled Reflections* premiered in 2013, performed by Movement of the People Dance Company. The final piece drew heavily from the community workshops—both the secrets and the movement phrases that came from them. The company even used the actual index cards. "We wore the secrets, and part of the choreography was shedding

those secrets, releasing them to the world," Powell says. "In one section of the piece we also started reading them aloud as a cacophony, peeling them off each other. It was an intense experience on so many different levels."

"It was a reminder of how personal choreography can be and of its power to address social issues," says Minturn. Powell adds, "It's an amazing thing to get outside voices within your own process." —Ashley Rivers





## Digging in Deep with JOYA POWELL/MOVEMENT of the People Dance Company

By [Caryn Cooper](#) | Published Friday, Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The Annual FLICfest, founded and curated by Jeramy Zimmerman and now in its sixth year, gave six choreographers an opportunity to present feature-length independent works at the Irondale Center, located in the heart of Brooklyn's Downtown Arts District. The work featured the world premiere of the piece *Song and Dance You* with choreography by Joya Powell and the members of the Movement of the People [Dance Company](#) -- Jenny Efremova, Brittany Grier, Jhia Jackson, Megan Minturn, [Rachel Moore](#), Leah Moriarty, [James Murray](#), Belinda Saenz, and Candace Tabbs -- along with live music by violinist Zoe Aqua and text by Amina Henry. Through the dissection of the sociocultural and sociopolitical constraints of our nation's racial divide, this piece seeks to answer the question "What does it take for Black Lives to actually matter in the eyes of all Americans?"

The choreography incorporated contemporary dance theater with the fusion of jazz vernacular movements from the ring shout to vaudeville to house dance in addition to some Capoeira drawing from Ms. Powell's dance training and background in Brazil. I appreciated the dancers' use of not only the entire space of the stage, but also the balcony and the audience. I loved the partner and group work in the choreography, especially the parts of unison.

The dancers, dressed in all white suits, came out in "white face" as a spin off the old Minstrel shows of the 1800s where white people would wear "black face" makeup while playing the role of black people. Through dance, singing, and spoken word the dancers led the audience on an emotional journey as they sought the answer to the question asked throughout the piece, "What will it take to make you see me?"

The commitment the dancers had for their characters was exceptional! I felt so many emotions including frustration and sadness. I also felt happiness from my laughter and from hearing the wonderful singing by Ms. Saenz, who has a lovely voice.

I especially liked the audience participation throughout the piece. The dancers included the audience in their acting. Toward the end, the dancers had members of the audience wash off their "white face" makeup as they transitioned into the next section. In the end, we were all invited to join the dancers on stage for the Electric Slide. Even I found myself on the stage! But, my favorite part was probably when Ms. Powell, the choreographer, who was sitting in the audience the whole time, got up, did an interlude, and joined the dancers for the finale.

Our country has a long history of using our differences to separate us based on our race, age, gender, sexual orientation, and/or socioeconomic status. I find it frustrating that as a society, many people define us by our differences. I think Joya beautifully displayed her frustrations with tensions of both past and present race relations, forcing us to dig deep within ourselves and really think about the answer to the question: "What will it take for Black Lives to matter to all people?"





## Bellies and Hornpipes

By [Barbarella](#) | Published Wednesday, Aug. 20, 2008

“All dance is interpretive,” says Joya Powell, artistic director for the Ayoj Llewop Body Politic dance company. “It’s trying to portray something in an open way so that everyone can pretty much get something from what they’re seeing.” Powell classifies her style of dance as modern and says her New York–based group is “dedicated to unearthing historic and present sociopolitical issues that plague the world we live in through the healing elements of dance.” The method by which they do this is to choose an event from the past or present and create movement to convey the scenes.

One piece called Las Madres is based on the Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo, a group of female protestors of the military regime in 1970s Argentina. “My goal as choreographer is to make sure that as much of the historical information as possible is accurately portrayed,” says Powell. Music and costumes are relevant to the location and time of the event. At that time in Argentina, military personnel were known for destroying photos of citizens they took into custody. “As if that person didn’t exist,” says Powell. The military also kept people from congregating in groups larger than two. “Las Madres would parade around the plaza as a protest, carrying photos and posters of their missing loved ones.” To involve her dancers emotionally in the choreography, Powell asked them to carry photos of their own deceased loved ones while performing the piece.

At the festival, Powell’s group will perform two works. One, called *Breathless*, was inspired by last year’s succession of 50 to 60 “noose incidents” — from Louisiana to New York, anonymous intimidators left nooses in bags and lockers and on the doorknobs of their African-American neighbors. The dance, which begins without music so the audience hears only the sound of struggled breathing, was created to demonstrate how racial tension is due to a lack of education and should not be blamed on individuals.

“It’s a duet,” explains Powell. “It’s about looking at yourself. We can place blame on everyone else, but we need to actually look at ourselves as a nation and say, ‘What is it that we have not done, and what is it that we can do?’ And if we don’t do anything, we’re pretty much hanging ourselves.”

# Theater Credits / Theater Choreography by Joya Powell

*JOB* by Thomas Bradshaw @ The Flea Theater, Directed by Benjamin Kamine

*True Bible Tales* by Robert Askins @ E. 14<sup>th</sup> St. Y Theater / OPEN: Festival of New Jewish Theater, Directed by Benjamin Kamine

*The Brothers Size* by Tarell Alvin McCraney @ Luna Stage, Directed by Christopher Burris

*Oud Player on the Tel* by Tom Block @ E. 14<sup>th</sup> St. Y Theater / OPEN: Festival of New Jewish Theater, Directed by David Winitzsky

*Ducklings* by Amina Henry @ The National Black Theatre, Directed by Christopher Burris

*Gilgamesh and the Mosquito*, words by Sam Chanse, music by Bob Kelly @ Theater Now's: Sound Bites @ 47<sup>th</sup> St. Playhouse, Directed by Kel Haney

*Ducklings* by Amina Henry @ Shelter Studios, Directed by Christopher Burris

*The Salt Makers* by Amina Henry @ Dixon Place, Directed by Benjamin Kamine

*Happily Ever* by Amina Henry @ New Workshop Theater at Brooklyn College, Directed by Benjamin Kamine

*Are You Not Entertained* by Dennis A. Allen II, *The Minstrel Show* by Amina Henry @ East 13<sup>th</sup> St Theater / Bring A Weasel and A Pint of Your Own Blood Festival, Directed by Benjamin Kamine and Christopher Burris

*The Dance Class* by Jonathan Caren @ The Lion Theater / Keen Company Keen Kids, Directed by Kel Haney

The Shakes! Romeo and Juliet, Act I, by Shakespeare @ The Flea Theater, Directed by Kel Haney and Liz Carlson

*for colored girls/ who considered suicide when the rainbow's enuf* by Ntozake Shange @ Teachers College Theater / Columbia College Black Theatre Ensemble

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