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Thursday, January 28, 2021, 7:30 PM EST

# **SANKOFA DANZAFRO**

*The City of Others*

**VT** VIRGINIA  
TECH™

# SANKOFA DANZAFRO

## *The City of Others*

**Direction and Choreography:** Rafael Palacios

**Light and Set Design:** Álvaro Tobón

**Costumes Concept:** Rafael Palacios

**Tour Manager:** Jimena Alviar

### Performers

Yndira Perea Cuesta, Juan José Luna Coha, Diego de los Ríos Naranjo, Camilo Perlaza Micolta, Liliana Hurtado Hinestroza, Sandra Vanesa Murillo, Yeison Moreno Córdoba, Yesid Quejada Moreno, Davinson Palacios Mosquera, Daniela Hernández Arango, and Jhoan Andrés Mosquera Ibarguen

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Composed by Lino Agua Limpia  
and Harrison Palacios

Performed by Explosión Negra  
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#### *Remolinos*

Composed by José Velásquez  
Performed live by  
Juan José Luna Coha  
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#### *Mañana, Tarde, y Noche*

Composed and performed live by  
Juan José Luna Coha

#### *Andando Pela Africa*

Composed by Fernando Barba  
Performed by Barbatuques  
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#### *Spring Waterfall*

Composed by Phillip Glass and  
Foday Musa Suso  
Performed by Jail Kunda  
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Composed by Richard D. James  
Performed by Aphex Twin  
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#### *Riding the Waves*

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# THE CITY OF OTHERS

Most cities are inhabited by people of different origins, cultures, and ways of understanding the world. In cities, thousands of people coexist in a defined environment, each having its own view of a common reality. In many countries, far from being a source of progress, cities can be a place of hostility, loneliness, and discrimination. *The City of Others* was created from our personal experiences of racism and oppression in our daily lives in Medellín, Colombia.

*The City of Others* includes traditional Colombian songs and rhythms, such as the vallenato from the Atlantic region coastline, and dances, such as the bullerengue (also from the Atlantic coastline) and the currulao and abozao dances from the Pacific coastline.

For life in a metropolis to be a positive space for constructive living and collective communities, I feel it is necessary to embrace the extended family concept prevalent in rural communities: what I own is for everyone; under my roof, there is room for someone else; if you need me, I am here; I am not the exclusive owner of what surrounds me.

*The City of Others* examines the lack of opportunities for the many who, for generations, have been marked by ethnic discrimination and social inequality. In Colombia, African diaspora communities and other marginalized peoples have been treated in the same dismissed manner—as second class citizens. In *The City of Others*, these communities claim political and social power, transcending racism and prejudice. This is their city—it is everyone's city.

*The City of Others* was created in celebration of Colombia's 159<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of slavery and was commissioned by the Mayor's Office of Medellín–Casa de Integración Afrocolombiana, 2010.

*The City of Others* had its premiere tour to North America in the fall of 2019 with performances at the Joyce Theater; Boston Celebrity Series; the Kravis Center; and USC's Voices & Visions, among other venues. The company has since been presented by the Hopkins Center at Dartmouth; Teatro de la Ciudad Esperanza Iris, Mexico City; and the Merida Festival in Merida, Mexico. The company's 2020-2021 North America tour dates were canceled by the COVID-19 pandemic and are being rescheduled in the 2021-2022 season.

—Rafael Palacios, artistic director, Sankofa Danzafró



# Biographies

## SANKOFA DANZAFRO

We dance, more than to be seen, to be heard!

In Akan, a Ghanaian language, *sankofa* means “to return to the root.” More than a word, it is an African philosophy that proposes to know the past as a condition to understand the present; as a way to see the future. This thought has guided the path of the Afro-Colombian dance and music company [Sankofa Danzafro](#). Founded by Rafael Palacios in 1997 with its home in Medellín, Colombia, Sankofa is dedicated to training and creation in dance as well as interacting with the community. Through the practice of dance, Sankofa’s mission is to bridge the gaps between the many African diaspora communities in Colombia—along with other populations whose human rights have been violated. Sankofa’s choreographic language searches for the poetics that are at the root of Afro dance, experienced through the frame of today. In this way, Sankofa honors both the traditional and the contemporary. Through its programs, the company nurtures community mentorship, social awareness, personal growth, and supports the sustainability of local cultures inside of the national dynamics of Colombia.

Sankofa’s achievements have been noted with recognitions such as the 2008 National Dance Award to Rafael Palacios for *San Pacho...Blessed!*; a mention in 2010 by the United Nations as a “good practice of Afro-descendant social inclusion in Latin America” with the cross-cultural collaborative project *Steps in the Earth* (created with dancers in the Pacific, Chocó, and Urabá regions and the Archipelago of San Andrés and Providencia), which resulted in the publication of a book of the same title; and by the Training of Trainers and Danza Viva program of the Ministry of Culture between 2008 and 2016. Sankofa has a wide repertoire of works and has toured to countries such as Brazil, France, Peru, Spain, Jamaica, Burkina Faso, Canada, Uruguay, and China. The company made its “electrifying New York debut” (*New York Times*), invited by the Battery Dance Festival in 2015.

## Biographies, (continued)

### **RAFAEL PALACIOS**

Rafael Palacios is a Colombian choreographer, teacher, and dancer, who researches traditional, Afro-contemporary, and urban dance. Palacios' experience as a dancer in Africa and Europe, where he studied with Germaine Acogny and Irene Tassemedo, has been the basis for the founding of Sankofa Danzafro. His creations explore social and racial inequality, ancestral knowledge, and a search for a new place of Afro-Colombian culture in the Colombian society. With a trajectory of more than 20 years, his works for Sankofa Danzafro have been presented in theatres and festivals around the world, showing the diversity of Afro-Colombian dance.

Palacios was a guest choreographer for the Celebration of the 159 years of Abolition of Slavery in Medellín, Colombia in 2010, for which he created *The City of Others*. He was also guest choreographer for the Summit of the Americas (Cartagena, 2012), Inauguration of the World Games (Cali, 2013), and for the First International Dance Biennial of Cali (Colombia, 2013). In 2008 he received the National Dance Award from the Ministry of Culture with the work *San Pacho...Blessed!*.

Palacios is a social activist through dance and has been committed to education of Afro-descendent youth since he started his work in Colombia. *Steps in the Earth*, his project of knowledge exchange among Black communities in Colombia, received mention from the United Nations as a good practice of Afro-descendant social inclusion in Latin America (Cali, 2010). In 2018 he received the National Prize for the Arts with his work, *The City of Others*, awarded by the Universidad de Antioquia.

Palacios is a specialist in Epistemologies of the South of CLASCO (Latin American Council for Social Sciences) and is currently working on a master's degree in education and human rights at the Latin American Autonomous University.

## **Sankofa Danzafro Thanks**

Colombian Ministry of Culture/Ministerio de Cultura de Colombia  
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Alcaldía de Medellín–Casa de Integración Afrocolombiana  
Teatro Metropolitano de Medellín

Ruth Waalkes, Margaret Lawrence, and the Moss Arts Center staff and crew

# Engagement Events

**MONDAY, JANUARY 25, 2021**

## **Panel Discussion**

Virginia Tech students in the Latin American and Iberian Graduate Students Association, SalsaTech, and College of Engineering spoke with members of Sankofa Danzafró about the company's work.

**TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2021**

## **Virtual Workshop: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Spanish**

Sankofa Danzafró led a virtual workshop in Afro-Colombian dance for students at Pulaski County Middle School.

## **Virtual Class Visit: Hispanic Life, Literature, and Language**

Undergraduate students in this Spanish class at Virginia Tech spoke with Rafael Palacios of Sankofa Danzafró about his inspiration by Colombian writer Manuel Zapata Olivella to create the original dance piece *Detrás del Sur, Danzas para Manuel*.

## **Virtual Dance Workshop**

Participants learned various Afro-Colombian dance styles, including bullerengue, abozao, currulao, tamborito, and salsa choque, from Sankofa Danzafró, all from the comfort of their homes.

**THURSDAY, JANUARY 28, 2021**

## **Post-Performance Q&A**

Artistic Director Rafael Palacios and company member Yndira Perea answer audience members' questions and participate in a discussion moderated by Andrea N. Baldwin, assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at Virginia Tech.

*Special thanks to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration at Virginia Tech; Sydney Altizer; Andrea N. Baldwin; Nestor Alejandro Santa Cano; Katrina Colucci-Chang; Blane Harding; Scotty Hardwig; Gonzalo Montero; Veronica Montes; Shernita Lee; Renee Cloyd; and Tremayne "Trey" Walker*

# Go Deeper

Reflecting on his dance company's 23-year history, Artistic Director Rafael Palacios explained Sankofa Danzafro's mission in an interview with *Barcelona Cultura*:

"[We] buil[d] a space of dignity where our way of dancing contradicts the stereotypes and imagery of eroticism and exoticism that modernity has foisted on [B]lack bodies. We have been interested in unveiling the knowledge that the dancing [B]lack body has built and the individual and community healing processes that they forge."

Where did you see this mission realized in *The City of Others*? When did you experience "healing," within and outside of the piece?

## In the Galleries

### **UNBEARABLE BEAUTY**

**James Balog | Daniel Beltrá | Edward Burtynsky | Chris Jordan | Steve Norton**  
Through Saturday, April 24  
All galleries

Expansive in theme and panoramic in scope, this exhibition presents works of art that are visually engaging, impactful, and even beautiful, while conveying the difficult reality that the consequences of human activity have imperiled the Earth. Featuring large-scale photographic works by five nationally and internationally recognized artists, a stunning film installation of one of the largest arctic glacier calving incidents to date, and an arresting soundscape of birdsongs of species that no longer exist, the exhibition articulates in striking, aesthetic terms the damage inflicted on our ecosystems by human activity. This exhibition presents a visual journey, poignantly bringing into focus a number of critical ecological issues, the enormity of which is difficult for most of us to grasp or fully comprehend.

For the most up to date gallery hours, please [visit our website](#).

# Online Resources

Join us for a special series of events featuring notable artists live from their homes and studios. Not another livestream or pre-recorded performance that's widely available to everyone, our *HomeStage* series is exclusive to the Moss Arts Center and designed specifically to be presented online. [For a full list of our online events and resources, please click here.](#)

# Reopening Updates

The health and wellness of our community is our top priority, and you can be assured that we are doing everything we can to keep you and our staff safe and healthy. [Please visit our 2020-2021 FAQs for more information.](#)

## Box Office Hours

Wednesday-Friday, 10 AM-5 PM

Saturday, 10 AM-4 PM

For more information, please call the box office at 540-231-5300 during these hours, or email us anytime at [mossartscenter@vt.edu](mailto:mossartscenter@vt.edu).

# Land Acknowledgement

The Moss Center acknowledges the Tutelo and Monacan people, who are the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, and recognizes their continuing connection to the land, water, and air that Virginia Tech consumes. We pay respect to the Tutelo and Monacan Nations, and to their elders past, present, and emerging.

We also acknowledge the university's historical ties to the indentured and enslaved whose labors built this institution. We pay respect to these people for their contributions to Virginia Tech.

As you engage with one another and the arts we present, we invite you to reflect on the history of this space and its possibilities for reconciliation, truth, and humanity. In the spirit of *Ut Prosim*, let this acknowledgment be but a single step in the Moss Arts Center's commitment to these values.



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