

Dance and Democracy

A Symposium for Social Movement



New York Public
Library for the
Performing Arts

Welcome



On behalf of the staff of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division I would like to welcome you all to this year's symposium, which celebrates the culmination of the work completed by our sixth cohort of Dance Research Fellows.

Last year our valiant fellows, curtailed by Covid restrictions and the Library's closure, were limited to presenting virtually. We had been working toward welcoming back attendees once more in person this year but unfortunately Omicron had other plans. Consequently for the second year in a row we are convening online. It is no substitute for gathering as a community but it allows the important work of dance research to continue. We also learned from the virtual experience last year that there is an audience outside of New York excited to engage in dance scholarship and so our silver lining is that this format forges global conversation and connectivity within our field.

The theme of this year's symposium is dance and democracy. A democratic body exists as both an individual physical experience and as a collective movement. Dance, a discipline of embodiment and kinetic imagination, is a unique site in which to explore ideas of civic, social and political democratic space. The presentations today run the gamut in exploring various sides of this complex subject from the empathetic power evident in the work of Bill T. Jones which is discussed by Ariel Nereson and Huiwang Zhang, to the recovery and reclamation of history by Jason Samuels Smith, and the inclusive environments conjured by fellows Tommie-Waheed Jones, Petra Kupperts and zavé

martohardjono in their respective projects. All six fellows foster open dialogue which enables democracy to thrive and I hope that they will inspire further research and reflection.

The reality of the Dance Research Fellowship relies on the generosity of our donors and I am incredibly grateful to our longtime partners at the Geraldine Stutz Trust, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Frederick Loewe Foundation, Nancy Dalva and to the Anne H. Bass Foundation for leadership support in this cycle. And, as ever, I am indebted to the Committee for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division for their vision and advocacy of this program. The Dance Research Fellowship was inspired by our late, beloved committee member, Nancy Lassalle, who did so much in her lifetime to foster dance and scholarship, and I know that the current committee members steward the fellowship and this symposium in her honor.

The last two years have led me to reflect often on the meaning of home. Although it will always be defined for me in many ways by physical and geographical markers, I have increasingly come to appreciate it as a state of mind. We may not be gathering in person on the site of dance history this morning, but any place where our dance researchers gather in the spirit of generous and robust discourse is terra firma for the Dance Division. Welcome home.

Linda Murray
Curator, Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Schedule

January 31, 2022

10 – 11 AM

Huiwang Zhang

Soften into the bones/Ooo baby:
experimenting with the creative processes of
the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company

11 AM – 12 PM

zavé martohardjono

TERRITORY: The Island Remembers

12 – 1 PM

Petra Kuppers

Crip/Mad Archive Dances

1 – 2 PM

Lunch break

2 – 3 PM

Jason Samuels Smith

Digging Deeper

3 – 4 PM

Ariel Nereson

Plague Dances: Revisiting Bill T. Jones'
AIDS Archive in the Time of COVID

4 – 5 PM

Tommie-Waheed Evans

“Polytemporal Re-Mixes”



Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Committee for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division, I am once again thrilled to welcome you to this Dance Division symposium, where our sixth cohort of Fellows will present their scholarship and work drawn from research in the collection housed here at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

In the early days of the shutdown precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, Linda Murray, Allen Greenberg, and I had a call to discuss the viability of undertaking the 2020 fellowship with no physical access to the collections. Linda felt strongly and spoke persuasively about the division's ability to pivot to virtual access. Beyond digital access to the materials requested by the Fellows, Linda and her team seamlessly created a virtual seminar, which brought attendance to a global audience of a size never experienced by any of the seminars and symposia hosted by the New York Public Library in its 125 year history. Out of this came an important learning; namely that the Dance Division should look toward a "both/and" strategy for future symposia, allowing for both in-person and streaming access to the presentations.

The Fellows Program is an initiative of the Committee that arose from a desire to shed light upon and enhance awareness of one of the world's leading collections related to dance. By so doing, we aspired to encourage greater use. In a few short years, not only have we achieved our initial goals, but we

have also experienced enhanced exposure across a vast array of traditional and social media platforms alongside increased usage through the NYPL website. Fellows have or are in the process of publishing articles and books based on their work. Others have been called upon to speak about their scholarship to a wide range of audiences. The Fellows Program has accomplished something beyond our wildest aspirations.

Last year I wrote about our seminar *Dance and Immigration*, "With all that has challenged our nation and the world over the last four years, the topics for this and the next cohort of Fellows could not be more prescient." In a ranging phone call in the summer of 2020, I had casually suggested Dance and Democracy as our next topic. I remarked that whatever the outcome of the 2020 election, it would be timely. Little did we know how timely it would be, most notably after the seditious acts of January 6th laid bare the fragility of our democracy. As I wrote last year, "Dance, along with all the performing arts and culture, will be critical to healing us individually and as a nation. It will once again remind us how much unites us in comparison to what divides us." Much like choreography or dance itself, democracy is an ongoing experiment, that is tested everyday in the life of this nation. What brought the thirteen disparate colonies together, from the merchant colonies of the South to those in the North founded by refugees of religious persecution, is difficult to understand in the

modern context. It was and remains a miracle, and one that while replicated by others, has no peer when it comes to longevity and success. As is inscribed on the Great Seal of the United States, "*E pluribus unum*"; *Out of many, one*.

In the past year, we sadly lost a longtime committee member, Nancy Lassalle, who had been foundational to the formation of the Dance Division. It was her passion to shine a brighter light upon the collection and the rich treasure that it is which began the conversation that led to this annual fellowship. Therefore, we honor her this year by dedicating this symposium to her and the memory of her that comforts us all as a blessing. Until the last days of her life, she was articulate in her commitment to dance and its

cornerstone importance in our cultural being as individuals and as a society. No layperson spoke more passionately or with such historical grounding about the art form we so love. Requiescat in pace.

I am sure that you will find this symposium rich in content, new scholarship and new thinking. I encourage each of you to think of people who should apply for our next cohort of Fellows. Please spread the word in advance of the online application deadline which will go live in April.

With my best wishes,

William H. Wright II
Vice Chair, Committee for the
Jerome Robbins Dance Division

Ariel Nereson



Plague Dances: Revisiting Bill T. Jones' AIDS Archive in the Time of COVID

Plague Dances brings together ideas and practices from Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane's choreography, critical race theory, and queer studies in order to make visible the ongoing contributions of queer artists of color to reimagining collectivity. Through highlighting archival materials, the project will show how artists have been developing tools that can address the urgencies of our contemporary moment, when the convergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and institutionalized racial violence demand revitalized democratic formations.

Ariel Nereson, PhD, is a dance scholar, educator, and practitioner. She is currently Assistant Professor of Dance Studies and Director of Graduate Dance at the University at Buffalo - SUNY. Broadly, her research considers the relation of performance histories to practices of racial violence and white supremacy in the US, with a focus on the intersection of racialization, embodiment, and movement-based performance. She is the author of *Democracy Moving: Bill T. Jones, Contemporary American Performance*, and the *Racial Past*, forthcoming from the University of Michigan Press in early 2022.

zavé martohardjono



TERRITORY: The Island Remembers

As preparation for a performance and installation project, TERRITORY: The Island Remembers, martohardjono is researching Balinese dance as ritual community action. TERRITORY critically examines colonial history through a parable of an island that grapples with division and reconciliation. The island's two sides (one colonized and one autonomous) must join together when disaster strikes and become interdependent in protest, mutual aid, and revolution to steward the island towards health. Alongside collaborators, martohardjono is devising choreography for their TERRITORY character based on the dance of Rangda, the Balinese queen of demons whose dance evokes questions of power imbalances, justice, epidemics, and village safety.

zavé martohardjono is a queer, trans, Indonesian-American artist born in Tiohtià:ke/ Montréal and living in Lenapehoking/Brooklyn. They develop performance, dance, installations, films, and write poetry. Dwelling in their ancestors' mythologies and cultural practices, with dreams of a more just future, their work contends with the political histories our bodies carry. zavé's performances have been presented at the 92Y, BAAD!, Bronx Museum of the Arts, Center for Performance Research, El Museo del Barrio, HERE Arts, Issue Project Room, The Kennedy Center, Storm King Art Center, the Wild Project, Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts, Boston Center for the Arts, Tufts University, and elsewhere. In addition to being a 2021 NYPL Dance Research Fellow, they are a 2020 Gibney Dance in Process artist, 2019 Movement Research AIR, and participated in LMCC's 2017-2018 Workspace Residency. Their work has received mention in *Hyperallergic* and *The New York Times*.

Petra Kuppers



Crip/Mad Archive Dances

Kuppers' project redirects the focus of disability dance and performance studies from representation and creation to dramaturgy, i.e. the space of research, audience development, cast development, and textual embodiment of performance. By focusing on dramaturgy as the lens, the project will offer new perspectives on the processes that fuel performance making, and will model how arts-based research methods can interact fruitfully with historical and textual scholarship. In her presentation, Kuppers will share scores developed out of her archival research, and then enacted with local communities: embodied research that calls for ancestors, and touches into history's openings with tenderness, holding pain, and joy.

Petra Kuppers (she/her) is a disability culture activist, a wheelchair dancer, and a community performance artist. She creates participatory community performance environments that think/feel into public space, tenderness, site-specific art, access, and experimentation. Petra grounds herself in disability culture methods, and uses eco somatics, performance, and speculative writing to engage audiences toward more socially just and enjoyable futures. She teaches at the University of Michigan in performance studies and disability culture, and is also an advisor on the low-residency MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts at Goddard College. Kuppers received the American Society for Theatre Research's best dance/theatre book award, the National Women's Caucus for the Arts' Award for Arts and Activism, and her performance poetry collection *Gut Botany* was named one of the top ten US poetry books of 2020 by The New York Public Library. She is the Artistic Director of The Olimpias, an international disability culture collective, and co-creates Turtle Disco, a somatic writing studio, with her wife, poet, and dancer Stephanie Heit, from their home in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Her next academic book project, *Eco Soma: Pain and Joy in Speculative Performance Encounters*, will appear with the University of Minnesota Press in early 2022.

Huiwang Zhang



Soften into the bones/Ooo baby: experimenting with the creative processes of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company

The project attempts to link the lineage of the postmodern movement approach to the historical and current creative processes of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company to establish scholarship on the possibility and significance of process-oriented performance. Drawing on Jones' and Zane's early duets, *Monkey run road*, *Blauvelt Mountain*, *Valley Cottage* and *Continuous replay*, Zhang will look closely on ways of finding movement vocabulary and on the relationship between content and form.

Jiujiang, conceived and raised in south China by working-class parents Cifu Zhang and Dongya Mao. He was introduced to dance at age 9 by his aunt who was a dancer then thought dance is the only way to escape poverty from not becoming a soldier or gangster.

Huiwang completed his formal training in Chinese dance and martial arts at the Beijing Dance Academy. He first came to the States studying alternative ways of expressing in the art form of dance. Later he studied in Germany with Katharina Christl on Choreography.

Zhang became a member of Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company in May 2017. He has choreographed and performed with China National Theater, Paper Tiger Physical Theater, Yinmei Dance, and PearsonWidrig Dance Theater. His first choreography debut was a duet with our names as the title of the piece, 张慧望与王玟甯 which was presented by the Beijing dance festival. His search for movement and structure is fueled by his interests in postmodernism and teachers such as Stephen Koester, Eric Handman, Katharina Christl, Tao Ye, Jennifer Nugent, Germaine Acogny, Gebing Tian, Sarah Pearson, Patrik Widrig, and Yin Mei. Huiwang voluntarily edits a dance e-journal "upsidedown" where he poorly translates and writes perspectives in performance making into the Chinese language.

Jason Samuels Smith



Digging Deeper

Digging deeper is a critical work about restoring the Black Perspective into the Narrative of Tap history in America. After years of being a firsthand witness to the personal truths of Legendary Tap Dancers such as Harold ‘Stumpy’ Cromer and Dr. Leonard Reed, I felt conflicted when reading books about Tap History and culture that directly contradicted the stories of these Masters. My research at the Library is a crucial step in documenting my own understanding and perspective of a Tradition whose presence is both celebrated and demoralized simultaneously.

Jason Samuels Smith, (tap dancer, choreographer, performer) received an Emmy, Dance Magazine Award, American Choreography Award, and Gregory Hines Humanitarian Award. Television/film and choreography credits include Outkast’s *Idlewild*; *Black Nativity*; *Psych*; *Secret Talents of the Stars (MYA)*; *So You Think You Can Dance*; *Dean Hargrove’s Tap Heat*. Stage Credits include Broadway’s *Bring in Da’ Noise*, *Bring in Da’ Funk*; *Debbie Allen’s Soul Possessed*, and *Imagine Tap!*. His touring works included *India Jazz Suites* as documented in “*Upaj: Improvise*,” A.C.G.I. Tap Company, *Going The Miles*, *Chasin’ The Bird*, and Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards’s *And Still You Must Swing*. Director of L.A. Tap Festival and Tap Family Reunion, Samuels Smith supports DRA/Broadway Cares, Tied to Greatness, CTFD/The Actors Fund, Groove with Me, TapTakeOverHarlem, amfAR, and AHF among others. Samuels Smith promotes respect for tap dance, developed a pro tap shoe by BLOCH, and creates opportunities for upcoming generations as he travels as an ambassador for tap around the world.

Tommie-Waheed Evans



“Polytemporal Re-Mixes”

Through focused study, Tommie-Waheed Evan’s practices seek to re-position the past within and alongside both the present and the future. This project’s research includes conversations with Donald Byrd. Citing and sourcing the work *Shards by Byrd* and working through relation, Evans places his choreographic process in close proximity. Within these poetic adjacencies, the sharing of ideas across the works generates a collective compositional form informed by and experienced through blackness and queerness. This project proposes a new kind of future, a polytemporal site, a re-mix, the dance, where the past and present meet to imagine a more expansive future.

2021 Guggenheim Fellow Tommie-Waheed Evans is a queer black dance maker, born and raised in Los Angeles, California, amidst racial divide, gang warfare, and earthquakes. His work explores blackness, spirituality, queerness, and liberation. He began his formal training with Karen McDonald before receiving a fellowship at the Ailey School, and a Master of Fine Arts in Choreography from Jacksonville University. He has toured and performed nationally and internationally as a company member of Lula Washington Dance Theater, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, and Philadanco. Since 2004, he has created more than 50 original dance works that range widely in scope, length, tone, and subject matter. waheedworks, his Philadelphia-based dance company, is the primary vehicle for his creative research. The company’s mission is to create a radically collaborative body of work that speaks to the human condition. His work brings together urban street dance styles and contemporary dance vocabulary through bold and raw movements propelled by gospel music and polyrhythmic sounds. He has also been commissioned to create works for BalletX, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, PHILADANCO, Verb Ballets, Ballet Memphis, The University of the Arts, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Lula Washington Dance Theatre, Louisville Ballet, among others. He has received accolades and honors including 2020 Center of Ballet and Arts resident fellow, 2019 Princess Grace Honoraria Award in Choreography, New Music Project Grant, Howard Gilman Foundation Fellowship, Joffrey Ballet Winning Works 2019, and Ballet Memphis New American Dance Residency 2019.

Schedule a virtual class visit to the Jerome Robbins Dance Division at The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts!



We offer

- Research assistance and catalog instruction
- Curriculum guides
- Virtual class visits, including use of moving image and audio materials, to complement classroom or studio learning
- Online exhibition tours with an emphasis on project-based learning

Contact

Kathleen Leary
Education Coordinator
kathleenleary@nypl.org
nypl.org/lpa



The 2021-2022 Dance Research Fellowship was made possible through the generosity of the Anne H. Bass Foundation, the Geraldine Stutz Trust, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Frederick Loewe Foundation, Nancy Dalva and the Committee for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

*Front and back cover photos Photo of Bill T. Jones by Arnie Zane, 1978.
Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Dance Company records, Jerome Robbins
Dance Division, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.*



New York Public
Library for the
Performing Arts

Jerome Robbins Dance Division
The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts
Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center
40 Lincoln Center Plaza
New York, NY 10023