



7NMS| Marjani Forté-Saunders + Everett Saunders

- Prophet: The Order of the Lyricist

Dance

SEP 21 - 23, 2023

8:30 PM

PRESENTED BY

REDCAT

Roy and Edna Disney

CalArts Theater

CaLARTS

California Institute of the Arts

We gratefully acknowledge that we operate on the traditional lands of the Tongva, Tataviam, and Chumash peoples—including the Gabrieleño, Fernandefío, and Venturefío; members of the Takic and Chumashan language families; and other Indigenous peoples who made their homes in and around the area we now call Los Angeles. We honor their ancestors past, present, and future, and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our society.

7NMS| Marjani Forté-Saunders + Everett Saunders

• Prophet: The Order of the Lyricist

Choreographer, Performer: MARJANI FORTÉ-SAUNDERS

Writer, Composer, Sound Designer, Performer: EVERETT SAUNDERS

Musician/Co-Composer: CHRIS RYAN WILLIAMS

Media Designer, Filmmaker, Thought Partner: MEENA MURUGESAN

Dancer: MARCELLA LEWIS

Directorial Consultant: D. SABELA GRIMES

Dramaturg, Literary Coach: SHARON BRIDGFORTH, OMI OSUN JONI L. JONES

Hip Hop Connoisseur, Thought Partner: RAHAMAN "KIL" KILPATRICK

Costume Design: ZOE'S VINTIQUE, SHVAWN "SIREN" BAUSLEY

Documentation and Storytelling Videographer: RASHAUD MICHEL

Project Manager, Producer: MARS GARCIA

Production Manager, Lighting Designer: JOHN D. ALEXANDER

Special thanks to the collaborators of this edition: Shvawn "Siren" Bausley, Zoe's Vintique, Sydney Reece, Miles Robinson, The Nest Creatives, HeyyHealer Holistic Health + Wellness, Holly Johnston/Responsive Body, and USC Kaufman School of Dance. Big Love to the Artists and and Family that have contributed their genius and energy to the life of this work: Rahaman Kilpatrick, Drom, Classic, ANI, Sirc, The Baylor Family, WalKat, Khazire, Fred, Mike Hernandez, Matic, Dubois Akeen, Jeremy Guyton, Kayla Farrish, Roobi Gaskins, KAART Gallery, Forté Construction Services, and Tina Love Sweets.

This work was supported and co-produced by the platform, Art x Power. 7NMS| Art x Power is 2020 recipient of the WHH Foundation seed grant, and a Doris Duke Charitable Foundation grant recipient for Strategic Planning, with consultants P.S. 314. Art x Power is a 7NMS Platform, offering a radical approach to investing in and building resilient futures for Black Artists and Experimenters.

This engagement of 7NMS| Marjani Forté Saunders + Everett Saunders is made possible through the ArtsCONNECT Program of Mid Atlantic Arts with support from the National Endowment of the Arts. midatlanticarts.org

Prophet: The Order of the Lyricist is co-commissioned by Abrons Arts Center and Kelly Strayhorn Theater, and is a recipient of: The New England Foundation 2021 National Dance Production & Touring Award, the 2020 New Music USA Award, the 2020 MAP Fund, National Performance Network - 2023 Documentation & Storytelling Fund, and The Princess Grace Foundation USA - Special Project Grant.



ABOUT THE WORK

A four-year archival, research, and multi-genre storytelling project on the life journey of a lyricist, *Prophet: The Order of the Lyricist*, illuminates the distinctive practices, systems, philosophies, and political ideologies that have shaped hip-hop's emcee/lyricists. The Lyricist is an Order of craft, of prose, oration, and exposé. Through the coming-of-age story of Everett as "Mental," the emcee, audiences are invited to enter a world of courage, self-determination, and devotion. Using text, sound, film, and performance, *Prophet* is a critical and embodied offering to the scholarly, civic, and ancient bodies of radical Black expression.

Please note: Prophet: The Order of the Lyricist contains loud sounds.

The program includes a post-performance talk on September 22 and 23, moderated by Hip Hop musicologist and founder of the Apt. 5B podcast, Rahaman "Kil" Kilpatrick.

Runtime: Approx. 60 minutes, no intermission

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

7NMS|Marjani Forté-Saunders + Everett Saunders Operating in California and New York, 7NMS is the public emergence of Marjani Forté-Saunders and Everett Saunders' work as a collaborative team, radically engaging art as a medium of elevation, healing, and futurity. With seven award-winning projects in 10 years, 7NMS tote a revolutionary commitment to the Black radical imagination. *Prophet* is an awardee of the 2020 MAP Fund and 2020 New Music USA Award, and the National Dance Project Production and Touring grant 2021. Marjani is a 2019 FCA Fellowship awardee, a three-time Bessie award winner, and an inaugural recipient of the Jerome Hill, Dance USA and UBW Choreographic Center Fellowships. Everett is the composer and thought partner behind the award-winning and internationally touring production, *Memoirs of a ... Unicorn*, and a two-time New Music USA Awardee. His recent work can be found as composer/sound designer on Jaamil Kosoko's *Chameleon*, Mayfield Brooks' *Whale Fall*, and Urban Bush Women's *Hair & Other Stories* (2018).

While incubating PROPHET through their Fall '20 and Winter '21 Satellite Residencies, in their newly erected home studios, they have worked in close collaboration with co-visionaries d. Sabela grimes (movement composer and sound archivist), Meena Murugesan (filmmaker & media designer), and Marc Winston (photographer), producing PROPHET's latest filmic iteration, commissioned by Jacob's Pillow.

Chris Ryan Williams is an interdisciplinary artist based in Brooklyn, New York and most at home collaborating with improvisers and experimentalists. During his years in Los Angeles, Williams was mentored by multi-reedist Bennie Maupin whose teachings instilled a conviction in finding one's own path in life through sound. Concurrently, he spent time in the community band Pan-Afrikan Peoples Arkestra. These collaborations continue to influence his musical journey as a recent

addition to the New York creative community, one in which elders and young folk (in spirit, age, and experience) share a space in creation. Williams' work explores the dyad of ancestral trauma and power existing in all Black Americans: *I Ain't Got No Spare* (2019) is a modular video and performance piece that explores the rich legacy of Black music and film in Los Angeles; *House of Peace* (2021) is a video installation and soundscape blending fabricated and 'real' memories across generations; *Of Yours* (2020) is a free jazz setting for imagined exchanges between Black leaders. Recent grants and residencies include, Foundation of Contemporary Arts, Musik installationen Nürnberg, Atlantic Center for the Arts WasteLAnd, and MATA Festival. Williams has collaborated with Bennie Maupin, Nicole Mitchell, Fay Victor, Luke Stewart.

Meena Murugesan (they/them) is an award winning video artist and movement artist living on Tongva-Kizh land, or Los Angeles. Meena creates experimental non-linear narratives at the intersection of live performance, video art installation, and social issues. Grappling with the practices of improvisation, somatic bodywork, brahminized bharatanatyam, collage, projection mapping, and contemplative documentary, Meena centers an anti-racist, anti-caste, feminist, queer, melanin-rich creative liberatory practice. They are directing a multimedia series entitled *Dravidian Futurities* about African-Dravidian connections, casteism, colorism, and trance/possession movement rituals. Meena is a current founding member of two collectives: SADA (South Asian Dance Artists, Mellon awardee 2021-2026) and SiriusShapeShifters (with d. Sabela grimes). Meena's dance, video art, or video projection design work has been presented at Getty Museum, Getty Villa, Underground Museum, Broad Museum, MOCA LA, The Ford Amphitheater, Pieter, LACE, UCLA, ODC, YBCA, Dance Mission, Abrons Arts Center, Gibney, NYLA, 651 Arts, EMPAC, Jacob's Pillow, SOPHIENSALE, Pearlstein Gallery, Black Star Film Festival, ICA Philadelphia, Opera Omaha, Tangente, MAI, Le Gesu, Monument National etc.

Marcella Lewis is a recipient of the Princess Grace Award in Dance. Ms. Lewis hails from Los Angeles, CA, where she began her dance training at the Lula Washington Dance Theatre. She then continued her studies at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA). She later received her BFA from the Purchase Conservatory of Dance in 2016, where she was awarded the Adopt-A-Dancer Scholarship. She joined A.I.M by Kyle Abraham in fall 2016, as a dancer, soloist, and company liaison. Marcella was featured with A.I.M in *Dance Magazine* in August 2017 and was mentioned in *The New York Times* for the A.I.M's Joyce season in May 2018. Marcella is currently a performer with TRIBE multidisciplinary visual performances and is a freelance artist, choreographer and teacher in Los Angeles and New York.

d. Sabela grimes – be a trans-media storyteller, sonic ARKivist, movement composer. Improvisational systems and collaboration are at the heart of his creative practice, inhaling through socio-historical observation, self-examination and speculative meanderings, exhaling through layers of interconnected sonic, visual and kinesthetic arrangements. Sabela be investing in the poetics of assemblage, the magic of mutability, mastering misuse. Past projects include *Philly*

XP, World War WhatEver, 40 Acres & A Microchip and *ELECTROGYNOUS*. Sabela's current collaborative endeavor with Meena Murugesan, *Parable of Portals*, dreams Butler's professional and personal writings into live performances, audio-visual installations, site-specific short films, and interactive community activations. Each experience realizes quantum Blackness as a means to play within the nowness of recurring futures. On faculty at USC's Gloria Kaufman School of Dance, he continues to cultivate, Funkamental MediKinetics, a movement system that draws on the layered dance training, community building, and spiritual practices evident in Black vernacular and Hip Hop/Street dance forms. He is a 2023 USC Associates Award for Artistic Expression recipient, 2021 Bessie Award winner for Outstanding Performer, 2017 County of Los Angeles Performing Arts Fellow and 2014 United States Artists Rockefeller Fellow.

A 2022 Winner of Yale's Windham Campbell Prize in Drama, **Sharon Bridgforth** is 2020-2023 Playwrights' Center Core Member, a 2022-2023 McKnight National Fellow and a New Dramatists alum. She has received support from The Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, Creative Capital, MAP Fund and the National Performance Network. A MAP Fund Scaffolding for Practicing Artists Coach, Sharon's work is featured in *Teaching Black: The Craft of Teaching on Black Life and Literature* and *Mouths of Rain an Anthology of Black Lesbian Thought*. Sharon's Lambda Literary award winning, *the bull-jean stories* will be produced by Pillsbury House + Theatre in October/November 2022, directed by Signe Hriday. Her *dat Black Mermaid Man Lady/The Show* is streaming on the Twin Cities PBS platform. Sharon has served as a dramaturg for: the Urban Bush Women Choreographic Center Initiative's Choreographic Fellowship program and is proud to be in deep process with 7NMS. | sharonbridgforth.com.

Omi Osun Joni L. Jones is an artist/scholar/facilitator who employs Black Feminist aesthetics and theatrical jazz principles in her work. Her original performances include *sista docta*, a critique of academic life, and *Searching for Osun*, an ethnographic performance installation around the Divinity of the River. Her dramaturgical work includes August Wilson's *Gem of the Ocean* and Shay Youngblood's *Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery*—both under the direction of Daniel Alexander Jones, as well as Sharon Bridgforth's *con flama* under the direction of Laurie Carlos. Her most recent book is *Theatrical Jazz: Performance, Àse, and the Power of the Present Moment*, a collaborative ethnography focusing on three theatrical jazz practitioners. Omi has been shaped by Robbie McCauley's activist art, Laurie Carlos's insistence on being present, and Barbara Ann Teer's overt union of Art and Spirit. She earned her Ph.D. from New York University, and her Embodied Social Justice Certificate from Transformative Change. She is Professor Emerita from the African and African Diaspora Studies Department at the University of Texas at Austin, a mother, a Queer wife, and a curious sojourner.

In 1984, when **Rahaman "Kil" Kilpatrick** was ten years old, he saw Run DMC performing "Rock Box" on *American Bandstand* and he knew he wanted to be a part of hip hop culture. While other kids were asking their parents for toys for Christmas, Kil begged his parents to buy him

two turntables so he could be a DJ. In 1992, Kil began attending Morgan State University where he read an article in *Vibe* magazine written by Bobbito which highlighted the dopest hip hop radio shows. When he saw Morgan's show *Strictly Hip Hop 88.9* was included he knew he had to become a part of that show! For the next seven years, from 1994-2001, Kil hosted *Strictly Hip Hop* which is currently the longest running hip hop radio show on the East Coast. After graduating from Morgan State, Kil dedicated his life to helping teens in Washington, D.C. by running numerous teen centers throughout the city. He's gone on to become a music producer for MOP, Maffew Ragazino, RJ Payne and he was Pete Rock's first artist signed on his record label Amxxr. He also hosts the weekly hip hop podcast *Apt. 5B*.

The Los Angeles native **Shvawn "Siren" Elyse** is a dancer, actress and costume designer for unique artists around the world. A lover of the arts, she has worked on her crafts for many years and has acquired a B.A. in Theatre and B.A. in Dance.

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AN ECHO OF ANCIENT THINGS

Dramaturgical Distillations

by Omi Osun Joni L. Jones, Ph.D. and Sharon Bridgforth

What wants to happen?

It is a great privilege to have been Witness to the unfolding of this piece, and to have been privy to the magnitude of Marjani and Everett's artistic vision—their Love of Black people—and each other. During our time together Marjani wrestled with understanding her role in the piece, and Everett grew into clarity about this piece as his story—a telling of his personal history, lineage, growth and relationship to being an Emcee. Their work required virtuosity through courage—going as deep as the work required—and an abiding trust that “the Ancestors got this.”

What are the Emcee's Spiritual technologies/artistic methodologies/and architectures of craft and form?

All the years of all the study of all the forms of dance. All the years of all the notebooks filled with words tested and released in Circles, and all the vibrations sounded and synced. “*Prophet* or *Prophet: The Order of Lyricism*” is rooted in Black brilliance through its circles, straight and diagonal lines; simultaneity; deep listening; polyrhythms and polycentrism¹; call and response; playing with time/multiple dimensions; non-linear storytelling; bodily acuity and nimbleness; Witnessing; improvisation; belief in Spirit; trust in Ancestors. This work exemplifies the Yoruba process of *ikọ́`se`*—learning a skill through the transmission of wisdom from a master². The inherent embodiment of active study with exemplars of a form, remaps intuition and promotes an organically acquired wisdom.

In this world, we find *eré*, the Yoruba concept for serious play³. What if their gestures/words are not only the improvised discoveries in the moment of a public sharing, but were also the rehearsal for the Spiritual/emotional/physical intimacy of their daily lives? What if their words/gestures are not only for the amplification of their union but also prompt our muscles/Spirits to be inspired, to emulate through the resonance of the frequencies they activate? In this way, they are practicing for their own loving lives *and* offering us tools to do the same. *Eré*, then, is where we all get to play together, to test possibilities and to clear new pathways. The work is for transformation—it moves in the realm of ritual—a practice with an intended result.

UPCOMING AT REDCAT

Anna Luisa Petrisko: *All Time Stop Now*

September 29 - 30

Anna Luisa Petrisko's experimental opera, *All Time Stop Now*, is a contemplation on listening, impermanence, and kinship. A chosen family invokes a spell to stop time. In this suspended reality, they grapple with their existence in a time-based world as they search for ways to rest, heal, and feel joy. The stage morphs into a "spacetime playground." Hypersaturated video, projection mapping, sculpture, dance, and new original music from Petrisko's latest release on Practical Records transform the senses. Her signature prism of mutant pop yields spiritually infused anthems that encompass beauty, sorrow, and discovery.

Edgar Arceneaux: *Boney Manilli*

October 5 - 7

Written and directed by interdisciplinary artist Edgar Arceneaux (CalArts MFA 01), *Boney Manilli* is a dark musical comedy in the shape of a pop music video, a puppet show, and a burial ceremony. Actor Alex Barlas plays "Edgar," a visual artist overwhelmed by feelings of inadequacy, frustration, and self-loathing, who is unable to complete his play on the infamous pop music duo, Milli Vanilli. His freeloading brother, Bro Bro, decides to adapt Disney's *Song of the South* into his own play about Black liberation, while their mother, Momma, a failed pop singer, is slowly fading away with dementia. Their lives spin from pathetic to bizarre, becoming strangely intertwined as each one's search for truth collides with the other's.

Nacera Belaza: *L'Onde (The Wave)*

October 19 - 21

Internationally revered for her powerfully abstract work, Nacera Belaza draws a path between shadow and light, seeking to glimpse the infinite. In *L'Onde (The Wave)*, the French Algerian choreographer immerses herself in the spellbinding notions of Algerian ritualistic dances. With a hypnotic sound narrative and mesmerizing movement that blends tradition and modernity, the piece features four dancers who explore the body's capacity for transformation through rigorous and elegantly minimalist choreography.



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