

Advance Program Notes

Urban Bush Women
Hair and Other Stories
Saturday, April 28, 2018, 7:30 PM

These Advance Program Notes are provided online for our patrons who like to read about performances ahead of time. Printed programs will be provided to patrons at the performances. Programs are subject to change.

URBAN BUSH WOMEN

presents

Hair and Other Stories

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Program and casting subject to change

Recording or taking photographs during the performance is strictly prohibited.

Crafted from personal narratives from our communities, kitchens and living rooms, social media and YouTube, Hair and Other Stories debates the center of perceived American "values" and celebrates the persevering narrative of the African Diaspora. Hair and Other Stories explores disquieting perceptions of body image, race, gender identity, economic inequities, and what constitutes freedom, liberation, and release in our everyday struggles to rise to our Extra-ordinary Selves in extraordinary times.

This is the urgent dialogue of the 21st century.

Choreography: Chanon Judson and Samantha Speis in collaboration with the company

Stage Direction: Raelle Myrick-Hodges

Dramaturg: Jawole Willa Jo Zollar

The Company: Du'Bois A'Keen, Courtney J. Cook, Chanon Judson, Tendayi Kuumba, Stephanie Mas, and

Samantha Speis

Lighting Designer
Xavier Pierce

Costume Designer
DeeDee Gomes

Projections
Designer
Nicholas Hussong

Sound Design by Everett Asis Saunders Music Composed by The Illustrious Blacks (Manchildblack and Monstah Black)

Additional Music:

Own That Sh*t by Tendayi Kuumba and Greg Purnell, Break It Down by Tendayi Kuumba, and I Am Not Yours by Du'Bois A'Keen

The Issue of Colorism by Dr. Cheryl Grills, used with permission by Dr. Grills and D. Channsin Berry

Move B*tch by Michael L. Tyler, Craig Stephen Lawson, Jonathan H. Smith, Bobby Wardell Sandimanie Jr., Jeffrey Ray Grigsby, Lola Chantrelle Mitchell, Paul D. Beauregard, Ricky Dunigan, Sean Paul Joseph, Stephanie C. Martin, Jordan Michael Houston, and Jason Williams as sung by Ludacris is used with permission from Universal Music, Reservoir Media, and Ultra Music.

Original concept for HairStories (2001) by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and Elizabeth Herron

About Urban Bush Women

Urban Bush Women (UBW) burst onto the dance scene in 1984 with bold, innovative, demanding, and exciting works that bring under-told stories to life through the art and vision of its award-winning founder, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. The company weaves contemporary dance, music, and text with the history, culture, and spiritual traditions of the African Diaspora.

Under Zollar's artistic direction, Urban Bush Women performs regularly in New York City and tours nationally and internationally. The company has been commissioned by presenters nationwide and includes among its honors a Bessie Award, the Capezio Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance, a Black Theater Alliance Award, and two Doris Duke Awards for New Work from the American Dance Festival. In March 2010 UBW toured South America as part of DanceMotion USASM, a cultural diplomacy initiative spearheaded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Brooklyn Academy of Music. In recent years Zollar has been awarded the 2014 Southern Methodist University Meadows Prize, the 2015 *Dance Magazine* Award, and the 2016 Dance/USA Honors Award. In 2017 Zollar received a Bessie Award for Lifetime Achievement in Dance.

Off the concert stage, Urban Bush Women has developed an extensive community engagement program called BOLD (Builders, Organizers, and Leaders through Dance). UBW's BOLD program has a network of facilitators that travel nationally and internationally to conduct workshops that bring the histories of local communities forward through performance. UBW's largest community engagement project is its Summer Leadership Institute (SLI), established in 1997. This 10-day intensive training program serves as the foundation for all of the company's community engagement activities. Ultimately the SLI program connects dance professionals and community-based artists/activists in a learning experience to leverage the arts as a vehicle for civic engagement.

As an extension of UBW's mission and core values, UBW launched the Urban Bush Women Choreographic Center in January 2016. The center supports the development of women choreographers of color and other underheard voices.

About Jawole Willa Jo Zollar

After earning a bachelor's degree in dance from the University of Missouri at Kansas City, Jawole Willa Jo Zollar received an M.F.A. in dance from Florida State University. In 1984 Zollar founded Urban Bush Women (UBW) as a performance ensemble dedicated to exploring the use of cultural expression as a catalyst for social change. Zollar developed a unique approach to enable artists to strengthen effective involvement in cultural organizing and civic engagement, which evolved into UBW's acclaimed Summer Leadership Institute. She serves as director of the Summer Leadership Institute, founding artistic director and visioning partner of UBW, and currently holds the position of the Nancy Smith Fichter Professor of Dance and Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor at Florida State University.

Zollar's awards include the 2008 United States Artists Wynn fellowship, the 2009 fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial, the 2013 Arthur L. Johnson Memorial Award by Sphinx Music, and the 2013 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. She has received the Meadows Prize from Southern Methodist University (2014), *Dance Magazine* Award (2015), and the Dance/USA Honor and Black Theater Alliance awards (2016). In 2017 she received the Bessie Award for Lifetime Achievement in Dance.

Who's Who in the Company

AMINATA BALDE, performer

Aminata Balde makes her debut performance with Urban Bush Women. She is excited to celebrate this landmark in her two years of being on the Earth.

CHANON JUDSON, associate artistic director and performer

Chanon Judson began her relationship with Urban Bush Women in 2001. She has had the privilege of serving the company as rehearsal director and director for UB2, Urban Bush Women's performing apprentice ensemble, and now furthers her work with UBW as associate artistic director and co-coordinator of BOLD (Builders, Organizers, and Leaders through Dance). An avid arts educator, Judson has instructed for Ailey Arts in Education (director of AileyCamp in Missouri), BAM, Earl Mosley's Institute for the Arts, and is the founder of Cumbe's Dance Drum and Imagination Camp for Children as well as Family Arts Movement LLC, which offers creative movement and art-making for children. She gives thanks to her dad for his help on research for *Hair and Other Stories*.

COURTNEY J. COOK, performer

Courtney J. Cook is a Virginia native now residing in Brooklyn, New York. She began her formal dance training at the Virginia Governor's School for the Arts. She later attended and graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University, receiving a bachelor of fine arts in dance and choreography. In addition to being a company member with Urban Bush Women, she also performs in projects, working with astounding choreographers and artists of the community, such as Christian Von Howard, Jennifer Archibald, Brotherhood Dance, and the Indigo Artists Collective. She looks forward to continuing her journey in the arts and community organizing with Urban Bush Women.

DEEDEE GOMES, costume designer

DeeDee Gomes is a self-taught fashion and fiber artist based in New York. She has created stage attire and done fashion styling for musicians and bands, including Meshell Ndegeocello, Nation Beat, and individual singers from Enrique Iglesias' band. She designed costumes for Brazilian band Fihos de Jorge, which were featured a music video that saw over six million views. She also designed costumes for dance ensemble the Pulse Project. She did the styling and costumes for a girl band called Funky Diamonds, of which she was a member, that toured internationally. Gomes is owner of DeeDee's Street Boutique in New York, which features her remarkable one-of-a-kind repurposed, recycled clothing.

DU'BOIS A'KEEN, performer

Du'Bois A'Keen is a true renaissance spirit, born and raised in Albany, Georgia. A'Keen began his formal dance training at age 19. After receiving a bachelor of fine arts in dance from Florida State University, he was accepted as an M.F.A. candidate. While studying in New York, A'Keen was asked to joined UBW in December 2014. Aside from his work with UBW as a company member and marketing/branding consultant, A'Keen serves as the founder and leader of the rapidly-growing creative movement and global community "The Tuesday Thing." A'Keen is the co-founder and creative director of AKEEN BRAND, LLC and 'KEEN Thinking, a lifestyle brand and blog platform. A'Keen is also an IFP Screen Forward Lab Fellow for the 2017 cohort. While working in the industries of film, fashion, and music (as a singer/songwriter), A'Keen looks forward to continued growth and success alongside his beautiful wife and life partner, Camry Vonyae' A'Keen. He is guided by his faith and life mantra, "just be."

Who's Who in the Company, continued

EVERETT ASIS SAUNDERS, sound designer

Everett Asis Saunders is the founder and creative director of Flux Innovations, a sound and audio services company. Their recent clients include PBS, Sony Music, and Columbia Records. Saunders is a producer, composer, songwriter, and performer. He has knowledge and practice in arranging, editing, and mixing for theatre, film, and music entertainment. His work spans across genres with original compositions for numerous independent films and projects of the New York/Los Angeles dance community, with his latest commissions including Marjani Forte & Works' *Memoirs of a... Unicorn*. Film works include PBS' *March on Washington* (2013), *Print Shop* (2016), and Project Imagination winner *Transporter*, directed by Damon Colquhoun.

THE ILLUSTRIOUS BLACKS, music composer

Manchildblack & Monstah Black comprise the fabulous musical duo the Illustrious Blacks, who have arrived on a mission to fuse futuristic funk, hypnotic house, and cosmic pop into pulsating positivity for the planet. Their entertaining weekly radio show on WBAI 99.5 FM in New York City, On Air w/ the Blacks, invites audiences to listen in as they conduct interviews, feature live performers, and discuss the latest happenings in global pop culture.

NICHOLAS HUSSONG, projections designer

Nicholas Hussong's off-Broadway credits include *Skeleton Crew* (Atlantic Theater Company) and *These Paper Bullets!* Drama Desk Nomination (Atlantic Theater Company, Geffen Playhouse, Yale Rep). Hussong's regional credits include *Grounded* (Alley Theatre), *Two Trains Running* (Arden Theater), *The Mountaintop* (Playmakers Rep), and *I Saw My Neighbor on the Train and I Didn't Even Smile* (Berkshires Theatre Group), as well as productions with Esperanza Spalding, Abrons Art Center, Premieres NYC, Ars Nova, Heartbeat Opera, Cantata Profana, Nashville Symphony, Hartford Symphony, I Am a Boys Choir, Summerworks Toronto, LaMaMa Summer Share, and Joe's Pub. Hussong was the artistic associate at Triad Stage in Greensboro, North Carolina, where he continues to design new works based on Appalachian life written by Preston Lane.

RAELLE MYRICK-HODGES, stage director

With a study of theatre and science, Raelle Myrick-Hodges is ecstatic to be working with Urban Bush Women for the first time. Myrick-Hodges has directed plays nationally and worked as a stage director internationally in devised works. She is the founder of Azuka Theater located in Philadelphia, an award-winning theatre company now in its 23rd year. Myrick-Hodges has presented works in dance, music, theatre, and film as curator of performing arts for the Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans. She has worked with artists in different aesthetics and disciplines, including Denis O'Hare, Miriam Hyman, Meryl Streep, Antonio Brown (choreographer), Jeffrey Wright, and Chinaka Hodge, among others. Currently, Myrick-Hodges is developing two works for her newly created theatre ensemble Elephant Room, which will premiere in January 2019. Her creative contribution to *Hair and Other Stories* is dedicated to the memory of Ebony McKinney, co-founder of Elephant Room. Upcoming works directed by Myrick-Hodges include *The Bluest Eye*, written by Toni Morrison adapted by Lydia Diamond at the Arden Theater Company, and a world premiere of the 1947 play *In Splendid Error*, written by William Branch, which is the fictional telling of the day before John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. (R.I.P. Ebony McKinney and Robert Langston)

Who's Who in the Company, continued

SAMANTHA SPEIS, associate artistic director and performer

Samantha Speis is a movement artist based in New York City. Speis has worked with Gesel Mason, the Dance Exchange, Jumatatu Poe, Deborah Hay (as part of the Sweet Day curated by Ralph Lemon at the MoMA), Marjani Forte, and Liz Lerman. She is currently a member of the Skeleton Architecture, a collective of black womyn and gender non-conforming artists who use the practice of improvisation to create, organize, advocate, gather, play, and challenge. Speis was the 2012 recipient of the Alvin Ailey New Directions Choreography Lab and recently was awarded a Bessie Award for Outstanding Performer. Her work has been featured at the Kennedy Center (Millennium Stage), Long Island University, Joyce SoHo, Hollins University, Danspace Project, Dixon Place, Dance Place, and the Kelly Strayhorn Theater. Speis' solo, *The Way It Was, and Now,* was commissioned by the Jerome Foundation to be performed at Danspace Project for the Parallels Platform Series and was later invited to the Kaay Fecc Dance Festival in Dakar, Senegal. She has developed a teaching practice that explores pelvic mobility as the root of powerful locomotion and as a point of connection to the stories, experiences, and lineages that reside in each of us. She has been a guest artist and taught workshops throughout the United States, South America, Senegal, and Europe. Recent projects include *Walking with Trane*, co-choreographed with Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, and her collaboration with Chanon Judson-Johnson and Raelle Myrick-Hodges on *Hair and Other Stories*.

STEPHANIE MAS, performer

Stephanie Mas is a Miami native and has been a performer with Urban Bush Women since her entry into the company in June 2013. Throughout her time with Urban Bush Women she has had the opportunity to tour worldwide, performing and co-facilitating workshops and master classes in the different communities they have been invited to visit. She also works as a freelance performing artist and has had the opportunity to collaborate and create with artists such as Paloma McGregor, Millicent Johnnie, Megan Bascom, Megan Kendzior, Kate Weare, BODYART, and Kirstin Kapustik. Mas received her 200-hour yoga certification in 2013.

SUSAN HAMBURGER, production manager

Susan Hamburger has designed the lighting for Urban Bush Women for over 13 years and has worked with such notable artists as Craig Harris, Lucinda Childs, Mark Rucker, and Mark Morris. Other notable dance companies Hamburger has designed for include Bessie Award winner Nora Chipaumire, Troika Ranch, Ellis Wood, Urban Tap, and Alice Farley. She has also designed *The Mystery of Edwin Drood, On the Town, A Child's Christmas in Wales, Little Shop of Horrors, Suddenly Last Summer, The Great Highway, West Side Story, The Cryptogram, Hamlet, Much Ado About Nothing, and Waiting for Godot, as well as many other plays and performance pieces.* She is an adjunct professor at New York University and received a master of fine arts from Yale School of Drama. For more information, please visit susanhamburger.com.

TENDAYI KUUMBA, performer

Tendayi Kuumba is a graduate of North Atlanta High School of Performing Arts and Spelman College. Kuumba's training ranges from Buffalo Inner City Ballet, Ballethnic, Callanwolde Fine Arts, and Moving in the Spirit. Currently, she is a company member of Urban Bush Women, ASE Dance Theater Collective, and Axam Dance Theater Experience. Past works include pieces with Liberata Dance Theater, Marjani Forte of LOVE/FORTE Collective, T Lang Dance, and the Nathan Trice/Rituals Performance Project StrangeLove. Kuumba performs as a resident jazz vocalist at the Williamsburg Music Center with the Gerry Eastman Quartet every Friday night. She gives thanks and blessings for life, love, breath, and the pursuit of happiness.

Who's Who in the Company, continued

XAVIER PIERCE, lighting designer

Xavier Pierce's credits include Shakespeare in Love (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, directed by Christopher Moore), Smart People (Arena Stage, directed by Seema Sueko), Harvey (The Guthrie, directed by Libby Appel), Fences (Long Wharf/McCarter Theatre co-production, directed by Phylicia Rashad), Fly (Florida Studio Theatre/Handy Award for Best Lighting), Two Trains Running (Two Rivers Theatre, directed by Ruben Santiago-Hudson), A Raisin in the Sun (Westport Country Playhouse, directed by Phylicia Rashad), Common Enemy (Triad Stage, directed by Preston Lane), The Piano Lesson (Olney Theatre Center, directed by Jamil Jude), Two Trains Running (The Arden, directed by Raelle Myrick-Hodges), and 4,000 Miles, Peter and the Starcatcher, and The Mountaintop (PlayMakers Rep). Pierce's upcoming credits include Native Gardens (The Guthrie and Arena Stage, directed by Blake Robison), Blithe Spirit (The Guthrie, directed by David Ivers), and Othello (Oregon Shakespeare Festival, directed by Bill Rauch). Pierce is a graduate of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with a master of fine arts in design stage and film.

Aminata short film and publicity videography by Ramy Mam. Photography by Hayim Heron. Additional sound recording by Jared Hassan Foles at World Eater Recordings. Special prop design by Kofi.

URBAN BUSH WOMEN STAFF

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, founder and visioning partner
Renee Taylor-Foles, organizational advancement partner
Chanon Judson and Samantha Speis, associate artistic directors and associate BOLD coordinators
Michelle Coe, producer
Tahnia Belle, operations manager
Cheri Stokes, company manager
Zoe Walders, administrative associate
Henry Liles, finance manager
Jennifer Calienes, strategic advisor, Urban Bush Women Choreographic Center
Susan Hamburger, lighting designer and production manager
Jose Santiago, lighting supervisor
Ross Daniel, stage manager and sound supervisor
Bennalldra Williams, training specialist

URBAN BUSH WOMEN BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Tammy Bormann (chair), Ashly Nikkole Davis, Mary Jamis, Yvahn Martin (vice-chair), Ngozi Ogbonna, Tanisha Ross, Alice Sheppard, Jennifer Smith (treasurer), Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Regina Bain, and Theodore S. Berger (UBW National Advisory Board)

URBAN BUSH WOMEN CREATIVE CATALYST CIRCLE

The UBW Creative Catalyst Circle invites the partnership of individuals, teams of individuals, and institutions who believe in the vision and mission of UBW and who wish to bring this vision to the stage through their philanthropic gifts.

Alfred and Patricia Zollar Tracey and Phillip Riese

Funding Acknowledgements

MAJOR FUNDING FOR URBAN BUSH WOMEN IS PROVIDED BY

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Leadership Grants Program, Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, New Music USA, New York Community Trust, New York State Council on the Arts, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, and the Surdna Foundation

Hair and Other Stories was commissioned by the Virginia Arts Festival and had its proscenium stage premiere as part of the 2017 Festival at the Attucks Theatre in Norfolk, Virginia, on April 22, 2017.

Hair and Other Stories (audience-engaged version) is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation Fund Project co-commissioned by Junebug Productions in partnership with Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans, Dance Place, and NPN. For more information, please visit npnweb.org.

Hair and Other Stories is made possible by Engaging Dance Audiences, which is administered by Dance/USA and made possible with generous funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; the Lincoln Center Cultural Innovation Fund, which is generously supported by the Rockefeller Foundation and administered by Lincoln Center; the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the MAP Fund, which is supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and Acton Family Giving and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. It is also supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

Hair and Other Stories was made possible by residencies at Baruch College and City College Center for the Arts through the City University of New York (CUNY) Dance Initiative, which receives major support from the Mertz Gilmore Foundation, the Howard Gilman Foundation, and the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Jerome Robbins Foundation and the Harkness Foundation for Dance. CUNY Dance Initiative is spearheaded and administered by the Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College.

Hair and Other Stories is informed by our ongoing partnership and work with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's Understanding and Undoing Racism workshop. For more information, please visit pisab.org

Special thanks to Talvin Wilks for early dramaturgical support for *Hair and Other Stories*, to Stephanie McKee and Laurie Uprichard for their continued support during the development of *Hair and Other Stories*, and to Jonathan D. Secor, Lai-Lin Robinson, and Thamar Fedestin for shepherding *Hair and Other Stories* during their tenure at Urban Bush Women. Additional thanks to Jared at World Eater Recordings for sound recording and support.

Urban Bush Women

UBW, Inc., dba Urban Bush Women, is a not-for-profit organization located at:
138 S. Oxford St., Suite #4B
Brooklyn, NY 11217
(p) 718-398-4537

Learn more about UBW and its programs:

BOLD: Chanon Judson and Samantha Speis, cjudson@urbanbushwomen.org | sspeis@urbanbushwomen.org | SLI: Tahnia Belle, tbelle@urbanbushwomen.org

Donations: Renee Taylor-Foles, rtaylorfoles@urbanbushwomen.org

For booking information:

Matthew Bledsoe, IMG Artists, 212-994-3565 | mbledsoe@imgartists.com Michelle Coe, UBW producer, mcoe@urbanbushwomen.org

www.urbanbushwomen.org facebook.com/urbanbushwomen | twitter.com/ubwdance | instagram: ubwdance

























Engagement Events

Saturday, April 28, 2018

TALK: URBAN BUSH WOMEN

Before experiencing *Hair and Other Stories*, attendees heard from Chanon Judson, associate artistic director and dancer with Urban Bush Women, during a brief talk and engaged in a group discussion, moderated by Olivia Jones, master of fine arts student in arts leadership in the School of Performing Arts, Virginia Tech.

Special thanks to Olivia Jones

LEARNING GUIDE QUESTIONS

The Moss Arts Center Learning Guide is a resource for educators, students, and anyone who enjoys digging deeper into our programming. To engage even more fully with our season performances, view the full Learning Guide at bit.ly/LearningGuideMAC. Please use the following questions to spark your own contemplation about today's performance. The following questions were adapted from prompts developed by Urban Bush Women in conjunction with *Hair and Other Stories*:

- Every man, woman, and child has a hair story! If your hair could talk, what would it say?
- Consider your childhood notions of beauty. What were notable influences? How were they supported, reflected, and by whom were they embodied? How have they shifted in your adult/ present age?
- Consider Liberation as a practice as opposed to a destination. How can we individually and culturally support building the muscle to "stay free?"

In the Galleries

LAURIE ANDERSON: INVENTED INSTRUMENTS

April 26-June 9, 2018 Ruth C. Horton Gallery

An interdisciplinary icon of our time, Laurie Anderson is internationally acclaimed for pushing the boundaries of pop and avant-garde music as well as performance art. Laurie Anderson: *Invented Instruments* showcases an extraordinary selection of unique musical instruments and her sonic architectural interventions. This exhibition is curated by Kevin Concannon, Ph.D., art historian and director of Virginia Tech's School of Visual Arts.

JOIN US!

Laurie Anderson: Heart of a Dog Saturday, May 5, 2018, 3 PM

Lyric Theatre

Free; donations encouraged for Montgomery County Friends of Animal Care and Control. Visit mcfacc.org/donate for a list of current needs.

Join us for a free screening of *Heart of a Dog*, a 2015 documentary that centers on Anderson's remembrances of her late beloved piano-playing and finger-painting dog, Lolabelle. Winner of several awards, the film flows from a sustained meditation on death and absence, while weaving together thoughts on Tibetan Buddhism, reincarnation, surveillance, and the artistic lives of dogs. The Montgomery County Friends of Animal Care and Control will be on site with information on their services, programs, and adoptable animals.

GALLERY HOURS

Monday-Friday, 10 AM-5:30 PM Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

To arrange a group tour or class visit, please contact Meggin Hicklin, exhibitions program manager, at megh79@ vt.edu or 540-231-0840.