

ISHMAEL HOUSTON-JONES,
RALPH LEMON, AND BEBE MILLER
RELATIONS

Program
Notes

MCA
STAGE

Fri-Sat
Nov 2-3, 2018

Edlis Neeson
Theater

Eyes
Wide

Lights
Low

at MCA
Stage

Summer/Fall
2018

Relations running time is
seventy-five minutes with
no intermission.

SUPPORT FOR THIS
MCA STAGE PROJECT

Thanks to Ishmael Houston-Jones's assistant Seta Morton for her diligent communication.

Deep gratitude to Lydia Bell and Judy Hussie-Taylor of Danspace Project at St. Mark's Church for their generosity with advice and resources, as well as their openness to expanding this conversation to Chicago.

Gratitude to former MCA Stage staff John Rich, Phill Cabeen, Kasey Trouba, and curator Yolanda Cesta Cursach for their work and support of this project along the way.



CHICAGO DANCE
HISTORY PROJECT

PERFORMERS	Ishmael Houston-Jones, Ralph Lemon, and Bebe Miller
PRODUCTION	
Lighting design	Stan Pressner
Project manager	Lila Hurwitz
MCA PRODUCTION CREW	
Sound Engineer	Mati Johnson
Lighting Supervisor	Joseph Staffa
Electricians	Joseph Staffa, Mati Johnson, Alexis Birts, Devonte Washington, and Megan Turnquist

FROM THE CURATOR

Last fall, I asked Ishmael Houston-Jones how he felt about being repeatedly asked to speak about experimental and improvised dance of the late 1970s–1990s in downtown New York. Dance history is now regularly examined for the perspectives it has omitted; I wondered if this question was related to his being one of few black dance artists in that scene. Ishmael's answer was indirect but practical, just like his style of movement: "You know, I've never actually *performed* with Ralph and Bebe. I'd love to do that."

As the three artists and I began to discuss *Relations*, it seemed their pasts might be understood more effectively by looking at their dancing bodies in the present—acknowledging where they've been, how they create together, and where they will move next. Their work shaped the scene that younger generations of dancers now move through; I've looked to each of them over my career as guideposts for what dance can be and what choices black artists can make. It's an honor to present them on the MCA Stage and in Chicago. Their improvised performances are truly a reunion, as together they navigate their relationships and their artistry.

Tara Aisha Willis,
Associate Curator of Performance

ISHMAEL HOUSTON-JONES, RALPH LEMON, AND BEBE MILLER *RELATIONS*

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Fri-Sat
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MCA
STAGE

Edlis Neeson
Theater

**You're invited
to step
"BACKSTAGE
WITH BEBE"
A Benefit for
MoMing Dance
& Arts Center
on Wednesday,
December 3, 1986**

It's a unique opportunity to go behind-the-scenes and watch the creation of daring dance spotlighting guest artist Bebe Miller & Company. Experience MoMing magic and see what actually happens before the audience arrives.

Bebe Miller's dances are acclaimed for their ingenuity, exhilarating energy, and fast-paced drama. Ms. Miller recently received a prestigious "Bessie" (New York Dance and Performance Award) for outstanding choreography.

- ★ 6:30 p.m. Champagne reception
- ★ 7:15 p.m. Open rehearsal previewing Bebe Miller & Company's December 4 premiere at MoMing
- ★ 8:15 p.m. Post-rehearsal buffet dinner catered by Jerome's
- ★ AND, a raffle for a Windy City Performing Arts Weekend!

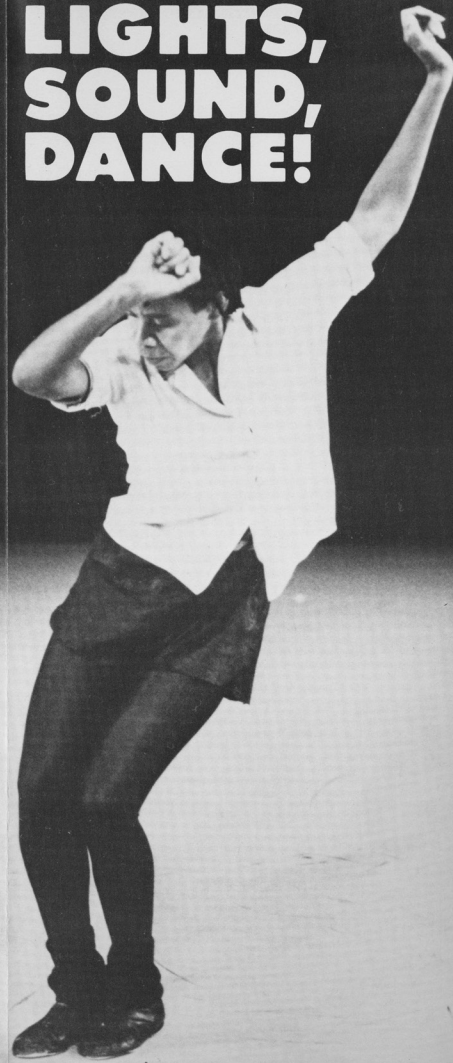
RESERVATIONS - \$35 per person
Contributions are tax-deductible to the extent provided by law.

All Benefit proceeds will help purchase much needed Sound and Lighting Equipment for MoMing. MoMing Dance & Arts Center is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit arts organization.

MoMing

Dance & Arts Center
1034 West Barry
Chicago, Illinois 60657
(312) 472-7662

LIGHTS, SOUND, DANCE!



RELATED PROGRAMS

MCA Stage's series of artist-centered talks, workshops, and open studios engages the public with the artists in intimate settings and provides a closer look at the creative process.

POST-SHOW TALK

Sat, Nov 3, immediately following the performance

The audience is invited to stay for a Q&A session with the artists led by Associate Curator of Performance Tara Aisha Willis directly after the performance.

GROUNDINGS

Nov 3, 2018-May 12, 2019

Organized by Assistant Curator Grace Deveney and Associate Curator of Performance Tara Aisha Willis, *Groundings* explores movement—both seen and unseen—through a series of residencies with artists working in dance, music, and performance art alongside works in the MCA's collection.

Still images of Ralph Lemon and Bebe Miller from Isaac Julien's 1999 film *Three* are on display in the exhibition, presented in the Turner Galleries on the MCA's fourth floor. A full schedule of artist residencies and public showings is listed online at mcachicago.org/exhibitions/2018/groundings.

CHICAGO DANCE HISTORY PROJECT

To mark the occasion of these historic performances taking place in Chicago, as well as their deep and ongoing contributions to the field of dance, the Chicago Dance History Project is collecting oral histories from Ishmael Houston-Jones, Ralph Lemon, and Bebe Miller in conversation. Video recordings of this interview will be made available online at chicagodancehistory.org.

GUEST TEACHING AT COLUMBIA COLLEGE CHICAGO

Tue-Wed, Oct 30-31

Through an ongoing partnership with Columbia College Chicago, Ishmael Houston-Jones and Bebe Miller give guest-artist master classes in the Department of Dance.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

ISHMAEL HOUSTON-JONES (PERFORMER)

is an improvisational and often-collaborative choreographer, curator, and teacher. In 1982 he curated *Parallels* at Danspace Project, asking, "What is post-Alvin Ailey Black Dance?" Thirty years later, with PLATFORM 2012: *Parallels*, he offered an updated reflection on the relationship between dance makers of the African diaspora and postmodern choreography. In 2010, after a ten-year hiatus from choreographing—during which he performed in the works of Miguel Gutierrez, Yvonne Meier, Lionel Popkin, and others—Houston-Jones restaged *THEM*, a 1985 collaboration with writer Dennis Cooper and composer Chris Cochrane. The work had premiered during the AIDS epidemic of the 1980–90s in New York and explored aggression and sexuality. Houston-Jones received the Doris Duke Impact Award in 2015 and the CalArts Herb Alpert Award in the Arts in 2016.

LILA HURWITZ (PROJECT MANAGER)

is principal consultant at Doolittle+Bird, specializing in project management, communications, production, and grant writing for artists and others. Previously she was associate director and director of communications at Artist Trust; administrative/coartistic director of Dance Art Group, producers of the Seattle Festival of Dance Improvisation from 1994 to 2011; designer of *Contact Quarterly* magazine for eleven years; and a dancer working with Nina Martin, Lucia Neare, Karen Nelson, Lisa Nelson, Stephanie Skura, Crispin Spaeth, and others. She received the inaugural Velocity Dance Center Dance Champion award in 2011 for her arts advocacy work.

RALPH LEMON (PERFORMER)

is a choreographer, writer, visual artist, curator, and the artistic director of Cross Performance, a company dedicated to the creation of cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary performance and presentation. His most recent works

include *Scaffold Room* (2015), *Four Walls* (2012), and *How Can You Stay in The House All Day and Not Go Anywhere?* (2008–10), a work with live performance, film, and visual art that toured throughout the United States. The immersive visual art installation *Meditation*, part of *How Can You Stay*, was acquired for the permanent collection of the Walker Art Center in 2012. In January 2011 a reimagined section of *How Can You Stay* was performed at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, in conjunction with *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*.

Lemon curated the fall 2012 performance series *Some sweet day* at MoMA and the acclaimed 2010 performance series *i get lost* at Danspace Project in New York. His solo visual art exhibitions have been shown at the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; The Kitchen, New York; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis. He is the recipient of three Bessie Awards, two Foundation for Contemporary Art Awards, two New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowships, a Guggenheim Fellowship, and a CalArts Herb Alpert Award. Lemon has held teaching positions or residencies at Harvard University, the Krannert Center, Princeton University, Stanford University, Temple University, and Yale University. He is currently professor of practice of Theatre Arts and Performance Studies at Brown University and a visual arts mentor at Columbia University School of the Arts. He was the 2014 Annenberg Fellow at MoMA, where he curated a series of "performance essays" titled *Value Talks*. His book *Come home Charley Patton*, the final installment in the series *The Geography Trilogy*, was published in 2013 by Wesleyan University Press. He was shortlisted for the 2016 Guggenheim Hugo Boss Prize and received a 2015 National Medal of Arts from President Barack Obama. MoMA published the first monograph of his work as part of their new Modern Dance series in 2016.

THE VOICE

APRIL 24, 1984

Ishmael Houston-Jones: The Politics of Improvisation

By Noel Carroll



The concerns of the student movement of the late '60s and early '70s are a key legacy to the contemporary art scene. The reason is simple. For the students of yesterday, radical politics were a crucial part of their rites of passage. And now they have come of

age, and, to a limited extent, to professional power—especially in the worlds of art and information. Journalists, critics, filmmakers, curators, painters, academics, programmers, and dancers, as well, who served their apprenticeships during the upheaval of Vietnam, have acquired a recognizable level of authority in their respective fields, and are now able to bring their political preoccupations before the public. The result is that, though the present moment lacks the potentially mass support of an earlier period, the desire to think through the nature and goals of political art and the will to attempt to implement them continues with high seriousness.

Ishmael Houston-Jones, a rising choreographer and performance artist, attended college during the height of the student protest movement. He was a member of the black student union at his school and participated in student mobilizations against the war in Southeast Asia. Before college, he had worked in Eugene McCarthy's campaign and at the peace center in his native Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. After college, he traveled to Israel in order to learn about socialism by participating in the life of the kibbutz. Houston-Jones has never abandoned the commitments to cooperativeness and democracy that shaped his interest in socialist living. In fact, these very values serve as animating presuppositions for much of his choreography.

For Houston-Jones improvisation is a major choreographic method. Moreover, his understanding of the significance of improvisation is stated in explicitly social terms. He argues that particularly contact improvisation is the most political of dance forms because it depends entirely

upon "free, spontaneous, and mutual cooperation." When he speaks of contact improvisation, you feel the presence of a man who has had intimations of a moral utopia.

His interest in improvisation began when he returned to Philadelphia from Europe and joined Group Motion, a troupe which had originated in Berlin. But two years later, he found its multirule-generated improvisation too constricting, and with Terry Fox and musician Jeff Caine, he began a company called A Way of Improvising.

Houston-Jones traces a lineage

through his contact with Fox to Yvonne Rainer and to Judson Church. And he certainly relies upon a '60s, Judson-oriented vocabulary of democracy and egalitarianism to describe his aesthetic choices. For example, several of his recent pieces with Fred Holland, such as *Babble: First Impressions of the White Man and Cowboys, Dreams and Ladders*, propose male dancers conversing and interacting as if at rehearsal. For him, this symbolizes a conviction that there should be no hierarchical separation between the everyday and art. In *Relatives*, Houston-Jones carries his mother onstage, a task



ACCESSIBILITY
INFORMATION

Select MCA Stage performances include open-captioning, sign-interpretation, listening devices, or are relaxed sensory.

Please call 312-397-4010 in advance to reserve seats and inclusive services.

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Single performance tickets starting at \$30; \$10 for students, limited availability.

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* Not accepted for special ticketed exhibitions.
** Regular price, in-stock merchandise only; no other discounts apply.

RALPH LEMON AND COMPANY

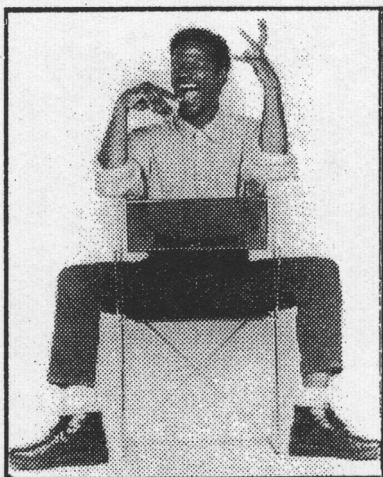


Photo: Branco Gaica

"the contemporary dance
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Box Office: 312.472.9894

March 1, 2, 3 & 4, 1990
\$12, \$10 Students & Seniors

This program is supported in part by the National Performance Network, Arts Midwest, the National Endowment for the Arts and the Illinois Arts Council.

BEBE MILLER (PERFORMER), a native New Yorker, first performed her choreography at New York's Dance Theater Workshop in 1978 after receiving her MA in dance from The Ohio State University in 1975. She formed Bebe Miller Company in 1985. Known for its mix of virtuosic dancing and fundamental humanity, her choreography has been produced at major dance centers across the country and in Europe and Africa. Her work has been commissioned by Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Boston Ballet, PHILADANCO, Ailey II, and Phoenix Dance Theatre in the United Kingdom, among others. She has been honored with four Bessies as well as fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, Ohio Arts Council, and Guggenheim Foundation, and she was named a United States Artists Ford Fellow in 2010. A professor in dance at The Ohio State University since 2000, Miller is a distinguished professor in their College of Arts and Humanities and received an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Ursinus College in 2009. In 2012 she was designated as one of the inaugural class of Doris Duke Artists, a program of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation's Performing Artist Awards. Most recently, she was honored by Movement Research as an honoree at their 2015 Gala along with Tere O'Connor and Moira Brennan. Miller currently lives in Columbus, Ohio.

STAN PRESSNER'S
(LIGHTING DESIGNER)

lighting for dance, theater, opera, and music events can be found in the repertoires of The New York City Ballet, The Lyon Opera Ballet, Geneva Opera Ballet, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, Ralph Lemon and Company, Bayerische Staatsballett, The Atlanta Ballet, The Boston Ballet, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, The Alvin Ailey Repertory Ensemble, Stephen Petronio and Dancers, and The Netherlands Dance Theatre, among others. Recent credits include *Twelfth Night* and *Richard III* (Shakespeare's Globe on Broadway); Jessye Norman's *Sacred Ellington* (Carnegie Hall); *Peer Gynt* (Guthrie); *Twelfth Night* and *Measure for Measure* (Shakespeare's

Globe); *La clemenza di Tito*, *The Abduction from The Seraglio*, and *The Rake's Progress* (Bayerische Staatsoper), Mikhail Baryshnikov's *Dances with Piano . . .*, and Jean Genet's *The Blacks* (Market Theatre of Johannesburg). He was University of California, Los Angeles's visiting professor of dance lighting from 1992 to 1994, Juilliard School faculty from 2000 to 2008, and resident lighting designer of the Lincoln Center Festival from 1996 to 2010. Television credits include *Two Moon July* (The Kitchen and PBS), *Night Music* (WHYY-TV Philadelphia), Bravo's *Inside the Actor's Studio*, and *Airdance (Alive from Off-Center)*. Pressner received a 1988 Bessie Award for cumulative achievement, a 1997 Cable Ace Award for *Inside the Actor's Studio*, and nominations in 1988, 1991, and 1994 for The American Theatre Wing Design Award.

DATE NIGHT



Marisol Escobar. Photo: Herman Hiller.

Join us for dinner or drinks before or after the theater at Marisol, named one of the "hottest restaurants in Chicago" by Zagat and one of *Vogue's* "Six Chicago Restaurants You Should Know About Now." Call 312-799-3599 to make reservations.

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SEASON CALENDAR

2018

Aug 18

Tamar-kali and Damon Locks
*Demon Fruit Blues and
Where Future Unfolds*

Aug 24-25,
Aug 31-Sep 1

Chicago Dancemakers Forum
SHareOUT!

Oct 3-4, 6-7

Dorothee Munyaneza/Kadidi
Unwanted

Nov 2-3

Ishmael Houston-Jones,
Ralph Lemon, and Bebe Miller
Relations

Dec 5-9

Claudia Rankine, Will Rawls,
and John Lucas
What Remains

2019

Jan 24-27

Mariano Pensotti
*Arde brillante en los bosques
de la noche (Burning bright
in the forest of the night)*

Feb 7-10

Ingri Fiksdal and
Jonas Corell Petersen
STATE

Feb 11-13

Ingri Fiksdal
Diorama

Mar 21-24

Annie Dorsen
The Great Outdoors

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Program notes
compiled by
Laura Paige Kyber

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Lead support for the 2018-19 season of MCA Stage is provided by Elizabeth A. Liebman.

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MUSEUM OF
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CHICAGO

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MCA Stage is supported by Enact, a group of MCA donors dedicated to supporting the Museum's renowned Stage programs.

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Circle Donor membership is required to join Enact. Enact donations begin at \$1,000 annually. For more information on benefits or to join, contact us at enact@mcachicago.org or 312-397-4044.

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ABOUT MCA STAGE

As an internationally renowned institution devoted to contemporary culture, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago presents the most thought-provoking visual art and performing arts of our time. MCA Stage is a vibrant series presenting theater, dance, and music by leading artists from the United States and around the world in the MCA's three-hundred seat Edlis Neeson Theater.

MCA Stage's groundbreaking performances are an integral part of the MCA's artist-activated, audience-engaged programming. Along with the museum's exhibitions and educational initiatives, they encourage a broad and diverse community to experience and discuss the work and ideas of living artists.

PARKING

Validate your ticket at the coat check for \$12 parking in the MCA garage (220 E Chicago Ave) and the Bernardin garage (747 North Wabash). The \$12 parking is limited to six hours on the date of performance.

LOST AND FOUND

To inquire about a lost item, call the museum at 312-280-2660. Unclaimed articles are held for thirty days.

SEATING

Please switch off all noisemaking devices while you are in the theater.

Patrons are seated at the management's discretion. Food and open beverage containers are not allowed in the seating area.

REPRODUCTION

Unauthorized recording and reproduction of a performance are prohibited.

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