



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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651 ARTS presents
BLACK DANCE: TRADITION & TRANSFORMATION

FLY

Five First Ladies of Dance

featuring performances by

Germaine Acogny
Carmen de Lavallade
Dianne McIntyre
Bebe Miller
Jawole Willa Jo Zollar

Saturday, May 30, 2009 at 8pm | Sunday, May 31, 2009 at 3pm
Kumble Theater for the Performing Arts at L.I.U.
Brooklyn Campus (Flatbush Ave bet. DeKalb & Willoughby)
Tickets: 718.488-1624 | www.brooklyn.liu.edu/kumbletheater
\$25 | \$30

(Brooklyn, New York, March 16, 2009) In celebration of the enormous contributions of women in the arts and specifically to the leadership of 651, **651 ARTS** dedicates its *20th Anniversary Season* to women artists of African descent. The season concludes with a program featuring performances by some of the most influential Black contemporary dancer/choreographers in history: Germaine Acogny, Carmen de Lavallade, Dianne McIntyre, Bebe Miller and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. These five dance legends will perform in ***FLY: Five First Ladies of Dance***, May 30 and 31 at Long Island University's Kumble Theater for the Performing Arts in Brooklyn.

...MORE

As dancers, company-founders, and inspiration to countless others, these groundbreaking artists are first ladies in every sense of the word - they have helped shape the language and trajectory of contemporary dance, both in the U.S. and abroad, as they have continued to raise the artistic bar and inspire the contemporary dance world with vital work and fresh ideas.

“While we still have the consistent benefit of seeing the choreography of these five luminaries – their performances are less frequent. Yet, they all have so much to say and to offer with their own movement. We wanted to provide a rare opportunity for our audiences to experience undiluted brilliance articulated through these five women’s choreographic visions - as well as through their radiant presence on stage.” 651 ARTS Executive Director, Georgiana Pickett

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Performances will take place at **The Kumble Theater for the Performing Arts at Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus.** Tickets \$25 - \$30

THE ARTISTS

GERMAINE ACOGNY, Untitled (2009), work-in-progress

"While my choreography spans the world, I want once more to stage my convictions as an artist, with the alphabet I have developed. I do believe that the creation I am thinking of and aspiring to will liberate the strengths of dance which are within me, waiting to be born. I am quite an ordinary dancer of the 21st century: an African of the Yoruba ethnic group, with Senegalese and French nationality. Mixed race sticks to my skin without altering its color, and this mix of ingredients makes me just want to dance, to dance beyond the words and weariness. More than drawing images, I want to "face up to the hope" of my various Africas and proclaim it with insight and conviction." -Germaine Acogny

BIOGRAPHY

Senegalese and French, **Germaine Acogny** founded her first dance studio in Dakar, 1968. Thanks to the influence of the dances she had inherited from her grandmother, a Yoruba priest, and to her studies of traditional African dances and Occidental dances (classic, modern) in Paris and New York, Germaine Acogny created her own modern dance technique and is considered the "mother of Contemporary African dance". Acogny's critically acclaimed all-male dance troupe **Compagnie Jant-Bi** was first presented in New York City by 651 ARTS in 2007 (*Fagaala*) and garnered Acogny a Bessie Award (New York Dance and Performance Award) for choreography. Acogny's *Les Écailles de la Mémoires* was developed in partnership with **Urban Bush Women** and was presented at BAM in 2008.



CARMEN DE LAVALLADE, New work TBD (2009)

"Few people in the performing arts can match the accomplishments of the supremely elegant Carmen de Lavallade." - Valerie Gladstone, *Dance Teacher*

"...it takes a dancer, actor and choreographer of Carmen de Lavallade's gifts and experience to create a bare-bones image onstage and fill it with unabashed emotion." - Anna Kisselgoff, *New York Times*

BIOGRAPHY

Carmen de Lavallade first appeared in NYC with the Lester Horton Dance Theatre and subsequently made her Broadway debut with Alvin Ailey in *House of Flowers*. She has appeared in a number of films for Twentieth Century Fox including *Carmen Jones* (1954), in which she danced with Ailey and Jack Cole. As a dancer she has had ballets created for her by Alvin Ailey, Lester Horton, John Butler, Glen Tetley, Agnes De Mille, Geoffrey Holder, Donald McKayle, Louis Johnson and Tally Beatty. She was a principle dancer with the Metropolitan Opera, a guest artist with American Ballet Theater and a soloist with the NYC Opera. In 1996, de Lavallade founded performance ensemble PARADIGM along with Gus Solomons, Jr. and which now includes Hope Clarke, Valda Setterfield, Keith Sabado and Michael Blake. As an actress, Ms. de Lavallade is currently appearing in the Classical Theatre of Harlem's production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters* presented at Harlem Stage.

DIANNE MCINTYRE, *If You Don't Know* (2009), work-in-progress

"Ms. McIntyre and her dances are like old friends who remain current and present no matter the time lapse since the last encounter. She has had a strong though typically soft-soften impact on New York dance, through her unusual fusion of improvisational movement and jazz music and her exploration of black American lives, both famous and little known" Jennifer Dunning, NY Times

BIOGRAPHY

Dianne McIntyre has developed a distinctive body of work that features an idiosyncratic use of music, a dynamic movement style, and important choreographic explorations of lives of Black Americans. In the 1970's McIntyre emerged, among African Americans, as a new voice in the front line of modern dance. Dianne McIntyre's **Sounds in Motion** company and school was a Harlem institution in the 1970's and 80's and served as a gathering place for artists – musicians, visual artists, poets, and theatre artists. Signature choreography for Sounds in Motion includes: *Take-Off from a Forced Landing* (1984), based on her mother's stories as an aviator; *Life's Force* (1979), a lively interaction of vibrant music and moves; *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1986), based on the Zora Neale Hurston novel; and, *Mississippi Talks, Ohio Walks* (1984), nightclub vignettes of dance and Olu Dara's Okra Orchestra. McIntyre was honored with the American Dance Festival 2008 Balasaraswati/Joy Ann Dewey Beinecke Chair for Distinguished Teaching and a 2007 Guggenheim Fellowship for Choreography.

**BEBE MILLER**, *Rain* (1989)

"*Rain* is a work built by struggle, ultimately redeemed. It is a work crafted in graphic contrast: opulent, red velvet dress / green, fragrant grass; the effort it takes to endure/the peace of surrender; a percussive, open-throated growling score / a soaring soprano voice. It was the Villa-Lobos piece that first inspired me, soprano Salli Terri singing Villa-Lobos' *Bachianas Brasilieras*. It seemed to be the most beautiful song I'd ever heard and I felt I didn't have the temperament to approach it; I was too intense, too overwrought. So I asked my collaborator, Hearn Gadbois, to build a way 'in' that could take me there, take me home. The resulting work seems to be about the effort to find release, to find peace. As such it can be viewed on many levels: the spiritual, the political, the personal. As a woman I felt, then, that I had to come to terms with something (myself?) in order to allow peace to enter - struggle was what I took for granted. As an African-American, I felt - the same thing." Bebe Miller

BIOGRAPHY

A native New Yorker, Bebe Miller has been making dances for over twenty-five years, and has created over forty original works for companies here and abroad. Her interest in finding a physical language for the human condition is a connecting thread throughout her work, and, in order to further a process of group inquiry, she formed **Bebe Miller Company** in 1985. After two decades of national and international touring, the company is now structured as a "virtual company," with dancers, collaborating artists and designers living in various locations around the U.S. In recent years, she has been investigating a mix of theatrical narrative, performance and design to expand this language, most notably in *Landing/Place* (2005) and *Verge* (2001), both works receiving New York Dance and Performance Awards (a.k.a. 'The Bessies'). In 1999, she, along with choreographer Ralph Lemon and filmmaker Isaac Julien, completed the award-winning, collaborative film, *Three*. Miller has been

honored with four Bessie (New York Dance and Performance) Awards, a John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, an American Choreographer's Award and Artist's Fellowships from the Ohio Arts Council and New York Foundation for the Arts.



JAWOLE WILLA JO ZOLLAR, *Bring 'Em Home* (2009), work-in-progress

In this new work, Zollar explores the New Orleans tradition of Second Line dancing- a part of traditional brass band parades in which members of the public dance behind the "First Line" of family in funerals and other processions.

"I hope that this piece can bring some light to a tradition that dates back a couple of centuries in New Orleans. Second Line dancing is the 'dance of the people' a spontaneous tradition that has been passed down through the generations" Jawole Willa Jo Zollar

BIOGRAPHY

Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, Founder and Artistic Director of **Urban Bush Women** was born and raised in Kansas City, MO. She trained with Joseph Stevenson, a student of the legendary Katherine Dunham, and received a B.A. in dance from the University of Missouri at Kansas City and an M.F.A. in dance from Florida State University. In 1980, Zollar moved to New York City to study with Dianne McIntyre at her dance studio/company, Sounds in Motion. She founded Urban Bush Women in 1984. In addition to thirty-two works for UBW, Jawole has created choreography for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ballet Arizona, Philadanco, University of Maryland, University of Florida, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company and others. Her many positions as a teacher and speaker include Worlds of Thought Resident Scholar at Mankato State University (1993-94), Regents Lecturer in the Departments of Dance and World Arts and Culture at UCLA (1995-96), Visiting Artist at Ohio State University (1996), and the Abramowitz Memorial Lecturer at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1998). She was named Alumna of the Year by University of Missouri (1993) and Florida State University (1997), and awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Columbia College, Chicago (2002). In 2006, Zollar was recognized with a New York Dance & Performance Award, a 'Bessie', for her choreography of the Pearl Primus-inspired dance, *Walking With Pearl...Southern Diaries*. Most recently Zollar was named a United States Artists 'Wynn Fellow'.

Coming soon to 651 ARTS

Toni Blackman

Travels of a Lyrical Ambassador

Thursday, May 14 at 8pm

BRICstudio

651 ARTS presents the sensational musician, poet, activist and international champion of hip-hop culture, Toni Blackman for this work-in-progress showing of *Travels of a Lyrical Ambassador*, an examination of the power of music and poetry to inspire personal and social change. One of the first hip-hop artists to break ground using hip hop to promote international peace and understanding Toni Blackman never imagined that hip hop would be so universally spoken in places such as Swaziland, Botswana, Senegal, South Africa, Ghana, Indonesia, Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines. *Travels of a Lyrical Ambassador* examines her belief in the power of music and poetry to inspire personal and social change.

"A one-woman revolution of poetry and microphone," the award-winning Blackman is known for the irresistible, contagious energy of her performances and her groundbreaking work in the world of hip-hop. She has shared the stage with such luminaries as Erykah Badu, Mos Def, The Roots, Wu Tang Clan, GURU, Bahamadia, Boot Camp Clic, and Me'Shell Ndegeocello.

Black Dance: Tradition and Transformation has been a major 651 ARTS program since its inception in 2000, and has provided a platform for the unparalleled contributions of performers and choreographers from across the diaspora.

651 ARTS is committed to developing, producing and presenting performance and cultural programming from the African Diaspora, with a primary focus on contemporary performing arts. 651 ARTS serves the cultural life of New York City, with a particular focus on Brooklyn, one of America's most culturally diverse communities.

651 ARTS' 2009 Season is sponsored in part by the following: Axe-Houghton Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, Con Edison, City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Ford Foundation, Independence Community Foundation, Harkness Foundation for Dance, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, Council Member Letitia James, Mertz Gilmore, National Endowment for the Arts, National Performance Network, Tides Foundation, and Lila Acheson Wallace Theater Fund



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