Advance Program Notes

FLEX AVE.
Saturday, February 15, 2020, 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.

FLEX AVE.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Flex Ave. is a bridge between two worlds, the real and the surreal. Flex Ave. allows the audience to peek into the world of a community that encourages individuality and expression through the lens of street culture and explores the human experience in the world today. The human experiences of loss, triumph, social injustices, and the discovery of self are some of the themes explored within the dance. Flex Ave. allows its audiences to peek into the future while reimagining the now.

—Reggie “Regg Roc” Gray

Special thanks to Flex Ave. sponsor:

lululemon

Special thanks to photographer Carol Dragon, @caroldragonphoto.

Follow us on social media at @_thedreamring_ and @flexave_.

This performance is supported in part by Mr. Joseph A. Hopkins and Ms. Linda W. Hopkins.
Faculty Essay

Part of a series of writings by Virginia Tech faculty that contextualize Moss Arts Center visiting artist performances

BEYOND SPECTATION
Anthony Kwame Harrison, associate professor, Department of Sociology, Virginia Tech

The creative genius that manifests through the games Black youth play is one of the most valuable yet least valued forces in the modern world. As my friend Kyra Gaunt reminds us, the majority of people frequently overlook the importance of these everyday Black aesthetics as vital sources of musical, cultural, artistic, and ultimately political innovation (Gaunt 2006). Black people, we must remember, are not simply people of African descent. Our designation as Black came about through the historical encounter with Europe—resulting in the seizure of land and extraction of incalculable resources (including millions of enslaved Africans)—that was instrumental to the Western world’s global ascension. Blackness is thus as much a political category as it is a physical descriptor. Its appearance not only marks but also actualizes social inequalities and disparities in landscapes of power. Long before they are able to articulate or even fully understand it, Black children growing up in a White Supremacist society gain a sense of the anti-Black racism that shadows them as they pass through the world. The games they play are the foundations of practices of everyday resistance and everyday survival.

When we witness genuine forms of Black expression—inspired by, cultivated through, and/or contained in the games Black children play—we must avoid the tendency to dismiss them as merely child’s play. Viewed through the lens of popular media, Black people appear to be perpetually locked in a crisis of age. The contemporary faces of Black popular culture—most visible in the fields of hip-hop music and professional sports like basketball and football—are perceived of as stuck in adolescence (Gordon 2005). Black youth, on the other hand, are constantly being “adultified” as violent, menacing, and hypersexual (Clay 2011). Consider, for instance, the circumstances surrounding the murders of Black teenagers like Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Renisha McBride, and 12-year-old Tamir Rice; or for that matter, the moral condemnations associated with the supposed premature sexualities attributed to Black boys and girls. Under conditions like these, Black children cannot afford to be playful simply for the sake of self-amusement. Black play becomes a sustaining act of re-creation that masks its significance behind smiles, chuckles, and gestures of Black cool—that is, the art of making hard work look easy. As Black people collectively contend with these popular mischaracterizations, the opportunity to see unapologetic Black performances—and to engage with performers in all their beauty, ugliness, and delightful human complexity—provides an occasion for audiences to move beyond representations of Blackness by collaborating in the creation of genuine Black expression.

Any proper engagement with Black performance must attend to the ways it makes meaning in context. For me, this starts with some awareness of and attempt to grapple with how Blackness, and its distinct but variable qualities of performance, came into being. We should also seek to understand the contemporary circumstances impacting Black-identifying communities, and how many Black performances are in some way responding to (or at the very least in dialogue with) these circumstances. Finally, as audiences we should place ourselves within the immediate settings of these performances. Like the affirmations coming from a Black church congregation, the calls-and-responses at a hip-hop show, or the constant talking-back from the crowd in a Black movie-theatre, any instance of Black performance involves more than simply those people designated as “performers.” In attending Black performances, audiences have a responsibility to not only provide feedback but to additionally contribute to the overall experience of the event.
Many years ago a friend told me about an old Jim-Crow-era sign he had come across announcing a dance event in a small southern town. The sign specified that the White portion of the event would take place from 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Saturday night, with the Black portion following from 10:00 p.m. to midnight. In reference to the Black dance event, the sign included the additional qualification, “No White Spectators.” My friend and I marveled at the agency of Black people, even in the midst of the racialized terror of Jim Crow, to set the terms surrounding their own recreation event. Yet part of me wonders if it was the presence of White people or the act of their spectation that was more objectionable. At a time when most Americans, regardless of their race, aspire to greater levels of integration (if not assimilation), the expectations for engaging Black performance insist that attending audiences understand themselves as more than witnesses and spectators. Regardless of how you participate, in coming out to this show you are part of the event. Enjoy the experience.


Biographies

CREATIVE TEAM

REGGIE “REGG ROC” GRAY, director and choreographer

The American dancer, director, and choreographer Reggie (Regg Roc) Gray was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. Gray is one of the innovators of a new hybrid dance form, Flexn: a combination of various styles such as bone breaking, get-low, connecting, hat tricks, and pauzing, the style he revolutionized. He produced his first major choreography at the Park Avenue Armory with Flexn (2015) and Flexn Evolution (2017) and has toured both productions around the world. In July 2019 he premiered his most recent work, Maze, at The Shed, which was performed in an architectural maze of light and explored the puzzles and poetry of human coexistence. Known for his choreographic works rooted in social justice themes, Gray will continue to inspire the world through the expression of Flexn.

JOSHUA SAGE MORALES, associate director

As a dance artist, Sage's accomplishments include performing and teaching in Southeast Asia, Norway, and France. Through his travels, he learned to truly express and translate his movements. He recently premiered in The Shed production, Maze. He has appeared in movies, music videos, and ads in store fronts such as Converse. Morales is currently developing his own choreographic work, Flower.

COREY GUTTA BATTS, assistant choreographer

Ringmasters Corey Flex is one of the pioneers of the Flex dance style. Ringmasters Corey Flex has been teaching this style for over 20 years across the world. He is known for his amazing Flex dance hat tricks and his unorthodox connect dance moves—two elements that come from the Flex dance style. He is the originator of Ringmasters. His Flex dance style credits include: BET's 106 & Park, MTV's America's Best Dance Crew, The Extra Show, Jerry Springer Show, CCTV China, and Doctor Oz. He worked on music videos with Sean Paul, Wayne Wonder, Elephant Man, Bunji Garlin, Skrillex, and Justin Timberlake. In 2019 he was the wardrobe manager and performer for the production Maze.

KENT BARRETT, lighting designer

Kent Barrett is a multi-disciplinary theatrical designer and artist who has developed a wide-ranging body of work and established a national and international presence on the performance scene. Barrett currently teaches theatrical design and new technology at Dickinson College. He is a former company member with the Wooster Group, an NEA grant recipient, and an instructor at MIT. A prolific technologist, Barrett’s works have been seen at venues such as the Park Avenue Armory, Harlem Stage, La MaMa, Signature, The Public, the Brooklyn Lyceum, and Lincoln Center, as well as internationally in 14 different countries. In addition to his work in theatre, dance, and performance, Barrett has also collaborated widely on independent films, art installations, and with various architectural lighting firms.
Biographies, continued

EPIC B, music producer

Born and raised in Brownsville, East New York, Epic B is a producer, DJ, vocalist, and visual artist. Initially known for his work as a hip-hop producer—along with production for the likes of Vybz Kartel and Popcaan back in 2009—he’s now a fundamental member and pioneer of the Flex dance music scene. Epic is also the music director for Flexn, a show which the New York Times called “part protest, part dance party, part collective autobiography.” Epic’s debut EP, Late Night FlexN, arrived via Manchester-based label Swing Ting late in 2017 to a positive reception. Lead single One Time landed on FACT Magazine’s Top 50 Tracks of 2017, and additional coverage of the project came from Resident Advisor, Complex UK, and Mixmag. In 2019 Epic B produced music for the promotional videos and production of Maze.

PRODUCTION TEAM

ABENA FLOYD, company manager and D.R.E.A.M. Ring, Inc. producer

Abena Floyd is an aspiring dance therapist currently pursuing her New York State Mental Health license. Floyd is the executive director and producer of The D.R.E.A.M. Ring Inc. and the program associate of FlexNYC, a social justice artist dance residency program at The Shed. She has worked as the assistant producer and company manager for the Park Avenue Armory production Flexn and Flexn Evolution, which has toured in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, England, and parts of the United States, to name a few. Floyd produced a multimedia exhibit in 2018, Beyond the Yellow Tape, and looks forward to producing more innovative works.

NUGGET, rehearsal director

Ringmaster Nugget is one of the pioneers of the Flexn dance style who created one element in the style 25 years ago: bone breaking. Ringmaster Nugget has performed with major artists like Rhianna, Nicki Minaj, Justin Timberlake, Alicia Keys, YG, Chris Brown, Michael Jackson, Pit Bull, Demi Lovato, and many more. Ringmaster Nugget has starred in movies like Step Up and Honey 2 and in commercials for Louis Vuitton, Samsung, Adidas, and Rolls Royce. Nugget choreographed the Skrillex music video Red Lips and performed in television shows like MTV’s America’s Best Dance Crew, BET’s 106 & Park, CCTV China, America’s Got Talent, and So You Think You Can Dance.

THE D.R.E.A.M. RING INC.

In 2011 Reggie Gray founded The D.R.E.A.M. RING, Inc. (DANCE RULES EVERYTHING AROUND ME), a community-oriented dance company that aspires to build character and develop creative individuals who embody the Brooklyn-born street dance style Flexn and produce social change by using their talents. The D.R.E.A.M. RING provides youth with a safe environment to express their artistry and a wealth of opportunities for sharing their creativity with the community—such as touring in choreographic productions, performing in battle showcases, and teaching in schools and community centers nationally and internationally. The D.R.E.A.M. RING, Inc. hosts dance competitions, performance showcases, talks, and workshops within schools and community centers of the various communities with which they collaborate. D.R.E.A.M. RING, Inc. inspires, educates, and communicates through dance.
NIECEY

My name is Denise, also known as “Niecey.” For a while, I went by my given name but later on decided to go with something less formal but still self identifying. Growing up, I’ve had friends that chose other genres of dance, but what I loved was Flexn. The first time I’d ever been exposed to Flexn was in the street, and the creativity, rawness, and diversity of the style made me say, “nah, I gotta learn this!” In the early 2000s I made my first appearance with my dance group, Total Package, on Flex N Brooklyn. Since then, I’ve done numerous projects and shows in collaboration with House of Vans, Jacob’s Pillow, Lululemon, and NikeXSacai.

GEO

Everybody calls me Geo, but my artist name is Geo Alexzander/Geometricks. I was introduced to the dance scene by performing on BCAT, a local channel in Brooklyn that aired every Friday. I’ve been dancing for 10 years and was introduced to Flex N Brooklyn by a friend, and from there that’s how I got introduced to Reggie “Regg Roc” Gray. Now I’m working with him helping to push Flexn through productions such as the Maze and Flex Ave. I’ve taught Flexn workshops and battled nationally. What attracted me to the Flex dance style was the energy and approach to gliding; it was different from what I had seen and it changed my life as an artist.

DROID

Rafael “Droid” Burgos, or “King Droid,” is a born-and-bred Brooklyn native. At only 24 years old, Droid has been Flexn since 2010. Before he was serious about dance, he was serious about artwork animation, singing, and performing arts. The arts shaped who he is today. He incorporates his passion for the arts in his dancing to this day. His style is very animated and technical, and his dance style is described as “mechanical”—hence his name, Droid. Droid creates objects that he brings to life using four Flexn styles. He is a master of gliding/connecting, get low, and pausing. He wishes to one day direct his own productions using street dance art forms.

OPT

I got the name Opt from the famous Transformer, Optimus Prime. I’m a bone breaker, so my style of Flexn can give off the illusion of me transforming into something or someone else; I’m forever changing and evolving. I’ve been a part of the Flexn culture for 13 years now. What attracted me to this specific dance style was the movements and how it was so different from hip-hop or any other dance styles I have seen or been around. In October 2017 I joined The D.R.E.A.M. Ring dance company, and it has opened so many doors for me to perform on so many different platforms. Some of my favorite projects I’ve worked on are Skrillex’s music video for Red Lips, produced in 2015, and the most recent project, the upcoming film In the Heights, which will be in theatres June 2020. I’m grateful to be a part of all these projects and will continue to push the Flexn bone breaking style to greater heights!
Biographies, continued

RISA
Risa is an artist who moved to New York from Japan. She learned the Flexn dance style in Brooklyn. She blends multiple dance styles and inspirations ranging from various forms of culture to show her personality through the language of the body. Along with other techniques, Risa creates a unique form of movement for the eyes and hearts of her audience to follow. In 2019 Risa has performed with The D.R.E.A.M. Ring in The Shed production *Maze*, and worked with Nike and Converse for commercials. She also models for clothing lines. She has taught dance workshops in Japan, Korea, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam in 2018. The Flexn style, she says, “makes me be myself; it helps me experience life in a different way.”

SCI-FI
Dwayne “Sci-Fi” Crichlow is a professional dancer, teacher, and mentor with more than 16 years of experience. Passionate, creative, expressive, and inspirational is how he would describe his Flexn style, pauzing. This style allows him to become anything his mind can fabricate; he can convey rawness, aggression, and freedom. He plans on becoming the inspiration he saw when he first entered the Flexn culture and community.

SCORP
I’m Dwight Waugh, better known as Scorp, and I’m a Flex dancer from Brooklyn. I’m a full-time dancer, single father, and actor. I’ve been dancing since I was one, but started taking it seriously when I met my cousin’s boyfriend and was taught how to bruk up and Flex. Let’s start off on how I got the name Scorp... One day I was by my OG’s house (Regg Roc) with some friends; we were dancing and I was trying an old floor move called the scorpion. I was good at it and they said I should be called Scorpion, then Regg changed it to Scorp later down the line. I used to watch a show called *Flex N Brooklyn*, and my family is from Jamaica so it was only right that I followed my roots. I’ve performed at many colleges and universities in New York and have been a part of the Park Avenue Armory Production *Flexn* and *Flexn Evolution*, performing and touring for the last five years. I have starred in the *Gotham* television series and will be a part of two movies coming out in 2020.

SMOOTH
My name is Letwan Ricks, I’m 28, and I’m a Flex dancer out of Bed Stuy, Brooklyn. People call me Smooth, a.k.a. Rambo. In my dance culture we get our names based on our style and personality; I chose the name “Smooth” because I love to express myself using soft music and movement concepts, and “Rambo” because I like to battle!!! Dancing was the only thing that made me feel good, so I decided to take it on as a career. One of my favorite projects has been choreographing and performing at the Met in New York. I have been a part of the Flexn community and culture for 14 years now, and I have loved every moment of my journey.
Go Deeper

How did the specific dance styles within Flexn (e.g. bone-breaking, gliding, hat-tricks, etc.) embody different narratives and perspectives? What’s the significance of experiencing this dance form—which has roots in bruk up from Jamaican dance clubs in the 1990s and contemporary street dance in Brooklyn—in a traditional proscenium-style theatre? How does this context change the space and experience of performers and audience?

Engagement Events

Friday, February 14, 2020
SCHOOL-DAY LECTURE-DEMONSTRATION: FLEX AVE XPERIENCE
During their visit to the New River Valley, dancers visited Forest Park Academy in Roanoke and performed and presented on the roots and techniques of Flexn for students in grades 9-12.

Saturday, February 15, 2020, following the performance
POST-PERFORMANCE Q&A
Following the performance, join dancers from the company for a discussion of the work.

Special thanks to Eric Anderson, Clinton McLaughlin, Kwame Harrison, and La’ Portia Perkins
In the Galleries

Now on View
FIERCE WOMEN
Chakaia Booker, Guerrilla Girls, Jenny Holzer, Marilyn Minter, and Rozeal
Thursday, January 30-Saturday, April 25, 2020
All galleries and Cube

Guerrilla Girls

Since 1985 the Guerrilla Girls, an anonymous collective of feminist activist artists, have zealously taken on the established art world in an ongoing campaign to expose sexism, elitism, and racism in art institutions. Delivered with a fierce directness, scathing wit, and occasional humor, their proclamations have taken the form of posters, flyers, billboards, banners, performances, and unauthorized public projections or installations. Presented in this exhibition, on view through April 4 in the Francis T. Eck Exhibition Corridor, is a selection of 15 of the Guerrilla Girls’ most iconic works.

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.
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