Photos by Maria Baranova

Curriculum II (2022)

"I have oscillated between two or more polarities my entire career: love, mortality, and what it means to be human." -Bill T. Jones

Curriculum II is a timely new work conceived and directed by the iconic, Tony-winning, Bill T. Jones and choreographed by Jones with Janet Wong and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Applying the ideas of Cameroonian historian and political theorist Achille Mbembe, Nigerian-born Afrofuturism scholar Louis Chude-Sokei, and Jamaican writer and cultural theorist Sylvia Wynter. *Curriculum II* explores the historical and persistent connection between race and technology and the pursuit of what is human.

In *The Sound of Culture: Diaspora and Black Technopoetics*, Louis Chude-Sokei quoted Sylvia Wynter: "The other must be understood as not just that which is oppressed or marginalized or rendered inhuman, subhuman, or animal; it also must be understood 'as that which is to come.'" A poetic quilt of text, narration as philosophical lecture, live singing, and soundscore, *Curriculum II* features the rich archive of Jones's movement phrases, which are mostly non-theatrical, non-psychological, non-narrative, and made with the intention of clarity and form.

Jones's title is an ironic reference to Achille Mbembe's 2018 interview by the Norwegian journalist Torbjorn Tumyr Nilsen, in which he said "For me, this is a matter of common sense. I am in favor of expanding the archive, reading the different archives of the world critically, each with and against the others. There can't be any other meaning to a planetary curriculum." This fertile notion inspired Bill T. Jones to undertake a series of works entitled *Curriculum*, juxtaposing formal exploration with a range of today's urgent topics as expansive as Jones's artistry. The series attempts to embrace formal directness and clarity while allowing it to be intruded upon by word fragments, imagery, and the stuff of Mbembe's "planetary curriculum."

Conceived and Directed by Bill T. Jones
Choreography by Bill T. Jones with Janet Wong and The Company
Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company: Barrington Hinds, Jada Jenai, Shane Larson, s. lumbert, Danielle Marshall, Nayaa Opong, Marie Paspe, Jacoby Pruitt, Philip Strom and Huiwang Zhang
Lighting Design by Robert Wierzel
Sound Design by David van Tieghem
Installation & Costume Design by Liz Prince

Curriculum II is commissioned and produced by New York Live Arts with commissioning support from PEAK Performances at Montclair State University in Montclair, NJ and the American Dance Festival. Curriculum II premiered with PEAK Performances in June 2022. Created with support from the Made in Wickenburg Residency Program at the Del E. Webb Center for the Performing Arts in Wickenburg, Arizona with funding from the R.H. Johnson Foundation and The Welk Foundation.

BILL T. JONES NEW YORK LIVE ARTS

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Full Length Video

Technical Rider Download

Photo by Stephanie Berger

Deep Blue Sea (2021)

"Pip saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom, and spoke it; and therefore his shipmates called him mad. So man's insanity is heaven's sense; and wandering from all mortal reason, man comes at last to that celestial thought, which, to reason, is absurd and frantic; and weal or woe, feels then uncompromised, indifferent as his God." -Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

Bill T. Jones, Janet Wong, and The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company's massive new work *Deep Blue Sea* revolves around the interplay of single and group identities. Jones conceived this highly personal work in pursuit of the elusive "we" during these fractious times through a cast of 100 dancers/community members, and a deconstructed text from Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. The visual environment will be transformed by the renowned architect **Liz Diller** (Diller, Scofidio +Renfro) and Tony-Award winning projection designer **Peter Nigrini** in collaboration with lighting designer **Robert Wierzel** and costume designer **Liz Prince**. The soundscape features an original composition by **Nick Hallett** with an electronic score by **HPrizm** aka High Priest, **Rena Anakwe** and **Holland Andrews**. In addition to choreographing and directing, for the first time in over 15 years, Jones himself performs.

Deep Blue Sea was commissioned by Park Avenue Armory and Manchester International Festival in Association with the Holland Festival.

Commissioning support provided by The Mann Center for the Performing Arts with original support from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Philadelphia. Additional commissioning support from Carolina Performing Arts, Partners in Creation, Ed Bradley Family Foundation, New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, NEFA/NDP and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

Produced and developed by Park Avenue Armory in collaboration with New York Live Arts

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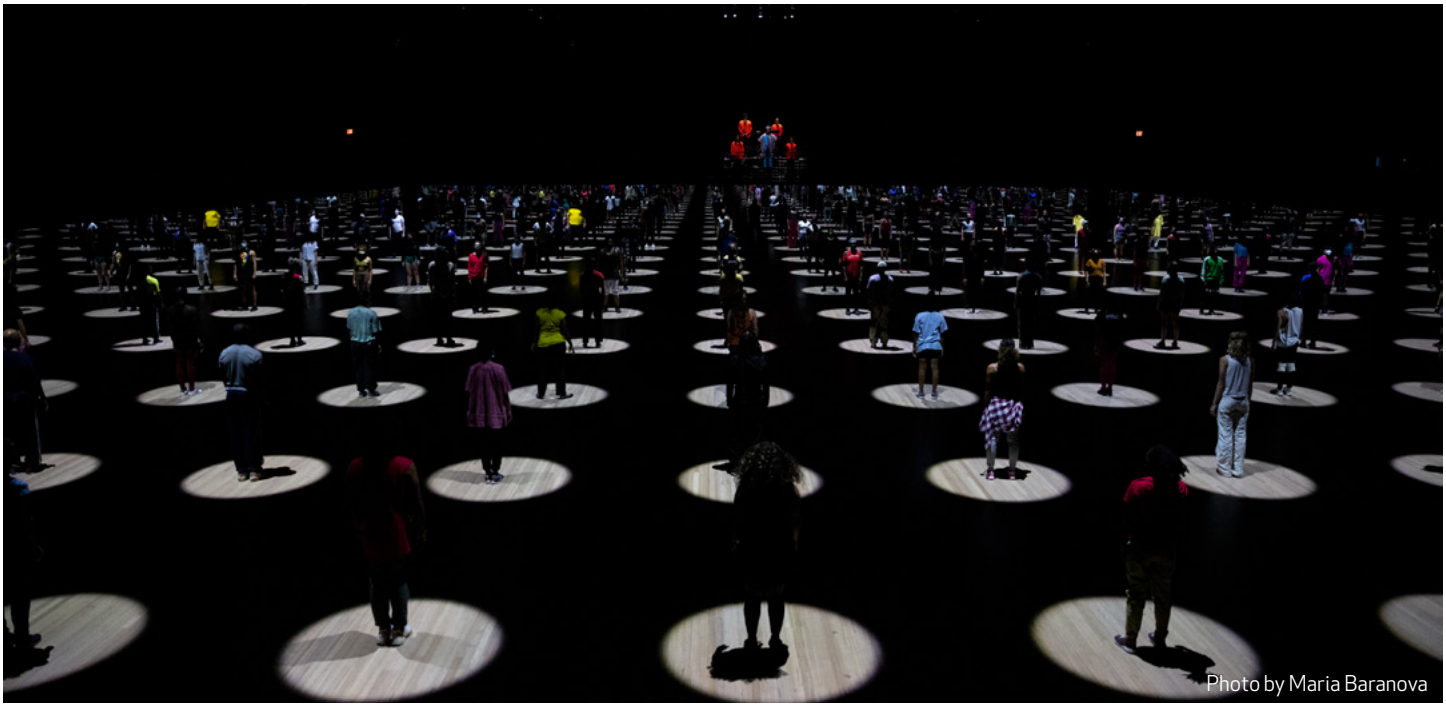
Photo by Maria Baranova

Community Participation
The world-renowned Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company is seeking 20-90 individuals (pending the size of each venue) to participate in the creative process and performance of a new work. The work examines the condition of loneliness in the individual experienced alone and within a community. It explores the need for community and the notion of collective redemption. The work is divided into three sections: the first section focuses on one person, Bill; in the second section the lone person is joined by the company of ten performers; in the third section the company is joined by the community. Participants will be invited to generate material and structures through guided improvisations and task based instructions, which will become the vocabulary for the third section. The work will be unique to each community and the set of questions and instructions will be shaped by whom the participants are. Participants may be asked to speak and sing.

Participants should be 16+, ideally with backgrounds in movement (martial arts, dance, gymnastics, sports, gardening, walking, etc) who can commit to the time requested.

Community will be required to participate in approximately ten (10) hours of rehearsal with the Company over the course of several days, to be determined by each venue. Longer workshops and community outreach can be arranged. Please contact Company to discuss.

Minimum Schedule Requirements
Day 1 & 2
Community Rehearsal" with 2 company members

Day 3
Community Rehearsal with full company

Day 4
Performance

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What Problem? (2020)

For the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line . . . the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men . . . And yet, being a problem is a strange experience,— peculiar even for one who has never been anything else." - W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903)

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company's latest work *What Problem?* provokes the tension between belonging to a community and feelings of isolation that many feel during these divisive political times. Adapted for proscenium stages from the massive work, *Deep Blue Sea* (2020), Jones conceived of this highly personal work in pursuit of the elusive "we" including a cast of local community members, a deconstructed text from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*. Jones and the company develop individual content with local community members in each of the touring locations making each performance specific to its host city.

Jones reflects on King's immortal words, we shall overcome, mixed with the scripture of our democracy as formed and shaped by WE THE PEOPLE. There has always been an uneasy recognition of the truth at the base of the great Du Bois statement concerning "the problem of the color line" for Du Bois represented the epitome of otherness; yet we now understand this is much more complex. In our fractious era, *What Problem?* elaborates on this line in terms of sexual politics, gender identity, class struggles and immigration.

Creator & Director Bill T. Jones
Associate Director Janet Wong
Choreography Bill T. Jones, Janet Wong and Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company
Lighting Design Robert Wierzel
Composer & Music Director Nick Hallett
Electronic Score Hprizm, Rena Anakwe and Holland Andrews
Costume Design Liz Prince
Dramaturg Mark Hairston

Adapted from *Deep Blue Sea* which was originally Commissioned by Park Avenue Armory and Manchester International Festival in collaboration with Holland Festival. Additional Commissioning support provided by the Mann Center for the Performing Arts with original support from The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, Philadelphia, Carolina Performing Arts, Indiana University Auditorium, the Center for the Arts at George Mason University, Lumberyard Center for Film and Performing Arts, Dancers' Workshop in Jackson Hole, WY. Rehearsed at Mana Contemporary and Bethany Arts Community. *What Problem?* Was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

What Problem? was first performed at the Center for the Arts at George Mason University on February 1, 2020.

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Full Length Video

Technical Rider

Photo by Jim Coleman

Community Participation
What Problem? requires 24-30 local community members to participate in the creative process and performance. The work examines the condition of loneliness in the individual experienced alone and within a community. It explores the need for community and the notion of collective redemption. The work is divided into three sections: the first section focuses on one person, Bill; in the second section the lone person is joined by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company of ten performers; in the third section the company is joined by the community. Participants will be invited to generate material and structures through guided improvisations and task-based instructions, which will become the vocabulary for the third section. The work will be unique to each community and the set of questions and instructions will be shaped by whom the participants are. Participants may be asked to speak and sing.

Participants should be 18-70, ideally with backgrounds in movement (martial arts, dance, gymnastics, sports, gardening, walking, etc) who can commit to the time requested.

Community will be required to participate in approximately ten (10) hours of rehearsal with the Company over the course of several days, to be determined by each venue. Longer workshops and community outreach can be arranged. Company members can be sent out ahead of time to work with community as schedule and budget allow. Please contact Company to discuss.

Minimum Schedule Requirements
Day 1 & 2
Community Rehearsal" with 2 company members

Day 3
Community Rehearsal with full company

Day 4
Performance

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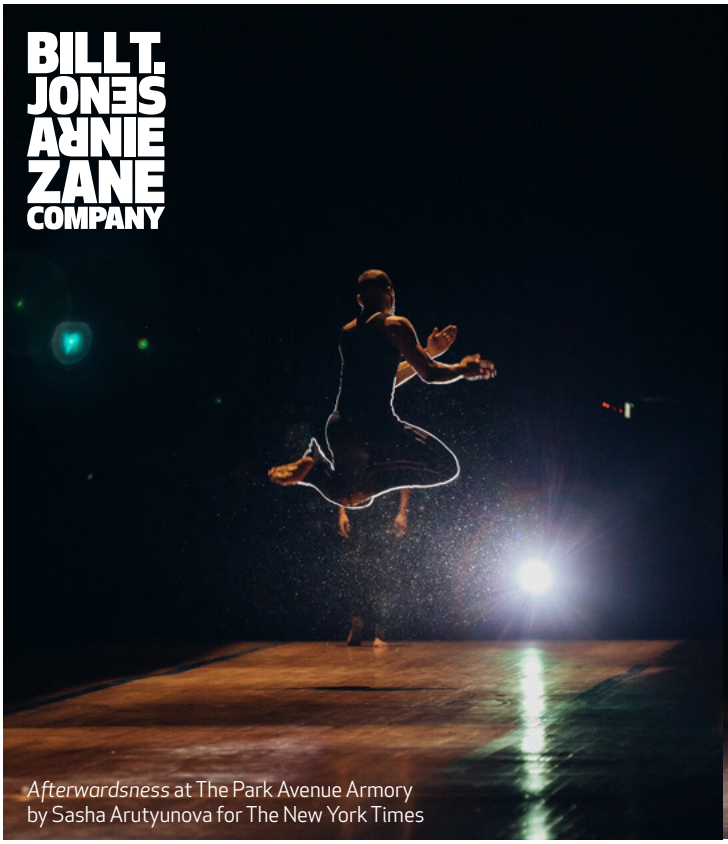
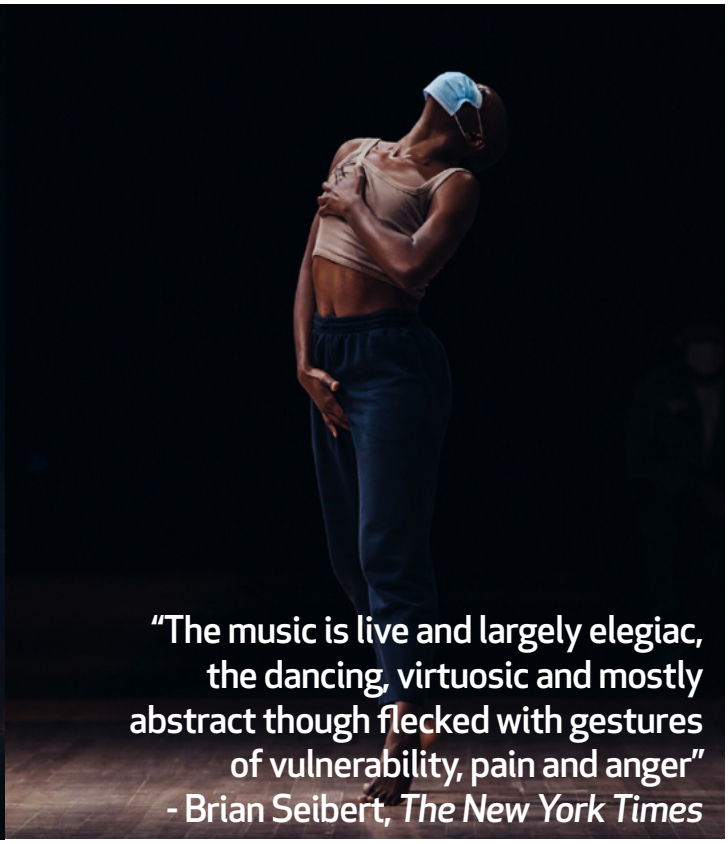


Afterwardsness at The Park Avenue Armory
by Sasha Arutyunova for The New York Times



Afterwardsness (2020)

"a march into the unknown"-Rebecca Robertson, Armory president & executive director

"the more constraints one imposes, the more one frees oneself"-Stravinsky

In the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud, afterwardsness is "a mode of belated understanding or retroactive attribution of sexual or traumatic meaning to earlier events..." Jettisoning the sexual component and emphasizing the notion of "trauma", this awkward though evocative term comes very close to describing Jones' state of mind when offered a commission to create a socially distanced work at this particular moment of our collective lives. In some ways, the title parodies Jones (and many others) desire to have reached an end point to our twin pandemics: The COVID 19 pandemic and the calling out of systemic racism in the wake of high profile abuses by the police.

The piece has been constructed quickly and within the constraints and uncertainty of social distancing. There is a retrospective dimension to *Afterwardsness* as much of its choreography comes out of assignments given to the dancers during their isolation requiring them to learn from archival videos phrase materials no longer in the repertory stretching back 40 years.

Jones invited Pauline Kim to be Musical Director in collaboration with composer/vocalist/instrumentalist Holland Andrews. They've created a composite score that includes Kim's original work *8:46* - an homage to George Floyd as well as compositions by Andrews and company members, Vinson Fraley, Jr. and Chanel Howard. Following the work's retroactive logic, we are consciously excerpting Messaien's great wartime composition *Quartet for the End of Time*.

Afterwardsness was commissioned by Park Avenue Armory, first performed at the Park Avenue Armory on October 16, 2020.

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Full Length Video
pw: btjaz
Trailer

Technical Rider

BILL T. JONES ARNIE ZANE COMPANY

"Rarely has one seen a dance company throw itself onto the stage with such kinetic exaltation." - *The New York Times*

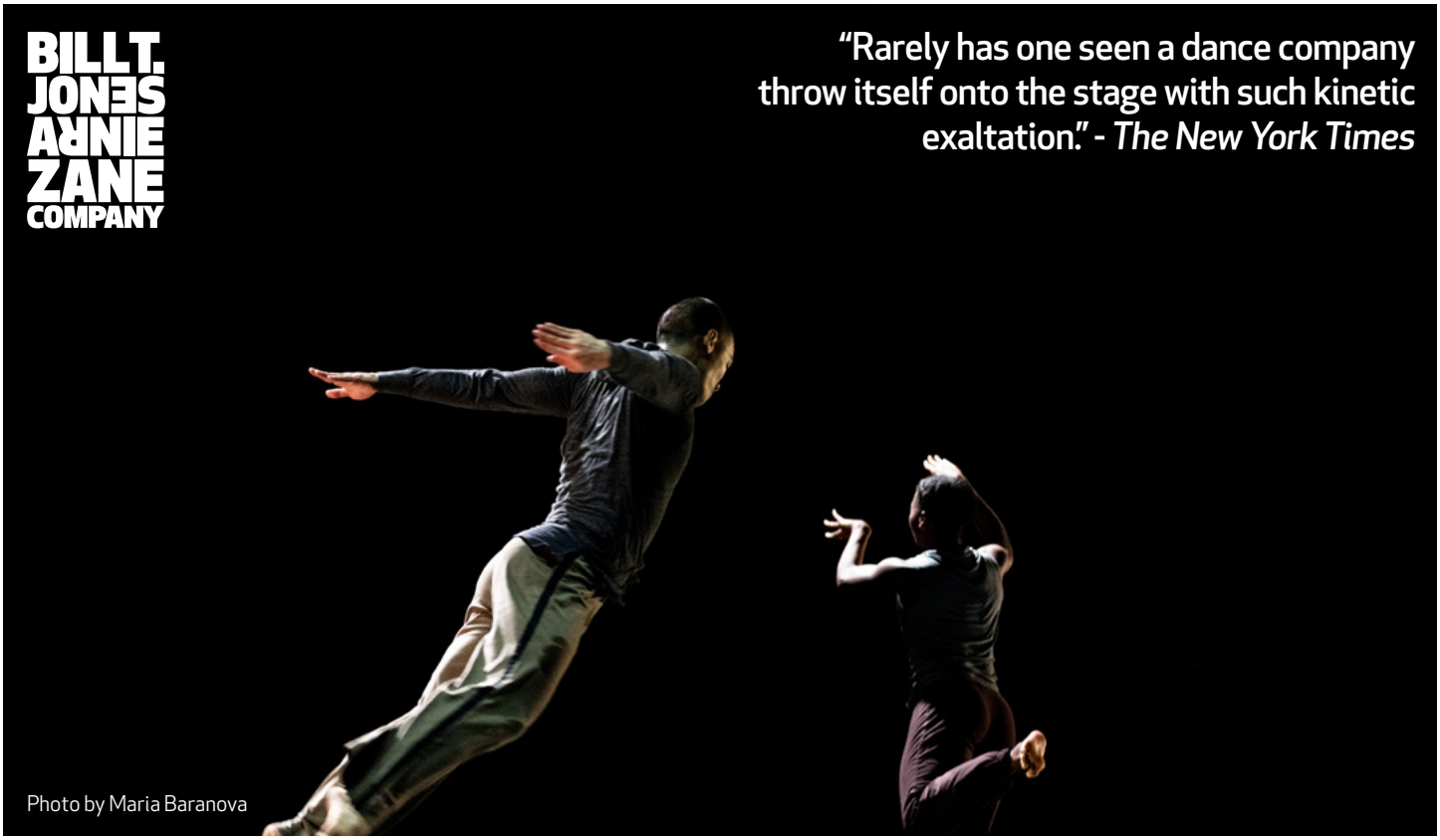

Photo by Maria Baranova

Repertory Program

"No other dancer-choreographer working today allows past, present, and future to mingle so freely in his body." – *Vanity Fair*

"Take something and do something to it, and then do something else to it." – Jasper Johns

Performed with live musicians sourced locally, Jones's applies inventive choreography to some of the most important Western musical works of our time. Featuring compositions by Beethoven, Schubert and Ravel, this program highlights the joy of musicians and dancers working together.

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Repertory Program

Story/ (2013)
Story/ is the latest result of the company's continued investigation in using John Cage's *Indeterminacy* as a choreographic tool. Following the model for the acclaimed *Story/Time*, the work employs a random menu of movement that is accompanied by Franz Schubert's String Quartet No. 14 (*Death and the Maiden*) to craft a conversation between the music and the movement.

Video: vimeo.com/905349379
password: btjaz
*can be performed with a local string quartet if desired

Continuous Replay (1977, revised 1991)
Continuous Replay reflects Arnie Zane's interests in photography and film. Originally choreographed by Zane in 1977 as a solo titled *Hand Dance* and later revised as a group work by Bill T. Jones in 1991, *Continuous Replay* is based on 45 precise gestures accumulated in space and time, cunningly complicated by discrete movement events. A newly commissioned score for string octet by Jerome Begin combines motifs from Beethoven's first and last string quartets with recorded sounds to create a surprising soundscape. Can be performed with or without nudity.

Video: vimeo.com/36301879
password: CRNYLA2011

Ravel: Landscape or Portrait? (2012)
This new work responds to Maurice Ravel's *String Quartet in F Major* (1903), reflecting the wistful and melancholic sentiment of the score as well as its precision and restraint. Similar to the music's complicated internal logic, one of two choreographic variations for the third movement (either landscape or portrait) is selected by chance procedure before each performance.

Video: vimeo.com/68562220
password: btjaz
*can be performed with a local string quartet if desired

Love Re-Defined (1996)
Choreographed by Bill T. Jones; first performed Joyce Theater, New York; music by Daniel Johnston; decor by Donald Baechler; costumes by Liz Prince; lighting by Robert Wierzel.

Video: vimeo.com/905348467
password: btjaz

D-Man in the Waters (1989)
"In a dream you saw a way to survive and you were full of joy."- Jenny Holzer

Bill T Jones's joyful tour-de-force, *D-Man in the Waters*, is a true classic of modern dance and a two time New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Award-winning work. It is a celebration of life and the resiliency of the human spirit that guides audiences through loss, hope and triumph. Set to Mendelssohn's *Octet for Strings in E-flat Major, Op. 20* the work is one of the finest examples of the post- modern aesthetic and was featured in PBS's landmark film *Dancing in the Light – Six Dances by African-American Choreographers*.

Video: vimeo.com/27773181
password: btjaz
*can be performed with a local string quartet if desired

Bill T. Jones *(Artistic Director/Co-Founder/Choreographer: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company; Artistic Director: New York Live Arts)* is a multi-talented artist, choreographer, dancer, theater director and writer, has received major honors ranging from the Human Rights Campaign's 2016 Visibility Award, 2013 National Medal of Arts to a 1994 MacArthur "Genius" Award and Kennedy Center Honors in 2010. Mr. Jones was honored with the 2014 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, recognized as Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government in 2010, inducted into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2009 and named "An Irreplaceable Dance Treasure" by the Dance Heritage Coalition in 2000. His ventures into Broadway theater resulted in a 2010 Tony Award for Best Choreography in the critically acclaimed *FELA!*, the new musical co-conceived, co-written, directed and choreographed by Mr. Jones. He also earned a 2007 Tony Award for Best Choreography in *Spring Awakening* as well as an Obie Award for the show's 2006 off-Broadway run. His choreography for the off-Broadway production of *The Seven* earned him a 2006 Lucille Lortel Award. Most recently in 2022, he was awarded another Lucille Lortel Award for his choreography for *Black No More*. Bill has been nominated for the 2022 Tony Awards for his work on *Paradise Square*.

Mr. Jones began his dance training at the State University of New York at Binghamton (SUNY), where he studied classical ballet and modern dance. After living in Amsterdam, Mr. Jones returned to SUNY, where he became co-founder of the American Dance Asylum in 1973. In 1982 he formed the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company (then called Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane & Company) with his late partner, Arnie Zane. Mr. Jones is currently Artistic Director of New York Lives Arts, an organization that strives to create a robust framework in support of the nation's dance and movement-based artists through new approaches to producing, presenting and educating. For more information, visit newyorklivearts.org.

His work in dance has been recognized with the 2010 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award; the 2005 Wexner Prize; the 2005 Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement; the 2003 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize; and the 1993 Dance Magazine Award. His additional awards include the Harlem Renaissance Award in 2005; the Dorothy B. Chandler Performing Arts Award in 1991; multiple New York Dance and Performance Bessie Awards for his works *The Table Project* (2001), *The Breathing Show* (2001), *D-Man in the Waters* (1989) and the Company's groundbreaking season at the Joyce Theater (1986). In 1980, 1981 and 1982, Mr. Jones was the recipient of Choreographic Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and in 1979 he was granted the Creative Artists Public Service Award in Choreography.

Mr. Jones was profiled on NBC Nightly News and The Today Show in 2010 and was a guest on the Colbert Report in 2009. Also in 2010, he was featured in HBO's documentary series MASTERCLASS, which follows notable artists as they mentor aspiring young artists. In 2009, Mr. Jones appeared on one of the final episodes of *Bill Moyers Journal*, discussing his Lincoln suite of works. He was also one of 22 prominent black Americans featured in the HBO documentary *The Black List* in 2008. In 2004, ARTE France and Bel Air Media produced *Bill T. Jones–Solos*, highlighting three of his iconic solos from a cinematic point of view. The making of *Still/Here* was the subject of a documentary by Bill Moyers and David Grubin entitled *Bill T. Jones: Still/Here with Bill Moyers* in 1997. Additional television credits include telecasts of his works *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land* (1992) and *Fever Swamp* (1985) on PBS's "Great Performances" Series. In 2001, *D-Man in the Waters* was broadcast on the Emmy-winning documentary *Free to Dance*.

Bill T. Jones's interest in new media and digital technology has resulted in collaborations with the team of Paul Kaiser, Shelley Eshkar and Marc Downie, now known as OpenEnded Group. The collaborations include *After Ghostcatching* – the 10th Anniversary re-imagining of *Ghostcatching* (2010, SITE Santa Fe Eighth International Biennial); *22* (2004, Arizona State University's Institute for Studies In The Arts and Technology, Tempe, AZ); and *Ghostcatching – A Virtual Dance Installation* (1999, Cooper Union, New York, NY).

He has received honorary doctorates from Yale University, Art Institute of Chicago, Bard College, Columbia College, Skidmore College, the Juilliard School, Swarthmore College and the State University of New York at Binghamton Distinguished Alumni Award, where he began his dance training with studies in classical ballet and modern dance.

Mr. Jones's memoir, *Last Night on Earth,* was published by Pantheon Books in 1995. An in-depth look at the work of Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane can be found in *Body Against Body: The Dance and Other Collaborations of Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane*, published by Station Hill Press in 1989. Hyperion Books published *Dance*, a children's book written by Bill T. Jones and photographer Susan Kuklin in 1998. Mr. Jones contributed to *Continuous Replay: The Photography of Arnie Zane*, published by MIT Press in 1999. Jones's most recent book, *Story/Time: The Life of an Idea*, was published in 2014 by Princeton University Press.

In addition to his Company and Broadway work, Mr. Jones also choreographed Sir Michael Tippet's *New Year* (1990) for Houston Grand Opera and Glyndebourne Festival Opera. *His Mother of Three Sons* was performed at the Munich Biennale, New York City Opera and the Houston Grand Opera. Mr. Jones also directed *Lost in the Stars* for the Boston Lyric Opera. Additional theater projects include co-directing *Perfect Courage* with Rhodessa Jones for Festival 2000 in 1990. In 1994, he directed Derek Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* for The Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, MN.

Performer Bios

Barrington Hinds is from West Palm Beach, Florida. He began his training at the School of Ballet Florida under the direction of Marie Hale. Hinds holds a BFA in dance from SUNY Purchase College and has worked professionally with VERB Ballets, Northwest Professional Dance Project, and the national tour of Twyla Tharp's Broadway show, *Movin' Out*. In 2011 Hinds was honored as a finalist for the Clive Barnes Award for young talent in dance. He has worked with leading choreographers including Laurie Stallings, Edgar Zendejas, Sarah Slipper, Helen Pickett, Thaddeus Davis, and Cherylyn Lavagnino to name a few. Hinds has also danced with the Stephen Petronio Company and has freelanced in commercial, TV, and print work. In addition Hinds is also a choreographer and teacher. His work has been shown at Purchase College, Dixon Place, Warwick Summer Festival, Arts On Site, and The Tank. Barrington has been a Performer with the Bill T. Jones/ Arnie Zane Company since 2017. You can follow him @bar_hinds and his website www.barringtonhinds.com

Jada Jenai was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. She has worked professionally with A.I.M by Kyle Abraham, Helen Simoneau, Peridance Contemporary Dance Company, and Wyckoff Collective. Jenai earned a BFA in Dance from SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance, studying under Jonathan Ridel, Kyle Abraham, Kevin Wynn, and Dylan Crossman, and Jean Freebury (Merce Cunningham Change of Address). She also studied at Western Australia Academy for Performing Arts and Springboard Danse Montreal, working with Jonathan Alsberry and Shamel Pitts. Jenai attended Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School and is a freelance model. Jada joined the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company in 2021 and became company manager in 2022.

Shane Larson was raised in Minnesota, where he received his early training at the St. Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists. He graduated from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, with a BFA in Dance and a minor in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Studies. He also studied at SEAD in Austria. Since living in New York City, he's branched out to collaborate with punk musicians, film makers, improvisational music ensembles, and site-specific visual artists. He is also a multimedia video artist who makes collage-based work about memory. Shane joined the Company in 2015.

Danielle Marshall is a native of Atlanta, GA. She received her early dance training from DeKalb School of the Arts, Phusion Performing Arts Alliance, and City Gate Dance Theater. In 2019, she graduated summa cum laude from the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. program, studying dance & Pre-Health for Physical Therapy. During her time at Ailey/Fordham, Ms. Marshall had the opportunity to perform works by her colleagues and notable choreographers such as Adam Barruch, Amy Hall Garner, and Maxine Steinman. Marshall is also a certified Horton instructor. Danielle joined the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company in 2021.

Marie Lloyd Paspe is originally from Bellingham, MA and Mississauga, Canada, currently based in Brooklyn, NY. Marie received her BFA from the Ailey/Fordham Program in 2016, studying abroad in Israel with Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company in 2015 and Springboard Danse Montreal in 2017. She toured with Carolyn Dorfman Dance and worked with choreographers Peter Chu, Renee Jaworski, and Rami Be'er. Her choreography, vocal work, and movement direction for stage and film were presented in the Philippines, Berlin, Israel, and across the U.S. Marie's ongoing practices are rooted in Filipinx-American diasporic work and somatic-based healing. Paspe joined the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company in 2018.

Jacoby Pruitt began his dance training in Miami, FL where he attended New World School of the Arts. He is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of Dance and is a recipient of the Martha Hill Dance Fund's "Young Professional Award". He has worked professionally with Ailey II, Company XIV, Sean Curran Company, and the Metropolitan Opera Ballet among various other freelance projects. His tv/film credits include *Good Morning America*, Comedy Central's *Alternatino*, and the *In the Heights* film. Jacoby joined the Bill T. Jones/ Arnie Zane Company in 2021.

Nayaa Opong is from Cherry Hill, New Jersey. She began her dance training at The Bowman School of Dance and later continued at Eleone Dance Unlimited. Nayaa chose to further her studies at Mason Gross School of the Arts - Rutgers University, where she earned a B.F.A. in Dance and was able to spend a semester at The Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. Since graduating in May 2019, she performs with Hysterica Jazz Dance and has begun working with the BIRDHOUSE artist collective. Nayaa joined the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company in 2019.

Huiwang Zhang has been a member of the Company since 2017. He was nominated an "outstanding performer" by the Bessies (Zhang imbues commitment with focus, and connects time together through sensitized and accumulated gestures) for his performance of "Our Labyrinth" directed by Lee Mingwei and Bill T. Jones at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He earned his MFA from the University of Utah under the mentorship of Stephen Koester. 张慧望，江西九江人，毕业于北京舞蹈学院。

Bill T Jones/Arnie Zane Company (1982-present)
Over the past 40 years the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company has shaped the evolution of contemporary dance through the creation and performance of over 140 works. Founded as a multicultural dance company in 1982, the company was born of an 11-year artistic collaboration between Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane. Today, the company is recognized as one of the most innovative and powerful forces in the modern dance world. The company has performed its ever-enlarging repertoire worldwide in over 200 cities in 40 countries on every major continent. In 2011, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company merged with Dance Theater Workshop to form New York Live Arts of which Bill T. Jones is the Artistic Director and Janet Wong is the Associate Artistic Director.

The repertory of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company is widely varied in its subject matter, visual imagery and stylistic approach to movement, voice and stagecraft and includes musically driven works as well as works using a variety of texts. Some of its most celebrated creations are evening length works including *Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land* (1990, Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music); *Still/Here* (1994, Biennale de la Danse in Lyon, France); *We Set Out Early… Visibility Was Poor* (1996, Hancher Auditorium, Iowa City, IA); *You Walk?* (2000, European Capital of Culture 2000, Bologna, Italy); *Blind Date* (2006, Peak Performances at Montclair State University); *Chapel/Chapter* (2006, Harlem Stage Gatehouse); *Fondly Do We Hope… Fervently Do We Pray* (2009, Ravinia Festival, Highland Park, IL); *Another Evening: Venice/Arsenale* (2010, La Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy); *Story/Time* (2012, Peak Performances); *A Rite* (2013, Carolina Performing Arts at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill); *Deep Blue Sea* (2021, Park Avenue Armory).

Arnie Zane Biography
Arnie Zane (1948-1988) (Co-Founder/Choreographer) was a native New Yorker born in the Bronx and educated at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Binghamton. In 1971, Mr. Zane and Bill T. Jones began their long collaboration in choreography and in 1973 formed the American Dance Asylum in Binghamton with Lois Welk. Mr. Zane's first recognition in the arts came as a photographer when he received a Creative Artists Public Service (CAPS) Fellowship in 1973. Mr. Zane was the recipient of a second CAPS Fellowship in 1981 for choreography, as well as two Choreographic Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1983 and 1984). In 1980, Mr. Zane was co-recipient, with Mr. Jones, of the German Critics Award for his work, *Blauvelt Mountain. Rotary Action*, a duet with Mr. Jones, was filmed for television, co-produced by WGBH-TV Boston and Channel 4 in London. *Continuous Replay: The Photographs of Arnie Zane* was published by MIT Press in April 1999.

Janet Wong, Associate Artistic Director
Ms. Wong leads the performance and humanities programming with Bill T. Jones at New York Live Arts. She has worked with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company since 1996, first as rehearsal director. Ms. Wong is also a projection designer, having designed all of the company's multimedia works since 2006, and collaborates with other artists such as Aaron Landsman, Daniel Bernard Roumain and Heidi Latsky.

Press Highlights

"the dancing has the straight-ahead drive of a bullet train"
-**Susan Broili, *Durham Herald Sun***, on *Analogy/Lance: Pretty aka The Escape Artist*

"Playing upon masculine and feminine energies with dynamic, mesmerizing, luscious movement that exhausts the options of what
human physicality can create."
-**Stephanie Burg, *The Post and Courier***, on *Play and Play*

"Commanding...never became predictable."
-**Mark Swed, *LA Times***, on *Story/Time*

"[Jones's] gifts: pungent, purposeful character development, compelling storytelling and pure-dance interludes of slippery and often deeply romantic choreography."
- **Sarah Kaufman, *The Washington Post***

"…flows with an engaging slipperiness between being illustrative and formally abstract."
–**Brian Seibert, *The New York Times*,** on *Analogy/Dora: Tramontane*

"'Analogy/Dora: Tramontane,' the extraordinary dance-theater piece…"
–**Robert Johnson, NJArts.net**, on *Analogy/Dora: Tramontane*

"D-Man in the Waters radiates the clarity of love."
–**Apollinaire Scherr, *Financial Times*** on *Play and Play: an Evening of Movement and Music*

"These memories…are poignant, hilarious and sometimes terrifying."
- **Robert Johnson, *The Star-Ledger*,** on *Story/Time*

"…a dance theater rollercoaster with surprises around every corner."
- **Claudia Bauer, *The San Francisco Chronicle***, on *Story/Time*

"Jones is larger than life and then some."
- **David Wiegand, *San Francisco Chronicle***, on *A Good Man*

"Jones is not a choreographer in the sense that he just makes dances. He likes to tackle unlikely theatrical themes in unconventional ways…"
- **Hilary Ostlere, *The Financial Times***

"No other dancer-choreographer working today allows past, present, and future to mingle so freely in his body."
- **Laura Jacobs, *Vanity Fair***

"Bill T. Jones, choreographer, philosopher, and political commentator, makes works of art that reflect the turmoil at the center of our society."
- **Iris Fanger, *The Patriot Ledger***

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company Recent Repertory

***Analogy/Dora: Tramontane* (2015)**
Based on an oral history Jones conducted with Dora Amelan, a French Jewish nurse & social worker. Amelan's harrowing, touching and inspirational story chronicle her early life in Belgium, her mother's death and her experiences working at an underground Jewish organization in Vichy France's internment camps. Here is a portrait of the ability to persevere and survive.

Trailer: youtu.be/RIW7EADjreM
Full Piece: vimeo.com/142145677
pw: BTJAZ

***Analogy/Lance: Pretty aka the Escape Artist* (2016)**
Base on an oral history with Jones' nephew, Lance whose battles with his own personal demons of drugs and excess expose us to another type of war: the battlefield of the underworld of the late 80s/early 90s club culture and sex trade. This "pretty boy-gangster thug", holds steadfast to his often tragic and sometimes outrageously humorous narrative.

Trailer: youtu.be/XLyp3YdAZjg
Full Piece: vimeo.com/180188790
pw: btjaz

***Analogy/Ambros: The Emigrant* (2017)**
Jones' reaction to Ambros Adelwarth from W.G.Sebald's celebrated historical novel, The Emigrants. This narrative, through a fictionalized history, strives to suggest how an experience of trauma can go underground in the psyche of an individual and direct consciously and unconsciously the course of that individual's life. This restrained and evocative narrative tracks Ambros' experience working at hotels, the glamorous travels with his charge, Cosmo, through Europe and the Middle East on the eve of WWI and then his life after Cosmo's death.

Trailer: youtu.be/JUm0D2zcRMs
Full Piece: vimeo.com/230778354
pw: btjaz

***A Letter to My Nephew* (2015)**
An intimate, impressionistic collage for nine dancers, setting a portrait of Jones's beloved nephew Lance T. Briggs—a talented dancer who struggled with illness and addiction—against the political landscape of the present. Flashing like a feverish hour of the evening news, this dramatic new work is an evocative and moving collage of imagery, movement, and sound. Using conversations with his nephew, Jones is navigating familial relationships within the context of a larger socio-political history. Performed in Boston, Macau, New York, Paris, Ravena, and Singapore, each iteration serves as a snapshot of life in a specific place, incorporating references to local culture, customs and architecture as they relate to world events.

Trailer: youtu.be/lbS0Sy4mxGk
Full Piece: vimeo.com/195501049
PW: btjaz

***Story/Time* (2012)**
In *Story/Time*, Jones fuses the age-old art of storytelling with a vibrant landscape of contemporary movement and music. Similar to a busy streetscape or a crowded room, the experience challenges audience members to find meaning and connection in the sweep of randomized, disparate elements. Jones' short stories are drawn from his own life and tales handed down through the generations of his family. In layering a traditional form against the avant-garde compositional concerns of the mid-century modernists, the tension between high and low art is called in to question.

Trailer: https://youtu.be/20_6RVNQlvQ
Full Piece: vimeo.com/38237079
pw: btjaz

NWTHEATRE
Seattle-Area Performance & Art

2022-23 ON NOW THEATRE

NWTheatre Awards: Companies, Trends, & Touring Shows of 2022

February 14, 2023 Chase D. Anderson 14/48 Projects, As If Theatre Company, Broadway at the Paramount, Meany Center for the Performing Arts, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Seattle Theatre Group, Sound Theatre Company

All around the region and all year long, theatre and dance companies treated viewers to great performances in 2022.
Last month, NWTheatre's editor recognized a list of locally crafted Shows of the Year, featuring 13 standout productions from Puget Sound-area stages of all sizes. This month, on Valentine's Day, NWTheatre extends the love to some companies, touring shows, a trend, and even a single scene that made 2022 a year to remember.

See NWTheatre Awards: Best-Loved Shows of 2022 here for general methodology and to read what stuck with NWT's editor as the most powerful, most memorable, most spectacular locally produced shows of 2022. Read on for company and touring recognitions.

Touring Recognitions

Dynamic Season of the Year: Meany Center for the Performing Arts

It's hard to think of a more exciting season than what the Meany Center, located on the UW's main campus, put up last year. Taking advantage of its huge stage and towering ceilings, Meany kicked off 2022 with Streb Extreme Action, dancer-

daredevils who propel themselves through the air and on enormous contraptions. Following them on the year's lineup were the legendary Mark Morris Dance Group and Music Ensemble, with a night of modern dance and live music; MOMIX, with a very strange, very cool Alice in Wonderland-themed series; and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, with a locally generated spin on Jones' text-based work, *What Problem?* In a unique partnership, the New York-based Jones also guest-curated the current season.

Along with its dance series, the Center brings in concerts from percussion groups, pianists, and more. If you want to foster a budding taste in the arts with big and varied programming, give Meany's lineups a serious look.

Next up: Camille A. Brown Dancers: BLACK GIRL – Linguistic Play (March 16-18)*; "a story of Black female empowerment" in which Brown draws on "African American vernacular forms — social dancing, Double Dutch, hand-clapping games, ring shout — to evoke the self-discovery and playfulness of childhood." Tickets and show info here.*

*

Later in the season: The Motherboard Suite *– with music by Saul Williams and direction by Bill T. Jones, seven choreographers explore intersections of technology and race (April 1);* ***Step Afrika!*** *– the first professional dance group dedicated to step (April 20-22); numerous musical performers; and free events and a culminating performance by* ***Daniel Alexander Jones*** *(throughout April and May, schedule TBA). View upcoming shows here.*

THE DANCE ENTHUSIAST
a moving arts project
CELEBRATING 15 YEARS OF DANCE ENTHUSIASM
Paul Taylor's Madelyn Ho; Photo: Whitney Browne

The Dance Enthusiast's Brand of Review/Thoughts on What We See

IMPRESSIONS: "Curriculum II" by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company Makes NYC Premiere at New York Live Arts

Share:

By Cecly Placenti
Published on January 31, 2023
"Curriculum II"; photo by Maria Baranova, courtesy of NYLA
Conceived and Directed by Bill T. Jones
Choreography by Bill T. Jones with Janet Wong and the Company
Lighting Design by Robert Wierzel
Video Design by Janet Wong
Sound Design by David van Tieghem
Installation and Costume Design by Liz Prince
Text adapted from: Louis Chude-Sokei The Sound of Culture: Diaspora and Black Technopoetics; Mark O'Connell Uncanny Planet: William Shakespeare The Tempest; The Bible Genesis 1:28-31
The Company: Barrington Hinds, Jada Jenai, Shane Larson, s.lumbert, Danielle Marshall, Marie Lloyd Paspe, Jacoby Pruitt, Nayaa Opong, Philip Strom, Huiwang Zhang

January 11, 2023

Down a corridor draped in plastic sheets smeared with blood-red paint, above a floor that reads “don’t tread on me,” and through a forest of small black dolls hanging from nooses, a world emerges — a dystopian world caught between past and future. Computer monitors wedge between seats as if fallen there after an explosion. The phrase “Call it Culture” floats across them in eerie refrain. Stripped bare of wings and curtains, the skeletal structure of New York Live Arts is exposed- creating a strangely new, yet familiar, landscape. Conceived and directed by Bill T. Jones, with choreography by Jones and Janet Wong, *Curriculum II* addresses the meaning of global citizenship and the cultural effects of technology, asking us to examine our navigation of history in light of our present experience.

Curriculum II; photo by Maria Baranova and courtesy of New York Live Arts

Any worthwhile curriculum is carefully designed to generate proficiency, but isn't necessarily an end in itself, rather a vehicle. Think of *Curriculum II* as a Ferrari. The many ideas swirling around Jones’ New York City premiere move fast, taking us on one wild ride! Concepts are not consecutive, and with seating in the round and each spectator given a different view of Liz Prince’s eerie installations, proficiency is not promised. As all good teachers do, Jones calls us to join him and his dancers in an ongoing inquiry, and bring an open mind.

Curriculum II; photo by Maria Baranova and courtesy of New York Live Arts

The dancers, initially sitting among the audience, rise and begin spinning in the dark holding cell phones with flashlights on. Performer Marie Lloyd Paspe sings in a strong, radiant voice: “Streets full of people, all alone; roads full of houses, never home.” The dancers circle their arms as if holding invisible partners, their tiny flashlights orbiting like stars. Here, humanity’s most ubiquitous piece of technology poignantly transforms the stage into genesis.

Curriculum II; photo by Maria Baranova and courtesy of New York Live Arts

The movement, created in collaboration with the dancers, is gestural and specific, offering a visual anchor to this turbulent and complex work. Deliberate, committed, marvelously individual, the performers master sudden balances and precipitous turns with ease and bring structure to the space with precise walking patterns. The choreography powerfully guides viewers through the maelstrom of words, music, and floating images, securing them in the present.

Curriculum II; photo by Maria Baranova and courtesy of New York Live Arts

Sound designer, David van Tieghem, arranges text pieces to coax understanding rather than dictate it. Culling passages from Cameroonian historian Achille Mbembe, Jean-Paul Sarte, Jamaican writer, Sylvia Wynter and Nigerian scholar, Louis Chude-Sokei, *Curriculum II* explores the connections between race and technology as well as posing questions about the future.

Curriculum II; photo by Maria Baranova and courtesy of New York Live Arts

Dancer Shane Larson, who also serves as the narrator, recites Sarte: “Blacks have clearly functioned as both (slaves and monsters.) But so have machines.” He performs a duet with Nayaa Opong in which they mirror each other from a distance, methodic and never touching.

Dancers rush to displace each other in a rotating cluster, the panic of not having enough resources in a changing environment breeding aggression. Snippets of the Bible can be heard: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over every living thing.” Yet how do we both replenish the earth and have dominion over it?

Curriculum II; photo by Maria Baranova and courtesy of New York Live Arts

As we create new technology to improve our quality of life and productivity- artificial intelligence, robotics, and nano technology- will the machinery we have authority over today evolve to control us tomorrow? Have humans taken

this ancient directive to an extreme, subjugating, exploiting and overpowering one another in a quest for purpose? Jones guides us through these questions as a teaching tool for both himself and his audience, an emerging sense of warning deeply sensed.

Curriculum II; photo by Maria Baranova and courtesy of New York Live Arts

Disparate verses and images begin to come more quickly. Performers climb onto platforms within the audience and roll their bodies with paint. Opong, covered in silver, vacillates between robotic precision and animalistic rage. Philip Strom performs vulgar, sexualized gestures and Nazi-esque heel clicks with tattered strips of American flag tied around his arms and legs. His grounded stomps and swirling costume give impressions of Native American dance, a clear metaphor for the machine of greed and conquest that once claimed the very land Strom is dancing on. “Yesterday’s monsters are today’s subjects,” Larson says. “Today’s machines are tomorrow’s human beings.”

Curriculum II is dark, but with shards of light. “The other must be understood as that which is to come,” Larson says. As Papse reprises her song from the opening, the dancers circle again, this time closer together, as one. They turn to face the audience, calling us to actively participate in this new world we are creating moment by moment, learning from the past.

The New York Times

CRITIC'S PICK

Review: To the Moon! A Vivid Bill T. Jones Dance Leaves Earth's Orbit

In "Curriculum II," dancers spin like planets as they grapple with the mind, the body and technology.

From left, Jada Jenai, Nayaa Opong and Danielle Marshall in "Curriculum II."Credit...Maria Baranova

By Gia Kourlas
Jan. 11, 2023

Questions worth asking in 2023: What makes a global citizen? And what would the curriculum for such a person be?

These are some of the many — so very many — ideas swirling around "Curriculum II," directed and conceived by Bill T. Jones, with choreography by Jones and Janet Wong. In this evening-length work, performed by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company at New York Live Arts in its New York premiere, much of the audience sits on the stage. The seating arrangement is a reminder, perhaps, that not only are we part of this performance world, but part of the larger world as well.

The dancers, who initially take seats among the crowd, soon make their way to the darkened stage, holding their smartphones, flashlights on; it's as if their curving arms are embracing a partner. Marie Lloyd Paspe begins to sing in a clear, radiant voice: "Streets full of people, all alone; roads full of houses, never home."

Given the visual — a stage dotted with flickering stars of light — her song is poignant: "Everyone's Gone to the Moon," by Jonathan King. The dancers, arms outstretched, spin like planets, and as with so much of the movement in "Curriculum II," there is a directness, a simplicity that gives it power. The choreography, a mix of new and old dance phrases, is culled from the Jones/Zane archives.

Throughout, fragments of text and sound (designed by David van Tieghem) are woven into and juxtaposed against the movement. Jones pulls texts and ideas from the Cameroonian historian and political theorist Achille Mbembe; and from the Jamaican writer Sylvia Wynter and the Nigerian-born scholar Louis Chude-Sokei, who explores the connection between race and technology.

What stands out the most in "Curriculum II" is its uncanny science-fiction atmosphere. Chude-Sokei named his growing-up-in-America memoir after a David Bowie lyric: "Floating in a Most Peculiar Way." That feeling of being in outer space, high above the fraught earth where problems seem entrenched — racial violence, climate change, you name it — fills the production.

The dancing, created in collaboration with the cast, anchors the work. The dancers give tour de force performances — unflappable, tireless, committed and wholly individual. Their stoicism is wild, especially as "Curriculum II" becomes more unruly. They sing "Dixie"; they use rollers to apply paint on their bodies (by the end, they are blue, green, orange, pink, silver); and they bring order to the stage with punctilious walking patterns, breaking apart for gravity defying turns and piercing balances. When the text becomes too much, the dancing gives the work air.

"I am a performer, and my name is Shane," says Shane Larson. "I am a narrator. You can call me Louis or Sylvia or Bill."

He is also the intruder, the other. And, he continues, "You need to picture me as Black." (He is not.)

I'll be your mirror: Opong and Shane Larson.Credit...Maria Baranova

Larson performs a duet with the dancer Nayaa Opong in which they take over the width of the stage, mirroring each other — crouching and balancing as their sweeping arms and legs delineate precise shifts of weight. They rarely touch. When Jada Jenai sings Nina Simone's "The Human Touch," softly descending to the floor as she belts out the last note, the memory of that duet, with its icy precision, comes back to the surface.

The notion of touch — or lack of it — is present also when Danielle Marshall moves within a small square on the stage as we hear the story of Joice Heth, a Black woman who was put on display in 1835 by P.T. Barnum, who claimed she was 161 years old. Instead of a human touch, the words are inhuman; the sight of Marshall, rolling on her back and freezing her limbs in the air, makes the tale, alongside Barnum's description of her, all the more horrifying.

Again, the theatrical elements — especially the text — come together as pieces that sit side by side to become a greater whole that is less nameable than felt. We hear shouts and sirens from the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol; "Dixie" is played, sped up. It fades into "Beulah Land" by Bessie Jones and Georgia Sea Island Singers.

"Yesterday's monsters are today's subjects," Larson says. "Today's machines are tomorrow's human beings."

As "Curriculum II" continues, it seems to be pondering an essential idea: What is it to be human? It's dark, but there is also an underlying sense of hope, especially as Larson says — and then repeats: "The other must be understood as that which is to come."

When, in the end, Paspe reprises singing "Everyone's Gone to the Moon," the dancers gather around her in a circle, before turning to face us, just as they began. But now, it feels like everyone has gone to the moon. And, in the words of Bowie, we are floating in the most peculiar way.

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company

Through Friday; newyorklivearts.org

Gia Kourlas is the dance critic of The New York Times.

A version of this article appears in print on Jan. 12, 2023, Section C, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Leaving the Earth's Orbit.

fjord

"Curriculum II" by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Photograph by Maria Baranova

Performance
Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company: "Curriculum II"
Place
New York Live Arts, New York, NY, January 10, 2023
Words
Candice Thompson

"Call it culture." This short phrase acted as the backbone of "Curriculum II," a new work from the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Uttered as a satirical refrain or in bold type, floating in the numerous screens as a reprimand, this barb reappeared continually like so many tiny vertebrates supporting the structure of a complex and at times, unwieldy, composition.

Conceived and directed by Bill T. Jones, with choreography by Jones along with Janet Wong and the company, this text-heavy multimedia production was set in the round at New York Live Arts. Each section of seats boasted a different view of Liz Prince's creepy installation—including a cluster of

hanging picaninny dolls and rope nooses that lurked around the edges of the theater like threats—and came with its own close encounters with the artists.

Emerging out of seats in the audience, the ten performers light up the stage with the flashes of their phones. They gather into a tableau where their bodies face out to us, but all focus is placed on their devices.

They return to their seats as Marie Lloyd Paspe begins to orbit the stage while singing Jonathan King's "Everyone's Gone to the Moon." Video design by Wong shows us the moon on four screens mounted over center

stage as in an arena; a galaxy of twinkling planets and stars expands on several screens installed in the stadium seating at the back of the theater.

Long time ago, life had begun

Everyone went to the sun

Streets full of people, all alone

Roads full of houses, never home

A church full of singing, out of tune

Everyone's gone to the moon

But soon, Paspe's lovely singing gives way to a disembodied voice reading from what sounds like a Bible verse (the program notes text adapted from several sources including Louis Chude Sokei's *The Sound of Culture: Diaspora and Black Technopoetics*; Mark O'Connell's "Uncanny Planet," from New York Review of Books; William Shakespeare's "The Tempest;" and Genesis 1:28-31), summoning the ensemble back to the stage. They twirl in place; one arm extended, phone in hand, to capture their absorption in their own universe. Meanwhile God's voiceover, commanding all "to be fruitful and multiply" has morphed into a propagation of terms defining identity: human, non-human, trans-human, post-human, primitive people, more-than-human. Later these words will run over the screens and LED billboards hovering over the audiences on stage left and right. For now, there is enough to concentrate on with the ensemble breaking into individual phrases of movement that coalesce into a blissful bit of unison dancing. It is a blip in time before they return to the gravitational pull of their phones, but long enough to glimpse the youth and immense talent of this group.

“Curriculum II” by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Photograph by Maria Baranova

Spinning is one of many conceptual ideas layered throughout this work, utilized both as a dance move that is part of Jones’s formal exploration and movement vocabulary as well as a circular method for incorporating and interrogating the series of cultural fragments comprising the curriculum in question. The substance of these fragments included famous and esoteric texts, conversations, protests, anecdotes, and songs from our collective archive as well as imagery, ranging from calming nature videos like waterfalls to scenes of migrants at a border and solipsistic selfie videos snapped while the dancers were spinning—all of it delivered in short, overlapping loops that came at the audience from all directions. Which meant there were episodes in which I felt almost felt dizzy in my effort to stay open to all the stimuli and other times in which I found myself caught in its web.

This setup enabled reveals and deflections; brought forth identities fluid and evolving.

At 59:43 I notice there is a countdown clock onscreen. Shane Larson grabs a mic and introduces himself as the narrator. He gives us a biography cobbled from the names, job titles, and origins of the various writers from which the text is adapted and describes himself as an “intruder” and “other.” But more importantly, he adds, “you need to picture me as Black.”

Shane Larson in “Curriculum II” by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Photograph by Maria Baranova

From there, Larson and Nayaa Opong chart the dimensions of a square of light, mirroring each other with slow and deliberate moves across the gridded floor. Larson and Opong work in near perfect unison down to small wobbles and wiggles of the head and hands and Robert Wierzel’s lighting design grows larger to accommodate them. All the while Larson’s words rattle in my brain.

A white man assuming multiple Black identities, Larson’s character is here for more than precise dancing and soon he regales us with a tale of cultural original sin: P.T. Barnum’s acquisition of the slave woman Joice Heth in 1835 and his showcasing of her as a curiosity, a story he will return to a few times and one he credits with “the moment American popular culture began.” He will go on to lecture us on the uncanny. His presence is both ridiculous and incisive. And in its own way, also uncanny.*

While the dancing throughout is formal and abstract, it is never fully separate from the juxtaposition of text and media. Danielle Marshall moves with an

articulate specificity in a solo while Larson describes the body of Heth, Barnum's 161-year-old slave woman. After the singing of a Confederate song, Philip Strom exorcises himself in a howling solo, thrusting his hips, arms, and fingers, hurling his fists, and flinging the thin strips of Prince's revealing and deconstructed American flag costume. In group sections, dancers tap in and out of phrases, literally replacing one another in a kind of physical subtext reinforcing ideas of reproduction, evolution, interconnectedness, and death. Later, in an accumulating phrase this idea turns into more violent yanking and pulling—perhaps an ominous foreshadowing to the playing of white supremacist chanting, "You will not replace us."

"Curriculum II" by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Photograph by Maria Baranova

The movement vocabulary is large and dynamic, and by turns measured and explosive. In partnered sections, surprising initiation points and jarring transitions involve flying kicks to the chest, tackles to the ground, and dragging bodies offstage. These rougher antics are complemented with

quieter sections, as when a large group of dancers link arms in a complicated tethering that lowers a fellow performer to the ground ever so gently. These moments make me resent when my attention is divided and drawn elsewhere. Likewise, the lovely voices and commanding vocal performances of both Paspe and Jada Jenai are welcome respites.

The fact is, there is no simple way to enjoy the performers dancing and singing at such a high level, bathed as we all are in the good, but mostly bad and ugly snippets from the centuries of culture that led us to this place. Throughout, I can't help thinking that this kitchen sink approach is an exercise in radical accountability.

"Curriculum II" by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Photograph by Maria Baranova

With 24 minutes ticking down on the clock, the dancers are now busy painting their bodies, on and off stage; some are visible through the curtained areas behind stage right and left, while another's progress can be streamed from their phone. Through a miraculous weaving of so many texts, we

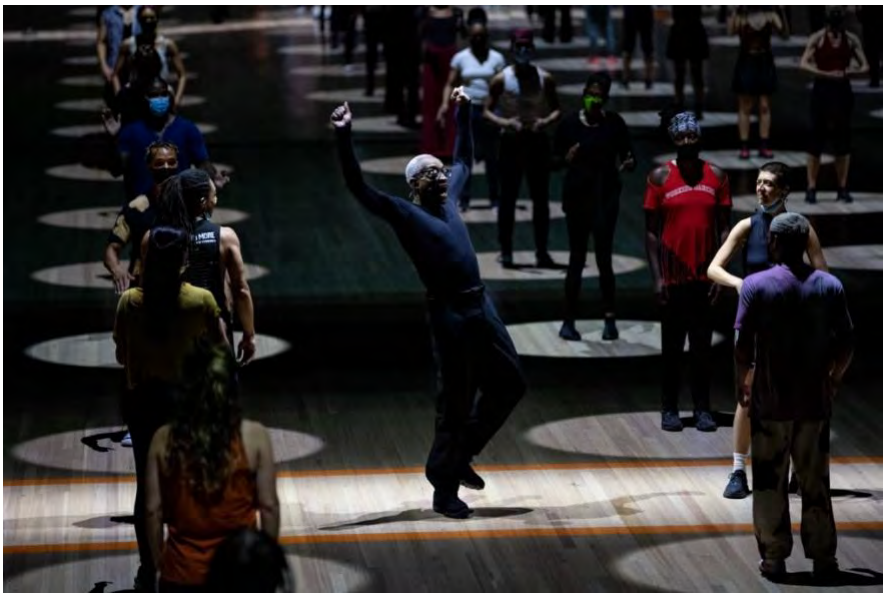
somehow journey from slaves and monsters to robots and the future. Now silver, green, orange, blue, magenta, multi-patterned and colored, the performers all eventually come to inhabit squares of light. They form two diagonal lines and reconfigure themselves with a different sort of pace and a new kind of groove.

There are so many archives that co-exist with body paint—from the practices of Indigenous peoples all over the world to minstrelsy and yellow face. At first, the body paint seems to categorize and segregate the cast; near the end, when they are all onstage together, it is almost hope-inducing to take them in as one colorful spinning form.

When Larson hands off the mic to Paspe, the clock reverses and moves from counting down to counting up. Like a palindrome or the BC/AD notion of time that the Gregorian calendar has given us, the performers are now moving forward in reverse order. When Paspe returns to sing "Everyone's Gone to the Moon" again, time feels anything but linear as it unspools and doubles back. They walk the lines of the grid only to find themselves back in the opening tableau, sans phones and physically transformed, eyes now searching the darkness.

**In the world premiere of Yvonne Rainer's* Hellzapoppin': What About the Bees? *last fall at New York Live Arts, there was a similar, if perhaps inverse, use of deflection. Rainer's work utilized a voice over in which a Black performer, David Thomson, read Rainer's own remembrances written from the perspective of Apollo Musagétés. I was troubled by what felt like an affect without rigorously thinking through the cringeworthy racial implications. From observing the talkback with Rainer and Jones after the show, it seemed that Jones was also put off with many aspects of how Rainer reckoned with her own racism (or didn't). This left me wondering if Jones' complicated narrator was a coincidence or a rebuke.*

DANCE magazine



Bill T. Jones in *Deep Blue Sea*. Photo by Maria Baranova, courtesy New York Live Arts.

News of Note: What You Might Have Missed in December 2022

Courtney Escoyne
January 6, 2023

Awards & Honors

Donald Byrd received the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation's 2022 Gordon Davidson Award.

At the 2022 NY Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Awards, **Tatiana Desardouin** received the Juried Bessie Award, **Emily L. Waters** the Bessies Angel Award and **Princess Lockerooo** Outstanding Breakout Choreographer. Other awards included: Outstanding Choreographer/Creator for **Leslie Cuyjet** (*Blur*), **Bill T. Jones**, **Janet Wong** and **Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company** (*Deep Blue Sea*), **Anna Sperber** (*Bow Echo*) and **Raúl Tamez** (*Migrant Mother* for Limón Dance Company); Outstanding Performer for **Soledad Barrio**, **Kayla Farrish**, **Nikolai McKenzie Ben Rema** and **Antonio Ramos**; and Outstanding Revival for ***Set and Reset/Reset (2021)***, performed by Candoco Dance Company.

Bill T. Jones goes Deep (Blue Sea) at The Mann Center

By A.D. Amorosi
Posted on April 28, 2022

Photo by Howard Schatz

What Miles Davis is to jazz and David Lynch is to film, choreographer Bill T. Jones is to dance. He is a MacArthur Genius Fellowship Award winner and two-time Tony Award winning creator whose every (literal) step, big or small, changes the landscape of the art-form.

“My process is like my face,” Jones said when he was last in Philadelphia, crafting a choreo-poem for Opera Philadelphia and its “We Shall Not Be Moved” theater piece. “I can change my hair, put make-up on, but the structure of my face is the structure of my face. There are certain things that I have a predilection for, one of which is…movement in all forms, the architecture of time and space as I have studied it in the world of dance. So, I care, ultimately, but in the moment, I care more about what the thing in front of me needs in order to be realized… Dance is malleable. Dance doesn’t need context.”

While Jones’ previous work in collaboration with Philadelphia art groups was based on this city’s tragic MOVE confrontation and bombing, as well as the events in Ferguson, and the beginnings of Black Lives Matter movement, this time out, the choreographer will bring what he calls as “an immersive arts experience,” ‘Deep Blue Sea’ to the Mann Center on April 29 and 30.

The experience begins with a Jones solo designed to “deconstruct text” from Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech, and then blossoms to incorporate the 10-member Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, along with Philadelphia movement artists. Jones legendarily named his company for artist/photographer Arnie Zane, a man who Jones met, fell in love and created an artistic and personal partnership in 1970 until Zane’s death from AIDS in 1988.

Additional elements of ‘Deep Blue Sea’ explore the manipulation of text, spoken word, singing and an ongoing “sound score” composed by Nick Hallett in collaboration with Music Producer HPrizm aka High Priest. Creating the physical environment is architectural team Diller Scofidio + Renfro and Project Designer Peter Nigrini, with lighting by Designer Robert Wierzel and costumes by Liz Prince.

One of the principal questions of ‘Deep Blue Sea’, is what Time Magazine called “the pursuit of an elusive we,” and a collective call to action. To this, Jones responded with some of America’s biggest “we” and what power they hold and betray.

“We the People, we shall overcome, we hold these truths. That is part of everyday parlance, and it’s quite irritating. I am a Black American who truly grew up thinking that we shall overcome, that there was a ‘we’ that transcended ethnicity and race. And the more I have lived, the more I see those things are so deeply entrenched. So what’s this we? This piece is a poem, a metaphorical rendering of wrestling with those stories, using iconographic texts—Herman Melville’s Moby Dick, Chapter 93, and Martin Luther King’s 1963 great March on Washington speech, ‘I Have a Dream’.”

As someone who has forever trafficked in hybrid art forms, genre-less work and multi-media mash-ups, the absolutely everything all at once of ‘Deep Blue Sea’ is right up Jones’ alley.

“I like to think about form. Form and thinking are inseparable for me. From there, I go to how and what is thinking’s relationship to feeling. That’s important to me – in everything that I do that is creative,” Jones said. “My whole life has been a hybrid, mixing this and that. That’s why I continue to call myself a post-modern artist: it’s all about combing new forms to move forward.”

The Philadelphia Inquirer

ARTS & CULTURE

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company unveils new piece at the Mann Center

The performance was also the public debut of a new black-box-type space that puts both performers and audience on the main stage.

"Deep Blue Sea," conceived and directed by Bill T. Jones, is performed at the Mann Center on Friday by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. The performance involved the spoken word, dancers, a choir and projected images and light effects.Read moreCHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

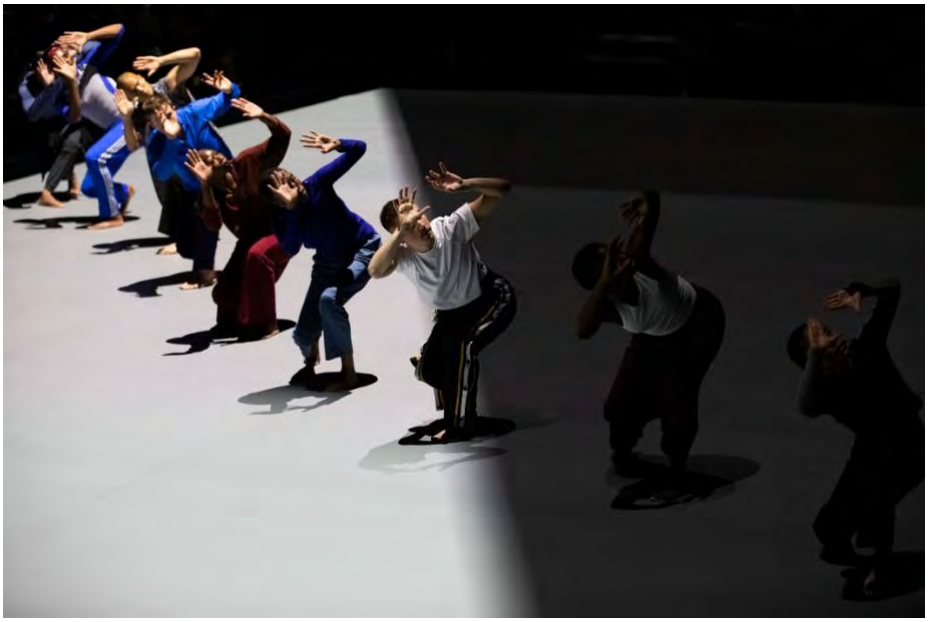
by Peter Dobrin
Published Apr 30, 2022

Blood-red in spray-paint-like font, the words are projected onto the stage at a certain point in *Deep Blue Sea*: “How’s it feel to be a problem?” Words grow to become blobs, and suddenly the whole stage is engulfed in crimson. Two dancers, Barrington Hinds and Marie Lloyd Paspe, writhe energetically into each other’s form — a reclaiming of the bloodbath atmosphere in a pas de deux of incredible agency and beauty.

Bill T. Jones does this over and over — raising moments of hope from despair — in *Deep Blue Sea*, which had its pandemic-delayed local premiere Friday night at the Mann Center. At 70, Jones is revered as a grand old man of dance, and yet this new work, commissioned by the Mann, couldn’t be more au courant. Jones himself is ever-present in the piece as speaker and

dancer, but it's through his larger role as creative catalyst for a cast of dancers, musicians, light artists, and others that *Deep Blue Sea* gets its edge.

What degree of control Jones exercised over all of the multimedia aspects isn't known and isn't necessarily relevant to the audience, but the overall feeling was that of a wise influence letting the artists do what they do best.



Bill T. Jones is the convener of at least a half dozen art forms and genres in "Deep Blue Sea," all brought together in a venue of great intimacy that's new to Fairmount Park.CHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

Jones establishes an unlikely narrative device that recurs in the 100-minute-plus piece. He tells the story of how, as a schoolboy, he studied *Moby-Dick*, and how later in life he revisited the story and stumbled on the question of Pip, the Black cabin boy.

"We don't remember him. Why?" Jones asks.

Pip gets left behind in the story, a lost, bobbing figure in the sea, and the metaphor for Black America is no less powerful for being obvious. The terror of being separated from humanity is more than one can bear. A lone countertenor is heard, a small chorus joins in, and the 10 dancers of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company roll across the stage, moving and trembling like a wave before the darkness swallows up Pip.

Jones is the convener of at least a half dozen art forms and genres in *Deep Blue Sea*, all brought together in a venue of great intimacy that's new to Fairmount Park. Performers and a small audience (about 275) are both on the main stage in this new configuration, dubbed Downstage @ the Mann, with an added black curtain at the stage's edge completing the enclosure. Sophisticated light projections flicker and move across the stage floor, amplifying the message. When a spotlight on a dancer suddenly turns into a black circle, effectively erasing a person, you feel it.

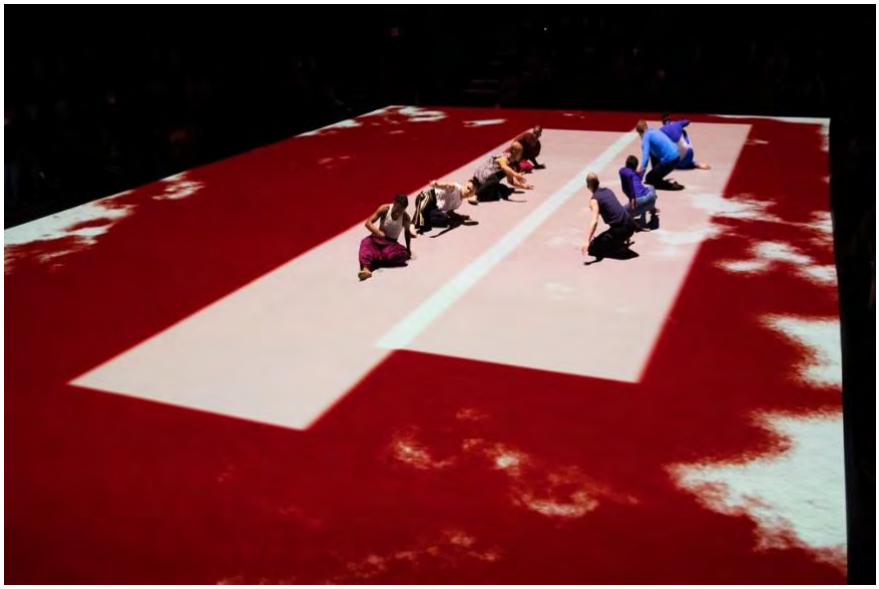
Sophisticated light projections flicker and move across the stage floor, amplifying the message. When a spotlight on a dancer suddenly turns into a black circle, effectively erasing a person, you feel it.CHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

Humanity erased, characters forgotten, people violated — *Deep Blue Sea* is above all a piece of social justice theater, and Jones acts as a kind of sage poet on its behalf. “Revolution is not a onetime thing,” he says, echoing writer-activist Audre Lorde. He invokes police brutality and Jan. 6, suggesting that his piece has only gained power and relevance since the originally scheduled premiere in 2020 was thwarted by the pandemic.

It’s the fact that so much of *Deep Blue Sea* is sophisticated and complex that makes one moment stand out as somewhat superimposed. Two microphones are placed on stage near the end, and one by one the professional as well as community dancers walk up and give testimony on things they believe about race, equality, and other matters.

Dancers of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company perform "Deep Blue Sea."CHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

Elsewhere, and densely packed, the synergies were elegantly constructed and potent. Bright, agile images of text and human faces move across the stage. The design by Elizabeth Diller (of the New York architecture firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro) and Peter Nigrini didn't just provide a changing dance floor, but one that often interacted with the dance. Original music by Nick Hallett, a small choir, and a substantial contribution of other sound design — combined with the tight "black box" configuration — made the Mann, and the outside world, disappear.



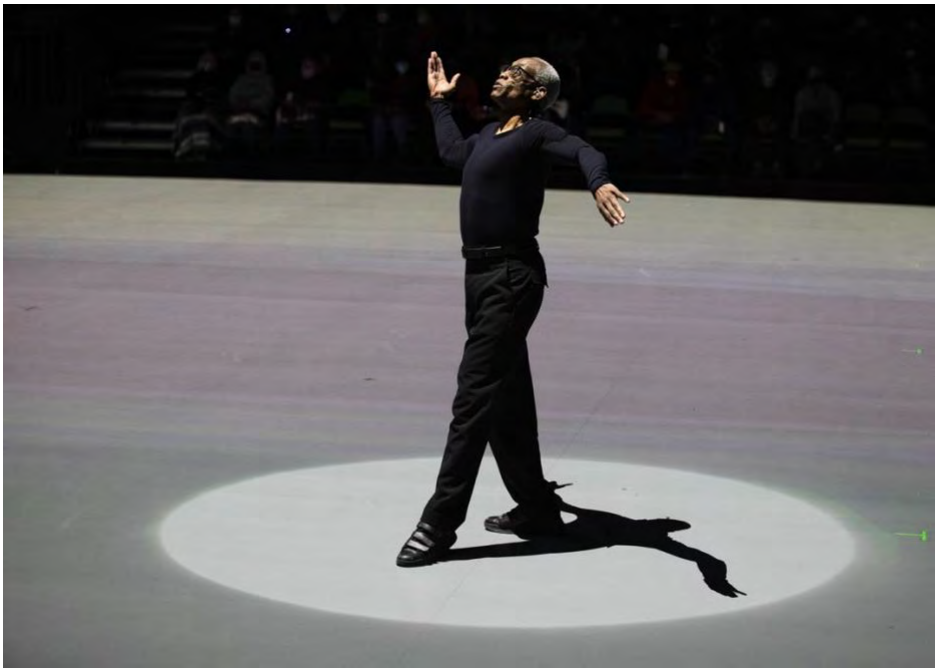
Dancers perform as a a blood stain envelops the stage.CHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

All the better to focus on the dance, which, both in its individual and ensemble work, was stunning in seamlessly drawing on traditional ballet moves as well as modern gestures. Jones moves bodies around the stage like sculptures — even nonprofessional ones. He carried the sea-of-humanity idea into the end of the work, where a few dozen dancers became a tight, bubbling whirlpool.

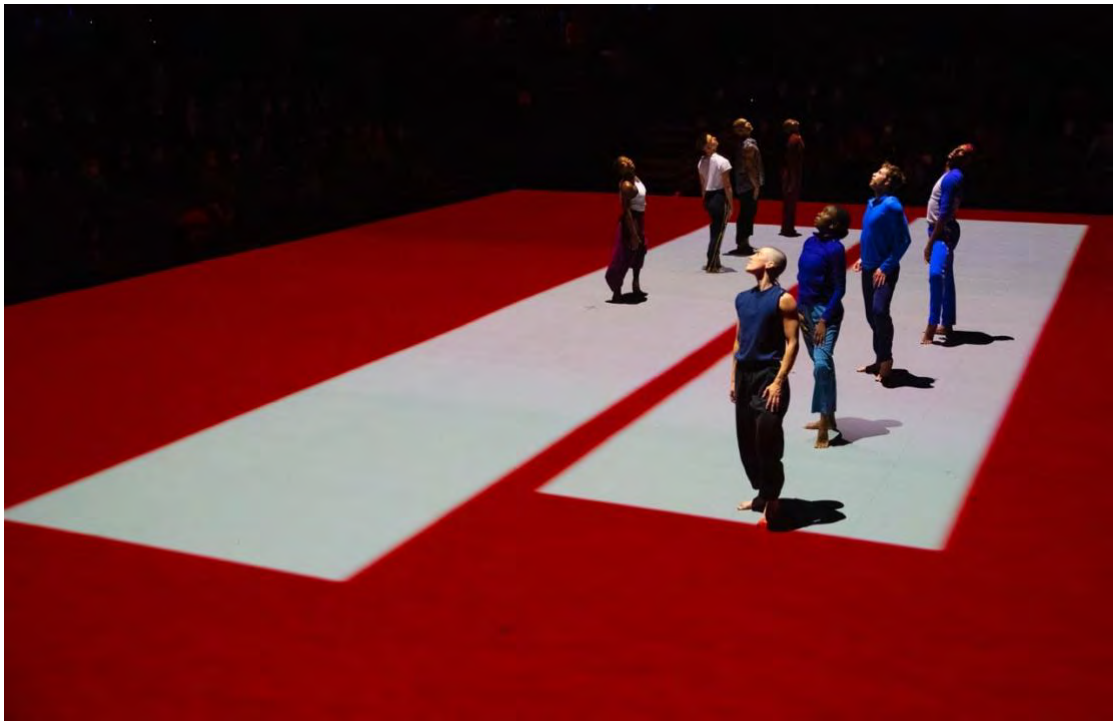
Surely one of the most arresting moments comes near the middle of the piece, where a projection turns the entire floor into an ocean. It's a breathtaking image, but also vast and desolate, and raises a troubling ambiguity. Whom have we left behind in the here and now? Beauty and horror don't contradict or mitigate each other in Bill T. Jones' world. Often they simply coexist on a knife's edge, raising the hope or fear that someday one may convert the other to its cause.

Deep Blue Sea, conceived and directed by Bill T. Jones, is performed at the Mann Music Center on April 29, 2022 by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. The performance involved the spoken word, dancers, a gospel choir and projected images and light effects.CHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

Deep Blue Sea, conceived and directed by Bill T. Jones, is performed at the Mann Music Center on April 29, 2022 by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. The performance involved the spoken word, dancers, a gospel choir and projected images and light effects.CHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer



Bill T. Jones is the voice of the performance and also conceived and directed the performance. Deep Blue Sea is performed at the Mann Music Center on April 29, 2022 by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. The performance involved the spoken word, dancers, a gospel choir and projected images and light effects.Read moreCHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer



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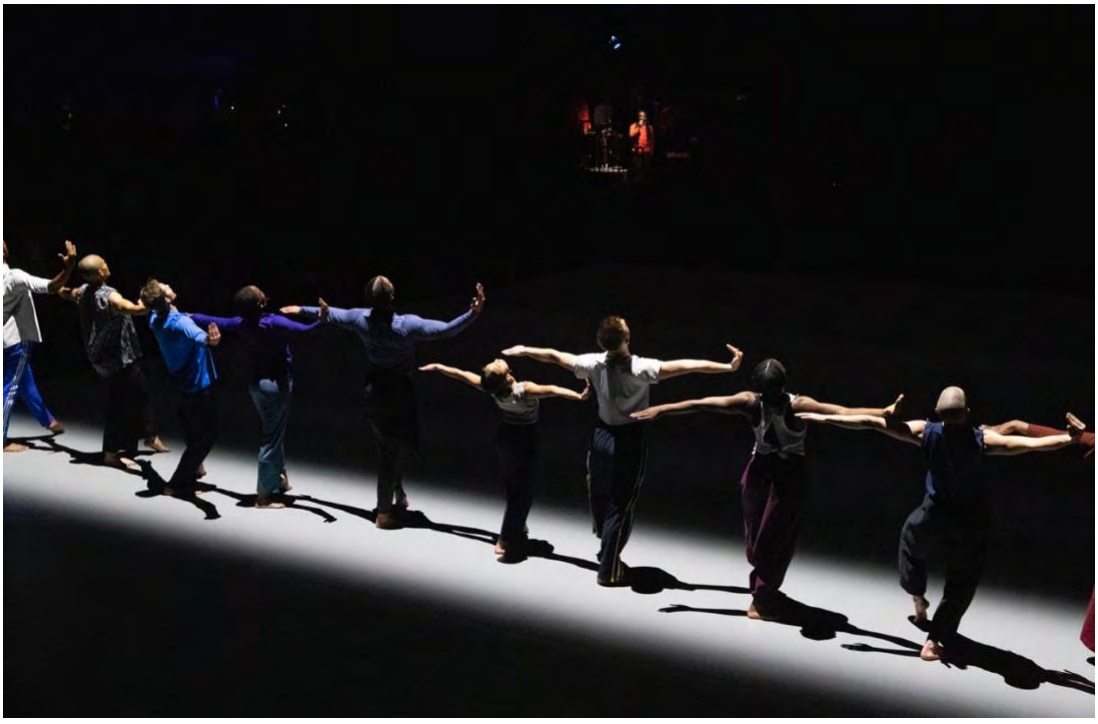

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The performers bow at the end of the performance. Deep Blue Sea, conceived and directed by Bill T. Jones, is performed at the Mann Music Center on April 29, 2022 by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. The performance involved the spoken word, dancers, a gospel choir and projected images and light effects.Read moreCHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

Prior to the performance, the cast gathers in a circle in the box theater set up on the Mann's stage. Deep Blue Sea, conceived and directed by Bill T. Jones, is performed at the Mann Music Center on April 29, 2022 by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. The performance involved the spoken word, dancers, a gospel choir and projected images and light effects.Read moreCHARLES FOX / Staff Photographer

Santa Barbara Independent

Dance

Review | ‘What Problem?’ by Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company at the Santa Barbara Granada

Dynamic Performance Weaves Contemporary Dance with Seminal Works by Herman Melville, Martin Luther King, and More

Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Dance Company performs 'What Problem?’ | Credit: Jim Coleman

By **Leslie Dinaberg**
Mon Nov 21, 2022 | 11:08am

From the moment that four musicians enter from the aisles dressed in bright orange shirts that echo prison garb, and then the icon of the dance world himself, Bill T. Jones, walks elegantly (albeit with a cane due to a leg injury) to take his position in front of the stage of the Granada, it’s clear that *What Problem?* — presented by UCSB Arts & Lectures on November 15 — is not going to be a typical dance performance.

Weaving contemporary dance, live music and Jones’s readings of excerpts from powerful texts — including W.E.B. Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*, Martin Luther King’s “I Have A Dream” speech, Kendrick Lamar’s “Never Catch Me,” and Herman

Melville's *Moby-Dick* — into a social, political, and spiritual exploration of the world we now live in, it's heartening to see that after 40 years of creating new works, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company is still innovating.

As a choreographer, Jones is a master of moving bodies on stage like sculptural compositions. One of my favorite and most indelible images was a beautiful mass of dancers rolling on the floor creating undulating shapes that mimicked the movement of waves in *Moby-Dick*.

With each touring location for *What Problem?,* the company develops content with local community members to create performances that bring home the themes and messages exploring the intersection of race, sex and sexual politics, gender, immigration, class struggles, and self in relationship to community.

The Santa Barbara production's local participants, encompassing a wide variety of ages, walks of life, and performance experiences, included Sophia Ben-Achour, Samuelle Bourgault, Rebecca Brown, Bijou Douglas, Mariangelica Duque, Devon Frost, Miyuki Hamai, Mindy Horwitz, Sophia Jeffe, Kara Le, Amanda Lizarraga, Meredith Lyons, Frances Manthorpe, Linn Molin, Ellen Pasternack, Ana Schreck, Chris Sellgren, Grace Slansky, Mariah Slechter, Ahlora Smith, Julianna Swille, Jenna Tico, and Estefani Zuniga.

The final, spoken word portion of the production was an Intentionally jarring component of an otherwise tightly woven symphony. Multiple microphones were placed on the stage and one by one, the assembly of dancers (both the professional company and the community members), took their turns at the mic to give testimony on what they believe (using "I know statements") about themselves, the world, and issues of race, equality, politics and more.

I don't know that the final statement (something along the lines of "I know that Donald Trump belongs in jail, not on the ballot,") was exactly the right sentiment to end such a powerful night of performance on, but I do know that *What Problem?* is not a show I'll soon forget.

The New York Times

Eiko Otake peering behind Bill T. Jones in Otake's Manhattan home last month.Credit...Jeanette Spicer for The New York Times

By Wendy Perron

- Published April 6, 2022
- Updated April 13, 2022

Eiko Otake and Bill T. Jones are two celebrated dance artists with different styles, temperaments and cultural backgrounds. What they have in common is their willingness — hunger, really — to take on weighty issues. Otake has been illuminating the environmental damage caused by nuclear accidents. Jones is intimately connected to the struggle against racism.

Both artists turned 70 in mid-February, and both are making some of the most powerful works of their careers.

In "A Body in Fukushima," Otake placed herself in irradiated areas around the nuclear plant in Fukushima that melted down in 2011. A book, with photographs by William Johnston, and a film version (both from 2021) immerse viewers in a desolate though poetic landscape. Her figure, exhausted or staggering, wrapped in an old kimono, is found among waste bags of radiated debris or abandoned temples.

In Jones's epic "Deep Blue Sea" (choreographed with Janet Wong), performed at the vast Park Avenue Armory this fall, he was the poignant elder guiding dancers through communal interactions and tableaux. They dance at times to text, including Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, recited backward. The stunning visuals by

Elizabeth Diller sometimes plunge Jones's lone figure into complete darkness and other times seem to immerse the audience in a roiling sea. We are left to wonder, is the sea the unconscious? Is it the racist underbelly of society? Is community what saves us?
In the '70s, Eiko & Koma — Otake's performing duo with her husband, Takashi Koma Otake — were developing their slow-motion, otherworldly style while Jones and Arnie Zane, his partner in work and life, were igniting a wild brand of athleticism. They all performed on the same festival circuit in the '80s, and over the years Otake and Jones developed a friendship. What draws them toward each other? They share a spirit of resistance but something else, too: a no-holds-barred approach that Otake calls "too-much-ness." Though they can seem like opposites — the dramatically impulsive Jones versus the grounded but impish Otake — there is something similarly relentless about their choreographic investigations.

Otake in "A Body in Fukushima."Credit...William Johnston

Jones, whose fame reaches beyond the dance world, leads a more public life than Otake. When Zane died of AIDS-related causes in 1988, Jones mourned publicly through his choreography and appearances on television. He's the artistic director of both the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company and New York Live Arts, a forward-looking theater in Manhattan's Chelsea neighborhood. The Japanese-born Otake, who came to New York in 1976 with Koma, has been performing solo in nontraditional spaces — a train station, a cemetery — since 2014.

This month, Otake's "The Duet Project: Distance Is Malleable," a set of partnerings designed to pull her off balance, will be at the N.Y.U. Skirball Center, April 15 to 17. The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company is touring "What Problem?" a portable version of "Deep Blue Sea." And Jones has choreographed two theatrical productions: "Black No More," which closed in February, and "Paradise Square," which opened on Broadway on April 3.

Recently over a dinner at Otake's Manhattan apartment — she cooked a Japanese meal with seaweed soup and fried tofu — she and Jones had one of their probing, rambling conversations. (They have talked publicly before: in an email exchange posted on Otake's blog and in a Zoom conversation sponsored by New York Live Arts.) Jones tends to be oratorial even when speaking casually, while Otake takes time to arrive at her point. Occasionally Jones's husband and sometime collaborator, Bjorn Amelan, supplied a phrase or quote when Jones was hesitant. Below are edited excerpts from

their conversation, which didn't shy away from big topics, including beauty, doubt and death.

You've known each other for a long time. When did the friendship click?

EIKO OTAKE We were at a benefit honoring Harvey Lichtenstein at Danspace [in 1997]. Koma and I were performing part of "Wind," which we did with our kids, and we were all sharing a dressing room. Bill, you had just done an amazing solo, and you came back to the dressing room and you couldn't calm yourself down. Your body was doing this [shaking wildly].

BILL T. JONES I assumed that's what our field was, that inside all the coolness and formalism of the avant-garde were people who were really exploding.

OTAKE But you were not only exploding inside, you were exploding onstage.

JONES I know, and it's totally inappropriate for a Black man to be so open in front of white people. That was transgressive. You have to understand, I was taught that they will kill you if they see weakness.

Image

Jones, center, with his dancers in a scene from "Deep Blue Sea" at the Park Avenue Armory in September.Credit...Julieta Cervantes for The New York Times

Who taught you that?

JONES My mother. Every Black adult would tell you that. But in the white avant-garde, these stories do not get told. So I had let that audience know that I'm *here*. I know the solo had been on fire.

OTAKE For Koma, myself and our son Yuta, it was a very big moment. It's like when I saw "Deep Blue Sea," I told you, "It was as if I came to this country to see this piece."

Bill, had you seen the work of Eiko & Koma?

JONES Yes, and they were doing something deep and elemental. It was free of "Was it ballet, was it modern, was it Merce [Cunningham]?"

OTAKE I always wanted Eiko & Koma to be singular, not accountable to any category.

JONES I'm going to ask my sister Eiko, Do you experience doubt as you grow older, and how do you deal with it?

OTAKE I do. When I came up with the idea of a monologue for the 20th anniversary of 9/11, everything was in doubt. How much to speak? Am I being too confessional or didactic? Looking at this immigrant body, could viewers find their own thoughts?

JONES My doubt is that maybe it doesn't matter. I rehearse the end of my life. I think to myself, Are you earning your food? You have a wonderful husband. You have this theater. What is it all at the service of? And it makes me depressed, and I have sometimes had suicidal thoughts. So that's what my doubt looks like. Just stop. It's obscene, your ambition; it's ridiculous.

OTAKE That's the inner voice, or something else?

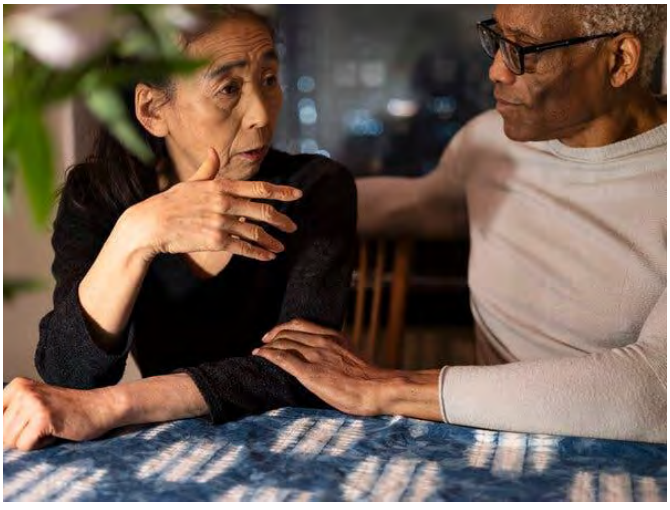
JONES It must be the inner voice. When the dark crowds in like that, I find myself looking for some idea, something to start building.

And each time you build a new piece, you are also building on your lifelong themes. You were talking about racism in your work way before Black Lives Matter.

JONES And trying to be lyrical in talking about it. Can you sing the song in a way that others can sing with you?

Eiko, I want to ask you a question about the idea of beauty. The other night when I was watching your film, "A Body in Fukushima," there were certain frames when I'm thinking, OMG, look at the red against the blue, the way the perspective is. But this is a place where people have died, and there's radiation everywhere. So the tragedy is there, but there is also — do I dare say? — beauty.

Image



Jones: “I’m going to ask my sister Eiko, Do you experience doubt as you grow older, and how do you deal with it?”Credit...Jeanette Spicer for The New York Times

OTAKE What I was trying to do using my body was to compose something. I wanted to make a shape of a certain weight. Instead of only a few pictures, I wanted to make strings of pictures. So I made this two-hour film with 459 pictures. There is beauty even in destruction, and that might make people see an image longer.

JONES You were demanding something of us who would look. You will be gone; you will pass. And then there will be someone looking at this amazing film in 50 years and looking at this person draped across a piece of cement, and they won’t have the pleasure of having dinner with you or hearing your voice. But I want to ask you: When you perform, do you go into — is it a character?

OTAKE It is the place I want to be when I’m dancing.

JONES It was like looking into — do you know the word maw, m-a-w? A whale has a maw, you look into the maw of the world. At the center of the world there is a big, dark hole, and you were living in that for a moment.

To me it’s suffering that I see in her face. That’s what I think the dark hole is that you, Eiko, somehow channel or allow to come through you.

OTAKE Channeling does happen because it’s not everyday me.

JONES Is it dangerous to do what you do? When you left Fukushima, did you need care? That pain we’re talking about, can you turn it on and off?

OTAKE That I do carry. That’s why I was completely out of control when the Russians attacked a nuclear plant in Ukraine and set a fire. I couldn’t find out how close the fire was to the reactors. I had a migraine all night.

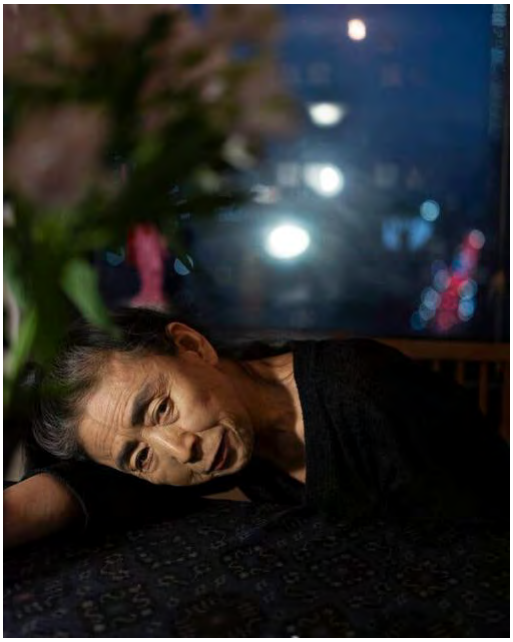
Now that you’re both 70, does that make you envision the end of your life?

JONES I oftentimes in my head rehearse the end of my life. I ask myself, Are you ready to die yet?

OTAKE I practice dying onstage. In my “Duet Project,” I work with young people; DonChristian Jones is 32. In this performance, I give him water. Then I say, “Working with you makes me know I want to die before you. This is the order. I don’t want to break it.”

JONES That would be a blessing, that the world was in order. I saw Arnie dying, and his parents were there. When I think of the terror Arnie must have had when looking at the ineffable, I think, would I have the strength to do that?

OTAKE We each prepare to die but also find reason to live.



Otake: “At 3 a.m., I’m working.”Credit...Jeanette Spicer for The New York Times

What are you working on now?

JONES Everything I make is rooted in emotion and recall. My big brother Azel, who I went to Woodstock with and did acid with — he died recently. Back in upstate New York, he told me, “You could be breathing in the dust of Raphael or Leonard da Vinci.” He told me things I needed to know about the world. I’m making this new work asking questions like, What do you have to know globally to be well versed in how to live in this ever more challenging world?

OTAKE In my “Duet Project” at N.Y.U., I have a talking duet with Ishmael Houston-Jones, a crawling duet with Margaret Leng Tan, a running duet with DonChristian, and a dying duet with Iris McCloughan. I want to put my speaking self and dancing self together before it’s too late.

What allows you both to keep digging deep into your work as you age?

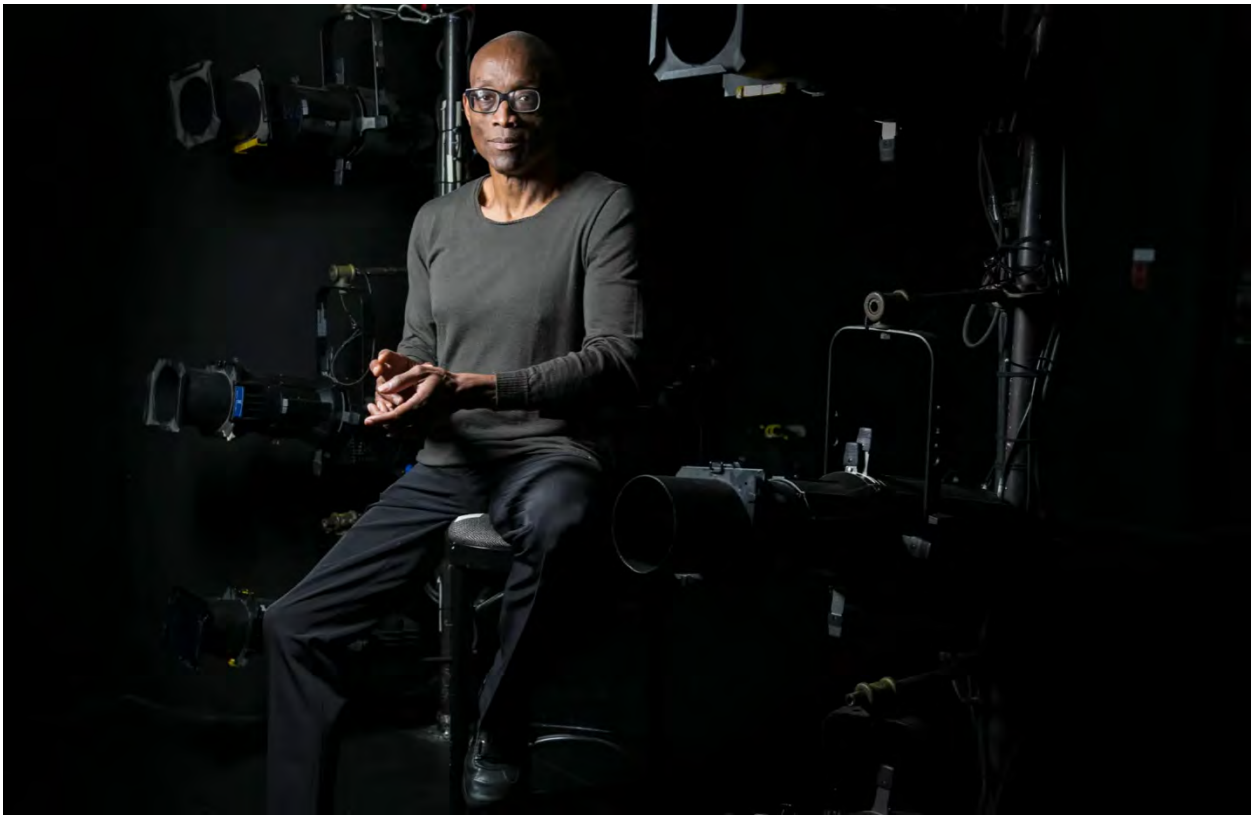
JONES If not now, when? If you’re going to be here, what are you doing? OK, I’m going to make one more piece and try to say things I haven’t been able to say.

OTAKE For me, I feel like I need to do certain things now. I raised two kids, I took care of my parents. Since my mom died in 2019, I have no other personal duties. At 3 a.m., I’m working.

Wendy Perron is the author of “The Grand Union: Accidental Anarchists of Downtown Dance, 1970-1976.”

TIME

"'Free At Last? ' Please. Who Is Free?" Choreographer Bill T. Jones Reflects on a Half Century of Creative Work



BY **BELINDA LUSCOMBE** OCTOBER 1, 2021 2:33 PM EDT

Bill T. Jones, 69, is a choreographer, MacArthur Genius Fellowship Award winner, two-time Tony award winner, author and cofounder of the Bill T. Jones /Arnie Zane Dance Company. He's performing with his own company for the first time in 15 years from Sept. 28 to Oct. 9 in a new work, Deep Blue Sea, commissioned by New York City's Park Avenue Armory. He spoke with TIME about how he stays creative, why he doesn't like to use the word "dance," and the how the events of the last 18 months have influenced his art.

You're still clearly burning to create after many years. How do you keep that fire stoked? When I am moved by a work of art, when I'm moved by a political situation, I immediately begin to think in my language: movement, space and time. So it is still helping me understand how to live. Not to mention that I have a company that must be fed. We're still fighting for the importance of this art form in public life.

One of the concerns of your new piece, *Deep Blue Sea,* is "the pursuit of an elusive *we.*" What does that mean? *We the People, we shall overcome, we hold these truths*. That is part of everyday parlance, and it's quite irritating. I am a Black American who truly grew up thinking that we shall overcome, that there was a 'we' that transcended ethnicity and race. And the more I have lived, the more I see those things are so deeply entrenched. So what's this *we*? This piece is a poem, a metaphorical rendering of wrestling with those stories, using iconographic texts. Herman Melville's *Moby Dick,* Chapter 93, and Martin Luther King's 1963 great March on Washington speech, "I Have a Dream."

What do those two things have in common? They are iconic texts that define the American sense of our community. Both those documents have grown dusty, taken for granted. And they must be returned to regularly.

This piece was commissioned by the Park Avenue Armory before 2020. Did the racial justice reckoning and pandemic we've undergone change the way that you thought about it? Did the piece change? Did I change? I know that I was angry as hell, in a way I haven't been angry in years. I know that I was and am still struggling with the psychological effects of the recognition that systemic racism and white supremacy is very much the world I have known my whole life. I've lived in an apartheid state my whole life. This is the person who was 17 years old at Woodstock dropping acid and saying, 'We are not our bodies.' And yet now everywhere I look, I see race. Everywhere I look, now I see identity. I have to police my language, even more than I was doing two years ago. All of those things were made more acute in the environment of the last two years, so it has made the ideas behind the piece more acute.

You did another Armory performance, *Afterwardsness*, during the pandemic, created within the constraints of social distancing. What did you learn from that experience? The power of gathering. People came and when the first movements began in the music, people wept, people were so moved. That's power; we take it for granted—we did before COVID. That was a big one to learn. I learned something about myself. How does that assault on our bodies on a biological level, reflect, live with, cohabitate with something like systemic racism? How can they all be happening at the same time? The piece was trying to talk about those paradoxes and contradictions.

Am I right in saying that you have a sort of a special way that you talk with performers and if so, how did you develop it? I'm basically a formalist and formalism demands the isolation of certain elemental languages, symbols, and then their organization and reorganization. Part of the language you see is made from the many dancers who have come through, and they've each contributed a shape. And that makes for quite a long laundry list of abstract shapes. Formalism says by combining and recombining them, contextualizing them in terms of what's being heard, musically, that's where meaning is found. Can it serve the purpose of entertaining the eye, almost like watching a puzzle. And can it also go deeper than that and connect to languages that are beyond language? These are all questions I've been asking my whole artistic life as an adult, something like 40 years now. And every new piece is a challenge. If you see 45 gestures, made independently, strung together with various musicality and rhythms, against a beautiful song, and then the same gestures juxtaposed to a speech about civil rights, are they the same gestures? And I say they are and they are not.

Mark Morris **said, "I can be daunting, because I'm scared to death." Can you relate to that?** I can relate very well. I come from field workers, people who understood they are not that far off from the lash. I tried to explain this to my dancers. The young say, "That's *your* pathology." I had young Black people say to me a few years ago, jokingly, but I think they were nudging me, "we need to take a Black power nap."

You're performing with your own company for the first time in 15 years. Why now? I am probably as much an intellectual speaking presence now as I am a physical dancing presence. But I don't want to yet give up the fact that the young people in the company and I are bodies together making a body-based art form. It's hard, but I have to try one more time. Can I sweat with them? Can I learn something? For me. For them.

A decade or so ago, you were you were suffering a little bit from depression. How's that going? I still have my bouts with it. I think I understand better what it is. And I think I'm up to the challenge. I'm terribly privileged. I'm in love. I have a person who loves me dearly, makes me a wonderful home. I have a lot of reasons to live. And one thing that depression tells you is that you should not. But you have to be vigilant.

It's no mean feat to keep an experimental dance company going for as many years as you have, especially financially. Do you have a secret? Well, I hardly think of us as a dance company. I have been trying to build an ensemble that can handle movement, text, and music with facility. That's a goal, building a new contraption, a new company. The clarity of that mission, personally, keeps me on my toes. It's sometimes extremely daunting, but I know I'm trying to make something new for myself.

How has it been working with the architect who's designing the set, Liz Diller**?** It's an honor to work with her. We've gone through Bill's male ego. I think that there's a mutual respect that has developed since coming back after COVID. We've had our meltdowns and so on. But I think she truly wants to do this piece with me. It's not naturally where she lives but she actually has seen the way that the world changes. And she's sort of looking at me with respect. 'Okay, Bill, where do you want to go?' And I respect her for that.

There are 90 community members in this performance. Did you teach them to dance? Can we find another word other than dance? Our tradition is body based expression. So you do not have to know how to tendu or turn or stretch or anything, you have to be able to understand physical problems and solve them. You have to be able to get up and in and out of the floor, you have to be able to change modalities of emotional expression. How

does anger work? How does pure shape work? There's a profound meaning in people lowering each other to the ground and helping each other up. The metaphors are there. But they've got to understand the technique from inside. Even when it's not perfect, it is something. We call it milling. And it's a profound thing to see.

You don't like to call what you do *dance*. Why? I feel that dance in the culture is very close to mime. People feel it is an indulgence, something esoteric, or little girls in pink. That's not what I'm doing. I'm doing a body-based investigation of art-making. You have to find a whole other way to talk about it. It's not about entertaining you, although it can be. It's not about getting you sexually aroused, although it can be. It's trying to really rethink what this basic instrument that we all share is capable of: two arms, two legs. Let's see, if we get together in a community with clear instructions: What happens?

What would the 70-year-old version of you tell the 20-year-old? The world does not care if you want to be an artist. You will always be full of doubt. You will very likely never make a satisfying living. You may get hurt. And yet, it is exhilarating. When it works when you are firing on all cylinders, and there is a population that is leaning in to see, that can be rewarding in a way you can't imagine.

A lot of your work is very personal. You did a piece about your husband's mother. You did a piece about your nephew who struggled with addiction. Is that cathartic for you? Or is it because your family is what you find most interesting? Every artist needs some material some spark. I try a lot of things. [These stories] are available to me. There are some things that are always with one. What is available to you that is deep and true? So that personal story: my nephew died last month. He was a very, very sick man when we were making that piece. And the piece was trying to be about an intergenerational conversation. The piece was trying to be about my holding him and saying, your life was not pointless. That personal was at the service of proving something to myself. Once again, what's worth doing in this world?

A TIME magazine cover in 1994 with your face on it, had the cover line "Black Artists Are Free at Last." How do you feel about that cover line now? Lord have mercy. To say it hasn't changed would be wrong. I grew up in a world that I call the white avant-garde. Now that white avant-garde has a lot more color to it. And that's different. But "free at last?", please, don't get me started. Who is free? I am privileged. I have a nice car. Tonight I'll sleep in a comfortable bed. And I'm working. My house is being renovated. Do I still have pain in my heart about George Floyd? Do I still feel naked and scared in the street? Yes, I do. Voting rights are being rolled back. That's real. So which world is it? Free at last? Or are we still living in apartheid? Both, I suppose.

Do you mourn the ability to dance as you used to? I do sometimes wish I had that motor I used to have; the impulse to move, the will to move and the ability to move are all one when you're young. Now it has to be more thought about, which is its own kind of goal.

And do you, when you're alone, just for the joy, still dance? I dance only when I'm very happy. When I am at a party with a big living room and we're all having a lovely meal and someone puts on some music that I particularly like, Schubert or something like that. And I let the music course through and it's heaven. It's for them. It's an improvisation; will never be seen again.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

fjord

Deep Dive

Bill T. Jones presents “Deep Blue Sea”

CECELIA WHALEN – OCT 2021

To look *at* the ocean can be deceiving. With feet planted in the sand, facing the horizon, we think we know where we are; the tide signals for how long. To look *into* the ocean is a different story: Looking *in* offers no sense of start and stop, no sides to stand on, no tide nor time. Looking *in* confronts us only with an endless sense of motion encompassed by a larger unknown. Bill T. Jones’s long-awaited “Deep Blue Sea,” a work massive in both size and depth and presented at the

Park Avenue Armory in New York through October 9th, thrusts its audience into that sea, using movement, text, music, and hypnotic projections to disorient us into revelation.

The piece starts before the beginning. To get to your seat—elevated seating designed by the acclaimed architect Elizabeth Diller—you have to walk across the vast Drill Hall stage where Bill T. Jones, himself, is already moving under house lights. This is the first time that Jones has performed in over 15 years. He is the leading figure of the piece, acting as participant as well as narrator, guide, but also traveler. Speech has become an increasingly important part of Jones's work (he now refers to his group not as a dance company but as one of body-based expression that handles movement, text, and music) and Jones reads from a number of texts, personal and archetypal, drawing in particular from Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick.*

"Deep Blue Sea's" sense of time is not linear nor cyclical but fragmented, like memories. We recognize passages read from "I Have a Dream," but they are all jumbled up, deconstructed to create new meaning. In addition to being heard, phrases like "To able be will we," a former declaration that now seems more like a question, appear onstage through impressive lighting and projections (by Liz Diller and Peter Nigrini, with additional lighting by Robert Wierzel). While Jones recites onstage, he travels in a spotlight which sometimes turns black with a simultaneously synthesized *bang!*, the lighting an ingenious effect that creates a shadow—a hole?—which nearly consumes Jones, almost erasing him.

Soon, Jones introduces *Moby Dick,* inserting personal anecdotes of the first time he read the book in high school and focusing on the character Pip, the young Black sailor boy who is harassed as a kind of jester and who has supposedly lost his mind after having been abandoned and left for a long time alone at sea. "'Pip saw God's foot upon the treadle of the loom and spoke it;'" Jones recites, "'and therefore his shipmates called him mad.'" Jones lists the many things he remembered from *Moby*

Dick upon reading the book years later*:* "I remembered the water," Jones says. "But for some reason, I didn't remember Pip—why?"

From here we are plunged into a journey that weaves in and out of the conscious and subconscious, memories and things forgotten, allusions and archetypes. The exceptional Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane company members command the enormous stage with versatility in movement styles ranging from angular postmodern vocabulary, ecstatic and vibratory dancing, and supple contemporary partnering with dancers moving in and out of the floor and across the stage with ease. Together, the dancers and Jones create shapes of ships and a whale's jaw in tableau-vivant-esque frozen images.

Soon after the dancers are first introduced, the stage is actually emptied and the audience is immersed into an amazing projection of the sea, multiplied exponentially by mirrors which are attached to the bottom of the seating structure, framing the stage. The sea is a brilliant amalgamation of blues and greens which move to ocean sounds (electronic score by Hprizm, aka High Priest, Rena Anakwe, and Holland Andrews). It is beautiful and terrifying and reminds us, from our raised position in the audience, that this whole time we have not just been *seeing* Jones and his dancers, but we have been there with them; we, too, find ourselves at sea.

The idea of the forgotten, as introduced by Jones's experience of forgetting Pip, persists throughout the work. Jones says, repeatedly, "*I* don't" and "*you* don't remember." When he says, "*we* don't remember," the idea of a collective memory is revealed, one that could be inspiring, but is often tragic, especially as it pertains to race and the erasure of African American experience and oppression, which occupies a vital role in "Deep Blue Sea." Why don't *we* remember Pip? Why do *we* allow for an entire history of people to be swallowed up, denied, and abandoned? It is generous phrasing to use "we" as opposed to "they," but Jones purposefully emphasizes Dr. King's idea of the single strand of destiny which promises the contrasting fates of "living together as brothers or perishing together as fools." Again, the sea acts as

metaphor: Whereas viewing the water from the beach shows a division of shores, looking directly into it reveals a predicament independent of shores, an all-encompassing force that surrounds all those within it and promises a fate much more complex than that of the individual.

That said, Jones is certainly not exonerating nor even hopeful when it comes to African American oppression at the hands of white supremacy. Particularly during the finale when 90 community members powerfully fill into the Hall as Jones reads "I Have a Dream," there are moments of outright rage and many of despair. The now-extended cast depict a march and protest, at one point linking arms and pushing through resisters across the stage. People throw what could be rocks or maybe grenades. The visual and spatial intricacies of Jones's work are fascinating and dynamic, such as when the entire cast surrounds a still Jones, moving quickly but with little change, creating the effect of a time lapse. Shortly thereafter, the cast is running laps around the stage while sequentially latching on to one another, creating huge links that are constantly evolving as the first breaks off and attaches to the end, becoming the last. This section ends with everyone on the ground, lying on their backs and rolling slowly in unison to the right and left like rolling waves or corpses rolling in graves.

This unified movement occurs in the shape of a cross, one of many representations of religious imagery. Religion, God, and a struggle with the two are omnipresent in the work. The original vocal score by Nick Hallett features allusions to "Sorrow Songs," songs which W.E.B. DuBois describes in his *The Souls of Black Folk* (another textual resource for the piece) as "haunting melody from the only American music which welled up from black souls in the dark past" and which are often religious in nature.

In fact, Jones himself appears to represent a prophetic role. At the beginning, we might think of him as Ishmael, the narrator of *Moby Dick* and the sole survivor of its doomed protagonist ship, The Pequod. However, as the piece continues, we realize that maybe Jones is not Ishmael at all but rather Pip (whom Jones says in the beginning he now

relates to), the one whom “the sea . . . carried down alive to wondrous depths, where strange shapes of the unwarped primal world glided to and fro before his passive eyes . . . and Wisdom revealed his hoarded heaps [of the] joyous, heartless, ever-juvenile eternities.” Whom upon being submerged in the sea had seen God’s foot, both spoke and danced it, prophesying the possibility of the triumphant dream-vision of King while warning of the catastrophic wrath of Moby Dick.

Concluding the piece, each cast member speaks one sentence into a microphone about “what they know,” a question Jones has already prompted his dancers to consider earlier on. While each member declares their piece of knowledge, we realize that there are actually only a precious few things of which we are truly certain. In fact, instead of exiting “Deep Blue Sea” with clarity, we leave in a state of mystery. And yet, looking in, we occasionally recognized our own reflections and those of each other. If Jones was Pip, perhaps we became Ishmael, emerging overwhelmed and bewildered, yet with a witness’s responsibility and a story to tell.

The New York Times

Huiwang Zhang in Bill T. Jones's "Afterwardsness" at the Armory. Video by An Rong Xu

Afterwardsness NYT Critic's Pick

By Gia Kourlas
May 20, 2021

It's been a year like no other, filled with tragedy and confusion, resilience and hope. It may feel like now is the time to dance, but it's still not the time to dance the pain away. In "Afterwardsness," a new presentation by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, the point isn't to celebrate what the future holds, but to stay put, just for a second, in the moment.

Created by Bill T. Jones and Janet Wong in collaboration with members of the company, "Afterwardsness" is named after Freud's idea of the belated understanding of trauma. But what it explores, in part, are Jones's in-the-moment feelings regarding what he sees as twin pandemics: the coronavirus and the unrelenting violence against Black bodies.

Performed on Wednesday at the Drill Hall at the Park Avenue Armory, which commissioned the work, "Afterwardsness" illuminates the swirling emotions and struggles of the last year. Even in more fiery passages, there is a sense of isolation and exhaustion as weary and brave bodies dart in and out of vacant spaces and pathways, delineated by blue and yellow tape on a 55,000-square-foot stage. The world of "Afterwardsness" isn't exactly entertaining; certain moments can really crawl. And yet it feels genuine, and beyond that, resolute in its unwillingness to paint the wrong snapshot of a time.

Marie Lloyd Paspe. An Rong Xu for The New York Times

Barrington Hinds. An Rong Xu for The New York Times

We entered the space in small groups. In what still seems rare, an in-person performance, the audience's choreography is just as involved as that of the dancers. (The production was originally scheduled to be performed in March, but was postponed after several members of the company tested positive for the coronavirus.) As people started filing in, it was as if a task-based dance — a postmodern call to action — had begun. Walk in a straight line. Sit down at your appointed chair. Place your belongings in the plastic bin underneath your seat. Find stillness.

The dancers, nine in all, weren't so contained in their entrance: Running across the space, they banged on pots to create a cacophony of motion and sound. From the start, a voice-over periodically listed dates — March 13, March 15 and so on — up to May 19, the night we had gathered. But this diaristic approach interrupted the flow and distracted from watching the dancers navigate space and time to music by artists including Olivier Messiaen, Holland Andrews — what a creamy voice they have — and Pauline Kim Harris. In its best moments, "Afterwardsness" was fully alive.

As the clarinetist Paul Wonjin Cho played in an elevated chair — it looked a little like a lifeguard tower — bordering the stage, the dancers took their places, some close in a large middle square, others in the distance, creating a domino echo of shapes. Even in proximity, no one touched. The choreography, culled from material the dancers had learned from archival videos of work no longer in the repertory, was an array of short movement phrases full of leaps and runs, twisting torsos and crisply held arms. It could get repetitive. I wanted

the lighting, by Brian H. Scott, to be more intuitive and less intrusive; at times, it felt like it was being operated with a dimmer switch.

Yet even as the dancing appeared and disappeared like fragments, its starts and stops mirrored the energy of a strange and sad year. Wasn't this what the days have been like, one banging cluelessly into the next? Waiting for a vaccination, waiting for justice. Hoping.

Vinson Fraley Jr., who also sang "Another Man Done Gone."An Rong Xu for The New York Times

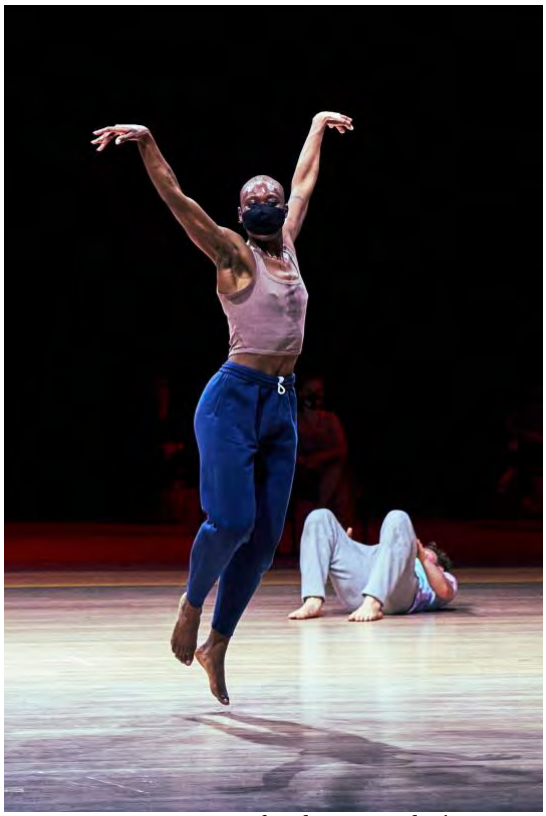
The music, perhaps more than the dancing, gave the work its dramatic arc. About halfway through, the dancer Vinson Fraley Jr., dressed in white and seemingly a guiding force, sang "Another Man Done Gone." Afterward, Harris, also the production's music director, quietly entered the large center space and played a violin solo, "Homage," in honor of George Floyd, whose death, last May, generated protests worldwide.

As she performed her composition — a long and lonely lament in which her strings could feel like lungs gasping for air — she rotated, so gradually that it was almost imperceptible.

For the dancers, there were solos or at least featured moments: Huiwang Zhang was astonishing — slippery and resilient as he wound and rolled his way along a single pathway of light. Nayaa Opong, in motion or not, simmered with a kind of otherworldly splendor, as did Chanel Howard, slicing her hips through the space. But it was really the bond of the ensemble, also including Barrington Hinds, Dean Husted, Shane Larson, S. Lumbert and Marie Lloyd Paspe, that gave the dancing its power.

Hinds in “Afterwardsness.” The choreography was culled from material the dancers had learned from archival videos of work no longer in the repertory. An Rong Xu for The New York Times

Dean Husted. An Rong Xu for The New York Times.



Nayya Opong. An Rong Xu for The New York Times

Aside from Fraley, they appeared in unpretentious practice clothes, everyday outfits, perhaps making reference to what must have been an arduous pandemic project: Putting together a dance on Zoom. In moments, they were shaky and out of sync, yet what they created was

unexpected and vulnerable, more illuminating than a display of perfect form: A group synergy born from social distancing.

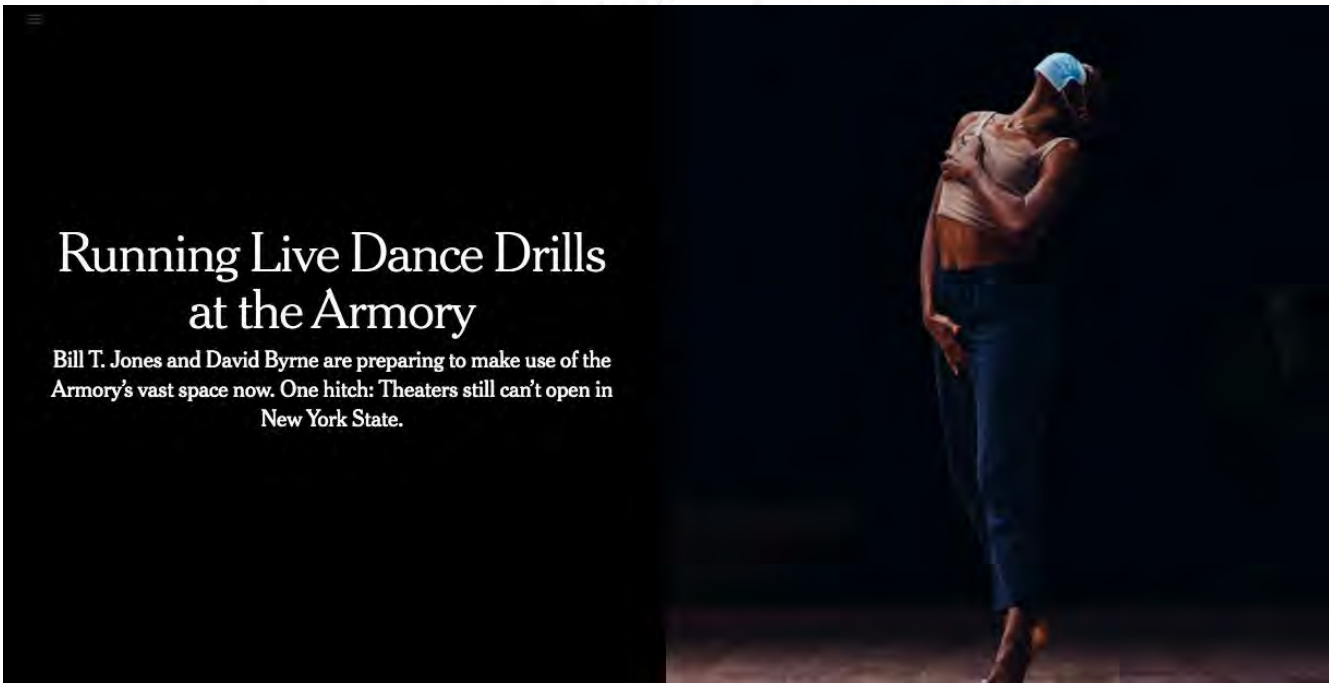
In the end, as they took their bows, the dancers, masked the whole time, locked eyes with as many audience members as they could find. Somehow, it wasn't corny. In this acknowledgment — look what we've been through, look at what we did together — "Afterwardsness" became more than a show that you hoped would feel timeless. Really, only these dancers could dance it in this moment. What does it capture? The spirit of time.

Zhang, flanked by Chanel Howard, left, and Opong. The bond of the ensemble gave the dance its power, our critic says. An Rong Xu for The New York Times

The New York Times

Running Live Dance Drills at the Armory

Bill T. Jones and David Byrne are preparing to make use of the Armory's vast space now. One hitch: Theaters still can't open in New York State.



Nayaa Opong of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company in "Afterwardsness," which was recently filmed before an audience of volunteers at the Armory. Sasha Arutyunova for The New York Times

By Brian Seibert

Published Oct. 22, 2020 Updated Dec. 4, 2020

A few days ago, I attended the premiere of an hourlong dance performance. In New York City. Indoors. With more than 100 other people.

Let me rephrase that. A few days ago, 98 volunteers, including me — all pretested for Covid-19, all masked, all following strict rules of social distancing — played the role of audience members for an indoor filming of an hourlong dance performance.

The Park Avenue Armory, where the filming took place, is part of a coalition of theaters that are lobbying New York State for special permission to present ticketed performances to reduced capacity, socially distanced audiences. Because of their open spaces and flexible designs, these theaters argue that they can safely return to business now or soon, before standard theaters do. At present, though, only rehearsals, gallery exhibitions and film shoots are allowed.

So, officially, I was a participant in a filming. And while the Armory intends to broadcast the results, some day, in a yet-to-be-determined way, the filming was a bit of a fig leaf. The other volunteers and I weren't merely pretending to be audience members at a live performance. The experience was real, a feast after famine — and a taste of what going to the theater in New York could be like in coming months.

A sold-out run of “Afterwardsness" by Bill T. Jones at the Park Avenue Armory, now postponed, would have invited extremely limited audiences back inside for a short season. Sasha Arutyunova for The New York Times)

Since August, the Armory has been the site of rehearsals and workshops, as several artists experiment with the building’s most distinct feature, its barrel-roofed Drill Hall. The room is like an airplane hanger, with 40,000 square feet of open space to spread out in and an enormous volume of air circulating above.

How to take advantage of such a space? What kind of performance suits it and the moment? What do audiences want now? How to make them feel safe?

Different projects have come up with very different answers to those questions. The one being filmed that day was “Afterwardsness,” a new work by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. (The title of the dance was updated after this article was first published.) The next closest to being ready is “Social!” — billed as “the social distance dance club” — which is not a performance but an experience featuring the voice and spirit of David Byrne.

Vinson Fraley Jr. of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company.
Sasha Arutyunova for The New York Times

Ms. Opong of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company.
Sasha Arutyunova for The New York Times

At “Afterwardsness,” you sit in a chair at least 11 feet away from any other viewer. Nine dancers, young and beautiful even with their faces partially obscured by masks, move all around you — in an empty center space and in wide, tape-demarcated lanes between the chairs. They are far away in the distance or as close as six feet. They don’t touch each other, not even when the choreography calls on them to do the patty-cake.

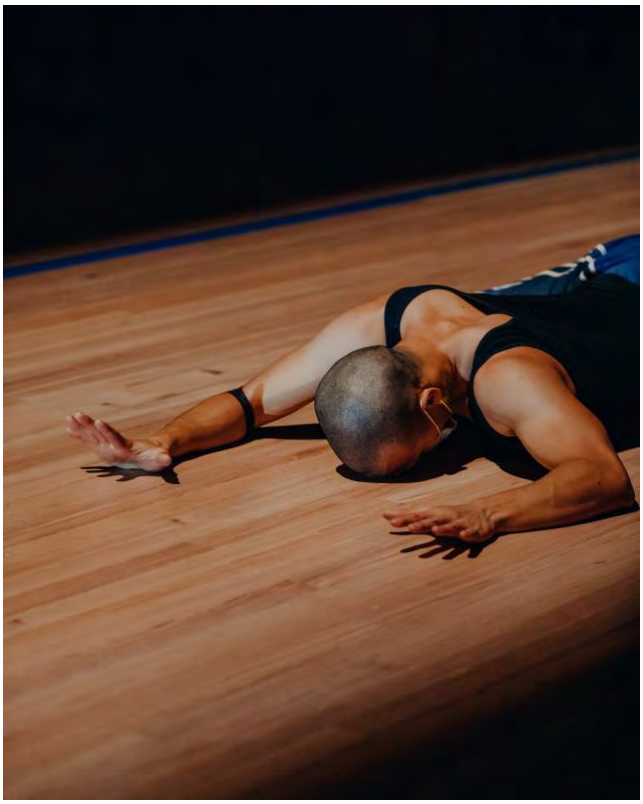
The music is live and largely elegiac, the dancing virtuosic and mostly abstract though flecked with gestures of vulnerability, pain and anger. From the start — through a journal-entry audio installation before you enter the Drill Hall — you confront the traumas of recent months: the pandemic, the protests. Throughout, voices periodically intone calendar dates in chronological order, starting with March.

In “Social!” — at least as experienced during a late-September workshop — instead of a chair, you have a circle on the floor, six feet in diameter, just for you. The music is a 55-minute D.J. set, a flow of dance tracks designed to be irresistible. There are no dancers, though. Or rather the dancers are you and another 100 or so masked people in their own individual circles, responding to movement suggestions from the recorded voice of Mr. Byrne.

And while Mr. Byrne’s instructions acknowledge the current situation and the strangeness of being inside with so many other people, the dominant tone is of reassurance and permission giving. It’s an invitation to let go, to find your groove, to move together with strangers and see how that feels.

Rebecca Robertson, the Armory's president and executive director, said she hoped that both "Social!" and "Afterwardsness" could open this year, perhaps as soon as November.

These projects, though, are "a march into the unknown," Ms. Robertson said. "We could fall off a cliff, but going forward is better than sitting around with your hands in your lap and no artists working and nothing to tell your donors. When I go into that room and see artists at full tilt, it makes me cry."



Huiwang Zhang of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. Sasha Arutyunova for The New York Times

Mr. Zhang. Sasha Arutyunova for The New York Times

Before the pandemic, Bill T. Jones had a show in mind for the Armory, but "Afterwardsness" was not it. "Deep Blue Sea" — a big work for a big space, featuring 100 performers and lots of physical contact — was scheduled to premiere there on April 14.

When rehearsals were shut down, Mr. Jones was stunned. "I couldn't believe it would go on for longer than a month or two," he said in an interview. "But then the Armory told us they were going to have to postpone longer, and I thought, 'There goes another gig.'"

"I was despairing, actually," he continued. "I was thinking, 'Is this the end of the company?'"

Janet Wong, the company's associate artistic director, insisted on weekly virtual company meetings. She gave the isolated dancers an assignment to learn bits of old repertory from archival videos. And when the Armory invited Mr. Jones to create a new, socially distanced production, these choreographic fragments became the basis for that work.

The New York Times

Bill T. Jones Knows Life Will Change, and His Art Too

The choreographer, whose life and work were affected by the devastation of AIDS, wonders, “How does my art find the new normal?”

By Gia Kourlas
May 20, 2020

It’s not a shock that the choreographer Bill T. Jones would be thinking about AIDS right about now.

“‘This is my second plague,’” he said he told his company recently. “I know it’s kind of a coarse thing to say. They’re different, but they have things in common.”

Yes, the circumstances of the coronavirus are different, but there’s a sense that the dance world, which suffered tremendous losses during the AIDS crisis, has been through this all before.

Mr. Jones’s comment on this photograph: “Did you see the film ‘Get Out’? Remember when he was sort of down in a body of water looking up at the doorway? So I said, ‘Imagine that you’re in “Get Out,” and you’re the young protagonist and this is about you trying to claw your way out.’”Credit...Ike Edeani for The New York Times

Certainly Mr. Jones has. The choreographer, who is H.I.V. positive, experienced its devastation firsthand as Arnie Zane, his partner both in dance and life, died from AIDS in 1988. And now once again bodily contact is taboo, but as Mr. Jones sees it, the comparison to AIDS breaks down in terms of moral judgment. The coronavirus doesn’t affect just one community, and we must all change our behavior to control it.

“Do we really want to change the way we live?” he said. “Are we willing to give up anything? Do I really need the convenience of going to a movie or a restaurant when I want to? Am I willing to have to think more about things?”

Like everyone, he has questions. But Mr. Jones, 68, a choreographer whose visceral dances have used bodies — and a diverse assortment of them — to explore and confront

pain, whether physical, cultural or emotional, is looking exactly like an artist with the experience and wisdom to help others navigate the present moment.

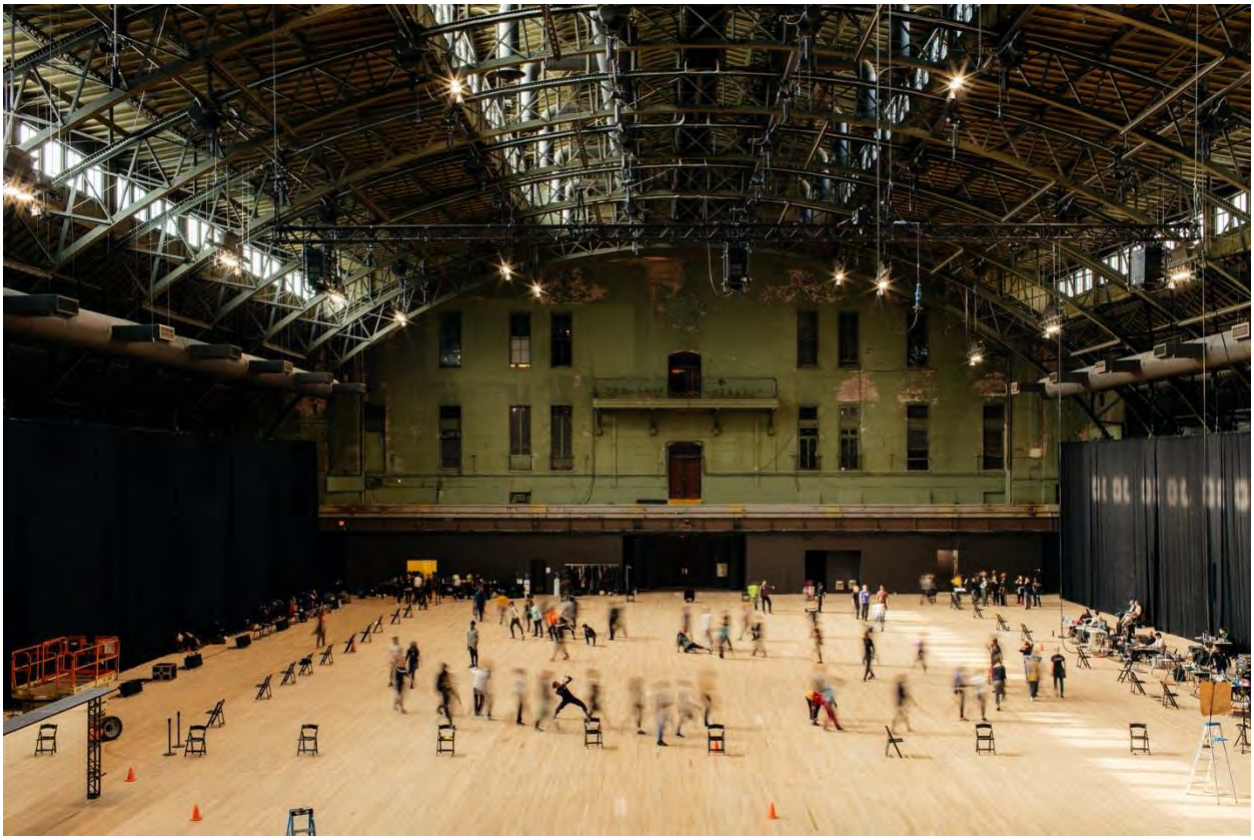
This task is called Passive/Aggressive. In it, Mr. Jones said: “One person becomes the support and the other person is leaning and trying to give as much weight as they can. And then groups of people connect to those two people. They can either lift the person up or they can all just collapse to the ground or they can just walk out of it. That’s where the menu gets very exciting: When you see the combinations and the shapes.”Credit...Ike Edeani for The New York Times

Each Monday he meets with his company for a virtual check-in. “I try to talk them through what it was like to be living through the AIDS crisis and how many of us felt cheated,” he said.

“You will be able to survive, but life will change,” he said he told them, adding: “We lost a lot of people at a time when those people should have been doing what they wanted to do, which was build a future. But life went on.”

Now, as then, Mr. Jones’s world changed. He was dealt an artistic blow when performances of “Deep Blue Sea,” conceived for the drill hall at the Park Avenue Armory, were canceled before the premiere, scheduled for April 14. Discussions are

underway about staging the work, produced and developed by Park Avenue Armory in collaboration with New York Live Arts, in 2021.



"Deep Blue Sea" is built on the structure of a figure eight; within this is a vocabulary of 50 shapes. Mr. Jones: "Everyone in the company had to take at least four people and teach them four out of the 50 shapes. Here, you have people walking and some people are actually doing them."Credit...Ike Edeani for The New York Times

In the meantime, we have these photographs of rehearsals in February, which show the breadth of his vision. In interviews before and after the shutdown, Mr. Jones, who is now at his home in Cottage Valley, N.Y., with his husband, the artist Bjorn Amelan, discussed the creative process behind the work and commented on the photos.

"They captured something about it, which helped me," Mr. Jones said as he and I looked at them together. "But of course it landed like a knife in the heart after the cancellation."

Before working on "Deep Blue Sea," Mr. Jones had spent been six years making "Analogy Trilogy," a series of evening-length, collage-type works that explored trauma and memory in language and movement. After that, he said, he felt done — at least for awhile. But the invitation from the Armory lured him back.

Mr. Jones calls this “Middle Passage”: “What does that mean in our era that’s trying like hell to be woke around our history? They’re rocking and trying to stay together.”Credit...Ike Edeani for The New York Times

“The Armory is the way we used to feel about going to BAM back in the ’80s,” Mr. Jones said, referring to the Brooklyn Academy of Music. “I thought, maybe it should be a swan song. Maybe I should make one more work and, look, it can only be done in one place. Like give *everything* to it.”

It was fitting, too; a space as expansive as the Armory required that level of intensity. For “Deep Blue Sea,” Mr. Jones was inspired in part by Herman Melville’s “Moby-Dick” — namely the lonely character of Pip, the African-American boy who at one point is stranded at sea — along with writings by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The ambitious and personal production, a collaboration with the architect Elizabeth Diller and the projection designer Peter Nigrini, features a sonic backdrop by Nick Hallett, the music producer Hprizm and the vocalist and composer Holland Andrews. The production progresses from one dancer to 100, beginning with Mr. Jones. His solo would have been his first time performing in more than 15 years.

The solitary figure of Mr. Jones is then joined by the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. He calls this part “The Raft,” which is also how he refers to the company; it has helped get him through impossible moments in his life, like Mr. Zane’s death. The final scene introduces 89 guest performers.

Mr. Jones calls this “Milling”; one idea for it came from a workshop Mr. Jones took with Nancy Stark Smith, a founding member of contact improvisation. “She had us doing an exercise wherein we had to move through each other. She used the image of fishes and she said to joggle the weight and to not be aggressive, to keep the body soft, but to keep it alert, being able to change directions in every moment. It does look a lot like Grand Central Station, doesn’t it?”Credit...Ike Edeani for The New York Times

The work, Mr. Jones said, is a reflection of the isolation he felt — and to an extent still does — as a black man making art in a mostly white avant-garde world. As the dance builds, it considers the idea of community within a divisive society.

“What does it mean to take this lonely, wounded apostate from the avant-garde?” he said. “What does it mean to put that person in the world? What does it look like?”

He is left, now, with more questions: “What is my art learning from Covid-19?” he said. “I don’t know if I’m ready for the new normal. How does my art find the new normal?”

For him, the expanse of the Armory was a way to show the fragility of a figure in a sea of space. “We can talk about loneliness,” he said, “but how do you show it?”

This is from the “Rock Throwing” section: “I love that picture of Chanel Howard. The image of all of this touching, feeling, leaning evolves into something that is about combat. I was saying to the performers, ‘I don’t know what the demonstration is, but this is a demonstration that has gone wrong.’ So that’s what that run is. Run for your life. Run as if you really are angry.”Credit...Ike Edeani for The New York Times

Now there is a larger question that haunts him, not only as a choreographer but as the artistic director of New York Live Arts, a performance space in Manhattan. How do you make live art in the age of the coronavirus? That institution focuses on ideas concerning the body, or as Mr. Jones put it “thinking and moving.”

“I feel that we’re constantly trying to convince the world that there’s beauty in movement,” he said. “That space is an eloquent medium. That text is not always necessary.”

But now, without physical proximity, what’s left? “That’s what I’ve got to find out,” Mr. Jones said.

After Mr. Zane died, Mr. Jones created two large-scale works: “Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land” (1990), a sprawling three-hour spectacle that explored race and sexuality; and “Still/Here” (1994), a two-act production that was developed in workshops with people with life-threatening illnesses.

For Mr. Jones, “Still/Here” wasn’t about AIDS; it was about survival. But in 1989, he did choreograph a dance that was more specifically tied to the AIDS epidemic: “D-Man in the

Waters," which he made to celebrate the resilient spirit of Demian Acquavella, a company member who died of AIDS in 1990.

A documentary about the history and the enduring quality of "D-Man" is in the works by Rosalynde LeBlanc, another former Jones/Zane dancer, and Tom Hurwitz. As the world changes, it is turning into a film about making art in a time of plague that mirrors our own.

"Deep Blue Sea," like "D-Man," is highly physical. Contact is integral. "If you'd think about a large work, like what you saw us rehearsing in the Armory is that going to make some people gasp,' oh my God, how can they touch each other?'" he said. "How can so many strangers be touching?"

Mr. Jones: "I look at this picture and I'm so aware now of my age. When did this happen? I had to tell them, 'Oh, be careful, you'll break me.'"Credit...Ike Edeani for The New York Times

He considered the photograph in which he is held aloft by other dancers: Curled on his side with his hands wrapped around his head, he's vulnerable, delicate, defenseless. "When we were in our prime and doing contact," Mr. Jones said, referring to contact

improvisation, “we were like the kamikazes — we would run in and with no mat, full on jump and roll. Boom! My lower back has still probably not forgiven me for it, but you know when you’re young and indestructible.”

Mr. Jones is no longer young. He is not indestructible. Yet in “Deep Blue Sea” he re-enters the stream of dancing bodies. “That picture says so much about what is needed for me to be there,” he said. “Yes, I’m saying something about loneliness and abandonment and the water, but I’ve got to really give myself to them. I’ve got to be completely in their hands. And that’s kind of beautiful.”

BOMB

Vastness, Loneliness, and Abandonment: Bill T. Jones Interviewed by Nicole Loeffler-Gladstone

Themes of race and abandonment in Bill T. Jones's Deep Blue Sea *become all the more relevant.*

Apr 10, 2020

Bill T. Jones, *Deep Blue Sea,* 2019. Photo by Maria Baranova. Courtesy of New York Live Arts.

The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company was scheduled to premiere Jones's latest work, *Deep Blue Sea*, a commission by the Park Avenue Armory, before the COVID-19 pandemic shuttered social gatherings throughout the United States. Jones and I spoke over the phone less than a month ago, though now it feels like it has been years. We didn't discuss the possibility of cancellation, because I didn't anticipate the exponentially deadly effects of COVID-19 or ask about contingency plans. Looking back on my notes, I feel naive, heartbroken, and terrified for the people and communities suffering from this

disaster. Since then, Jones and his company have transferred some of their activity online, including an Instagram Live series in which company dancers teach aspects of *Deep Blue Sea* choreography.

Deep Blue Sea draws on fragments of *Moby Dick* and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech to navigate community and isolation. Jones—whose decades-long career has earned him a MacArthur "Genius" Award, the Human Rights Campaign's Visibility Award, induction into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, and much more—cultivates a vision of resilient humanity that remains vital in this time of crisis. During our conversation he stressed the impact of Pip, a Black character in *Moby Dick* who is dehumanized by his shipmates and then abandoned in the ocean.

Jones didn't choreograph *Deep Blue Sea* with a pandemic in mind, but Pip is forsaken by the same forces responsible for the United States's sluggish public health response. COVID-19 lays bare the myth of individualism, the intentional violence of capitalism and settler-colonialism, and the indifference of the powerful. The image of Pip—vulnerable, isolated, slowly dying as his lungs fail—could be pulled from a current headline.

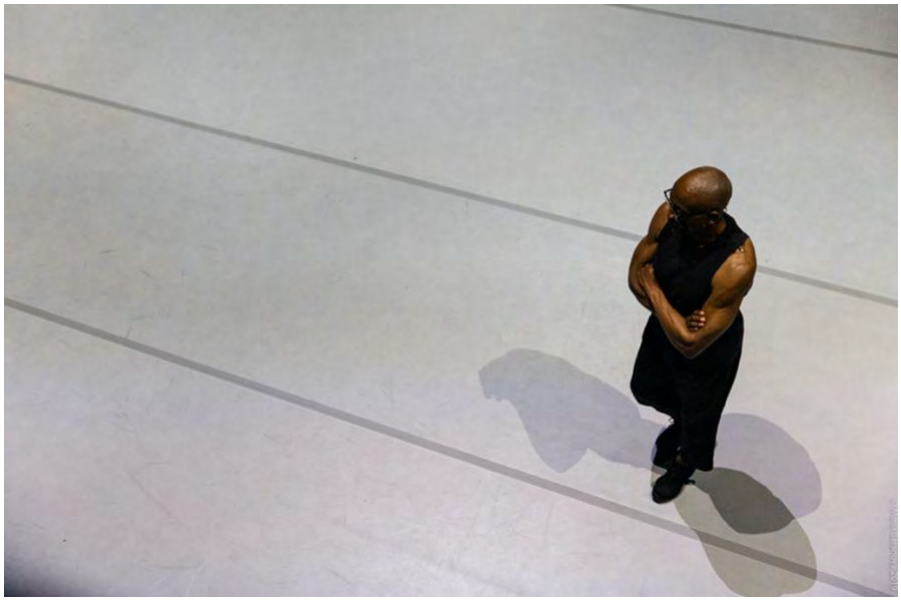
Toward the end of our interview, Jones said, "Now is not the time to be complacent. It's time to speak truth." I couldn't agree more: No one is disposable. No one should be left behind. Offered in the right way, performance can be an antidote to isolation.

—Nicole Loeffler-Gladstone

Nicole Loeffler-Gladstone I didn't sense an immediate connection between Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, the two source texts for this work. But you've talked about placing the character Pip at the center, and that changes my perspective on how the two can relate.

Bill T. Jones Pip surfaced as a minor character in *Moby Dick*, alone and abandoned in the ocean. I didn't remember him in the story. I love Melville, but once I realized I had entered into his white, entitled, nineteenth-century point of view, I felt embarrassed. He describes how Pip plays the tambourine. He says things like, "even Blackness has its brilliancy." It's said in such a convincing way that I swallowed it. He has the privilege of

describing things in a beautiful yet deeply patronizing way, and I'm trying to get at that worldview and get something out of it.



NLG That makes me think about the way MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech is marketed to white people as a palatable piece of civil rights history, while more militant figures, or even King's more militant speeches, are left out.

BTJ MLK runs the risk of cliché, almost like Black History Month. Our country has difficulty understanding what Blackness means. We think if we take hands and sing like children, we'll all be free. When you compare "I Have a Dream" to "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," the latter is much more angry.

NLG Pip is never able to confront the people who deny him humanity—he's considered mad after his sublime experience in the ocean. And of course, King was denied life because of the threat he posed to white supremacy. Does the text in *Deep Blue Sea* offer an alternate ending for their voices? One in which they continue to survive within community?

BTJ When Pip is in the water, it's a metaphor, a suspension. It's a goal to me, for all of us who are lost in the cultural moment. Melville gives me the metaphorical floor to stand on,

and King gives me the courage and the spiritual reach to try and enliven that journey. I would like to demonstrate loneliness and negotiate a complex social system.

NLG This work is premiering at The Armory. Did the idea for scale come first, or did the work need to push itself out into the space?

BTJ An idea comes from all sorts of places. Nick Cave invited me to respond to his work at MASS MoCA [*Until*, 2016–17]. I wanted to do something alone, walking a giant figure-eight in the space. That walking was hypnotic, and it began to suggest other things. There's something about the gigantic dimension of the ocean, the scale of Cave's show, and the symbolism of large and small. At the time, when we were rattled by Trayvon Martin, by Ferguson, I began to think about the invisible. Vastness, loneliness, and abandonment all began to play into my mood. Everything felt big, big, big. I asked Liz Diller [of Diller Scofidio + Renfro] if she would want to collaborate with me, because she has a hold on space. She said that The Armory isn't big enough, because she was thinking of the ocean and Melville's scale of the infinite.

NLG And The Armory is massive compared to any downtown theater! Was it overwhelming to imagine movement filling the space?

BTJ Scale is a daunting prospect in dance. Architects think nothing of putting up a project the size of Grand Central Station. In my world, everything is very human-scaled. When you begin to work at stadium size, you need something that helps, like video and lighting. We brought in Peter Nigrini, and he's going to help mitigate the scale through projection.

NLG How are you addressing detail and intimacy?

BTJ Intimacy is something we continue to struggle with. How do you translate fragile performance that's sometimes only about an elbow or hip, and that has great drama and pathos, when you're in a 184-seat theater? When I speak in the performance, and the MLK text is interrupted by bits of Melville, I change gears and use "I." It's extremely intimate. The audience knows that the small figure is now addressing them, is in time and space with them.

We also rely on Nick Hallett's musical direction. Some of the music is quite imagistic in its use of text. Sometimes it's a prison work song or something spiritual, so it has a quality that grabs the heart and allows you to travel inside yourself, into a shared public space that we all possess.

NLG You're performing for the first time in more than fifteen years. What prompted that decision? Does it feel momentous?

BTJ It's quite humbling. I used to dance and run and sing, but I'm not trying to make a physical display. That's the job of my brilliant company. I have challenges with the text, having to memorize it. When Cave asked me to do something with his work, it was just different enough, allowing me to see if I could feel embodied and move in a large and potentially alienating space.

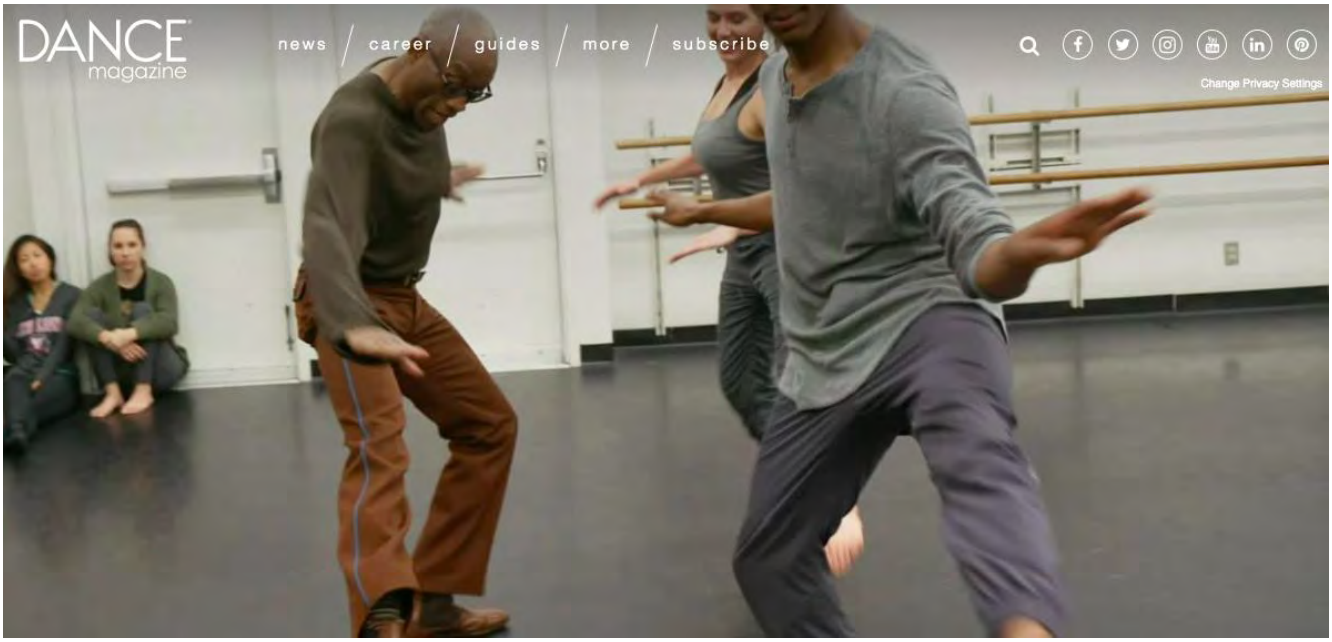
The piece begins with me, then my nine-member company, then a community with ninety people to make one hundred performers total. It moves through certain societal landscapes. I never change costumes, and my way of performing never changes. That may make me look like a protagonist, and yet I'm not. I'm part of the whole.

NLG Within these metaphors of the sea, it sounds like you are an anchor. Was it intimidating to engage with such well-known texts? Maybe the texts can form another anchor point for the audience.

BTJ There's something perverse about putting political speech to abstract movement. It's almost like dancing to the Constitution. I've been talking and dancing most of my career, with mixed results. "I Have a Dream" has been aggrandized. Many people have a sense of what *Moby Dick* is "about." When a near-sacred text is turned around, you should turn it around in your mind.

NLG Did the title *Deep Blue Sea* come from the dilemma implied in the phrase "Between the devil and the deep blue sea"?

BTJ No. It came from the huge weight and metaphorical meaning in Melville's image of a little Black head bobbing in the ocean.



Bill T. Jones in rehearsal doing Astaire steps with students Brandon and Nicole in *Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters*. Photo courtesy of Rosalynde LeBlanc.

3 Lessons the New Bill T. Jones Documentary Offers Dance Educators Going Back to the Classroom

Garth Grimball / Aug 06, 2021

"What are we desperate for?"

Rosalynde LeBlanc stares at her cast of dancers waiting for an answer. It's the final rehearsal for *D-Man in the Waters*. The first run of the piece showed the choreography but not the "why" of the movement. The dancers need to know, collectively, what makes the stakes so high.

This scene centers the new documentary *Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters*. Directed by LeBlanc and Tom Hurwitz, the film explores how one dance responds to tragedy, and, by turn, the hard questions to answer when responding to grief as a group.

When technique and choreography classes return this fall, the disruption and trauma of this pandemic will require more than a syllabus and a getting-to-know-you exercise to foster trust and vulnerability. This documentary can serve as a resource for dance educators welcoming students back. *Can You Bring It* is a source of radical empathy, a testament to the power of dance during great adversity.

D-Man in the Waters, widely regarded as Jones' masterpiece, originally premiered in 1989, one year after the death of Arnie Zane, co-founder of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company and Jones' partner. "D-Man" is Demian Acquavella, a company dancer who had contracted HIV/AIDS shortly before the making of the work. The documentary intercuts archival footage of the original cast with an intimate filming of current company members dancing. The urgency of *D-Man in the Waters* is present 32 years later.

Make Space to Talk About Trauma

In 2016 LeBlanc staged the work on the students of Loyola Marymount University. During the process, shown in the film, she and the cast confront questions that are still urgent for classrooms in 2021. While teaching the choreography LeBlanc makes space to talk with the students about trauma. What are the pressing issues for this generation? She and Jones listen to them talk about gun violence and social divisions. The conversations allow the students to find ownership in the dance and respect its original intent.

Use Dance to Grieve

Life during COVID-19 will be a source of inspiration for many choreography students. *Can You Bring It* shows today's young makers that they are not alone. Pandemics are unique but not new. The pain and despair of the AIDS epidemic are shared in interviews with the original cast. The Jones/Zane company dancers describe *D-Man* as a place to grieve. Dances are containers for feeling.

Build Community

In response to the question of desperation, one student answers with a personal conflict. LeBlanc pushes back, asking them to think about the "we," not the "me." Being part of a "we," being in community, is something many students and teachers may need to relearn after 17 months of isolation. Sharing space means something different in 2021. Dancemaking post-coronavirus feels less lonely after watching the Loyola Marymount students learn and embody the high stakes of Jones' work.

The *D-Man in the Waters* choreography evolved out of group improvisations. As the company mourned the death of Zane, they came together, danced together, created together. Jones describes the dance as an exploration of "what it takes to live." Movement succeeds where words fail. Dancing together will continue whether it's online, in person or hybrid. This documentary is a master class on dance as a way to process grief. *Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters* teaches that what it takes to live is being together.

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ARTS, POLITICS, AND CULTURE

Dance

Bill T. Jones Dancing Through Disease in *Can You Bring It* and *Afterwardsness*

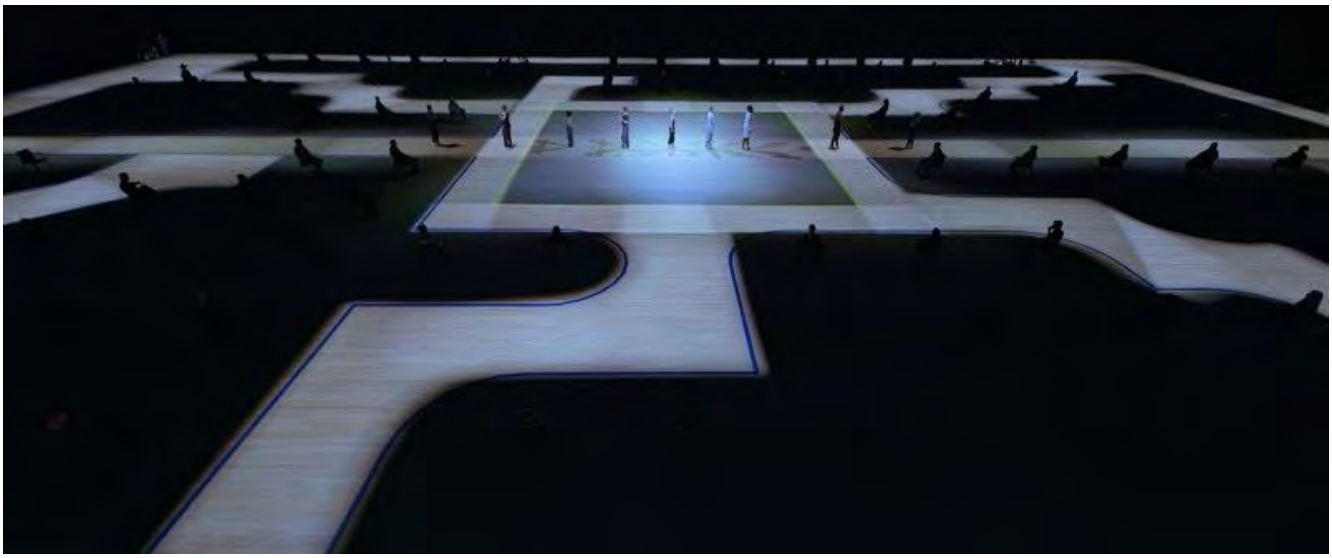
A new documentary and dance together offer seemingly contradictory but ultimately profound lessons in moving through personal and societal grief.

By Hallie Chametzky

Bill T. Jones in rehearsal doing Astaire steps with students Brandon and Nicole. Photo: Rosalynde LeBlanc.

Demian Acquavella was dying. In one of the most poignant moments of the new documentary *Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters*, Jones recounts carrying company dancer Acquavella, the titular "D-Man," onto the Joyce Theater stage during *D-Man in the Waters*' 1989 premiere. In a contemporary interview, Jones reflects that despite the disease destroying Acquavella's once spritely body and mind, he had to be on stage. It was their Joyce premiere; you don't let a friend miss their Joyce premiere.

The new documentary premiered at DOC NYC in November 2020, and will have its theatrical release next month, playing at Film Forum and in virtual cinemas through Kino Marquee. The film explores the background, creation, and ongoing legacy of Bill T. Jones's seminal dance created at the height of the AIDS epidemic and follows Rosalynde LeBlanc, former Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company dancer and one of the film's creators and directors, as she restages the work on her students at Loyola Marymount University. *Can You Bring It* is an intimate journey through loss and creation. The examination of the specific historical circumstances of *D-Man*'s birth alongside its ongoing life and evolution resonates with particular power now, as we deal with the ramifications of another era of intersecting health, social, and political crises.



Bill T. Jones, *Afterwardsness*. Still from filming at Park Avenue Armory, 2020. Photo: Jason Longo.

Bill T. Jones's latest dance *Afterwardsness*, performed at the Park Avenue Armory May 19–26, reflects upon the "twin pandemics" of COVID-19 and violence against Black people. The title is a semi–tongue-in-cheek reference to the desire for a post-pandemic, post-racist America, knowing that for those who have suffered at the hands of the two deadly forces, there will never be a clean "after."

Stepping foot on the Armory grounds, one immediately senses the performance will not be a post-pandemic celebration. After winding through long hallways of temperature checks, vaccine card checks, and rapid COVID tests, audience members are seated in spaced-out rows of chairs to await a choreographed entrance into the massive "Drill Hall" performance space.

Tape partitions the gymnasium-like room, keeping the dancers at least six feet from each other and audience members as they hurdle, crawl, and stroll through the massive space. It's thrilling to experience live performance again: the intricate, quintessentially Bill T. Jones

blend of virtuosity and casualness on the tremendous-as-ever dancers, and the sometimes melodic, sometimes dissonant soundscape reverberating through the gargantuan hall. Nevertheless, with audience members separated from each other and the performers, absence defines the experience of *Afterwardsness*.

Marie Lloyd Paspe and Nayaa Opong in *Afterwardsness* at Park Avenue Armory's Drill Hall, 2021. Photo: Stephanie Berger Photography/Park Avenue Armory

The obvious absence is the lack of touch between dancers. Perhaps even more profound is the distance between audience members. At most dance shows, one can expect to be wedged tightly in between friends if you came with them or strangers if not. In the Drill Hall, everyone is an island.

In *Can You Bring It*, on the other hand, we see the company dancing a section of *D-Man* in which performers tenderly carry, caress, and support one another. This choreography follows interviews in which original company members recall being present for Arnie Zane's death, just three months before Acquavella's. They gathered around his bed, Jones's sisters sang, and they felt him slip away. When the ambulance drivers arrived, they refused to touch Zane's body for fear of contracting AIDS. Jones and the dancers had to carry his body out and place it into the body bag themselves.

The tactile choreography physicalizes the way that dance has offered safety, visibility, and power to people so often denied basic dignity. The cinematography puts the viewer inside the movement. The camera travels within and amidst dancers in the flurries of runs and jumps, the intricacies of partnering, the momentum of group dynamics.

Clasped hands from *D-Man in the Waters* performance. Photo: Rosalynde LeBlanc.

The ability to feel the swell and pulse of collective motion is remarkable when compared with the solitude and distance of *Afterwardsness*. In the waiting rooms, recordings of journal entries from pandemic days past and chants from Black Lives Matter protests echo, including the names of people killed by police. These voices are ghosts lurking in the antechambers, reminding us of how much has been lost.

In contrast, the film casts *D-Man* as a flotation device within the turbulent waters of disease; a way to safely enter into, and triumph over, the thing killing your loved ones. The sense one gets is that the power of *D-Man in the Waters* is in its fierce insistence on presence, on vitality in the face of hardship.

In a scene of the college students' final dress rehearsal, LeBlanc tries to make them understand *D-Man* as more than the movements from which it is composed and the historical moment from which it came. "Why are we doing it? What are we desperate for? What is our AIDS right now?" she pleads. Then, desperately and through tears: "Do you understand what I'm saying? What's happening right now that is going to make this piece more important than anything else you do?"

If *Can You Bring It*'s message is about *D-Man*'s universality and adaptability, *Afterwardsness* is about specifics. The dancers wear masks. Their costumes, a mismatch of sweatpants and tank tops, are a true "work from home" aesthetic. Where *D-Man* and *Can You Bring It* end with a bang (a dancer tossed high into the air), *Afterwardsness* ends with a fizzle, each dancer alone in space with a chair and a series of

task-like movements that embody the cyclical, maddening, exhausting experience of observing avoidable death and violence while mandated to stay at home. At one point, company dancer Vinson Fraley, Jr. plaintively sings “Another man done gone … I didn’t know his name … They killed another man,” as Chanel Howard and Nayaa Opong march a funereal procession around the entire yawning hall, and the other dancers writhe on the ground and eventually lie still, corpse-like.

Nayaa Opong in *Afterwardsness* at Park Avenue Armory’s Drill Hall, 2021. Photo: Stephanie Berger Photography/Park Avenue Armory.

Despite the film and the dance painting such different pictures of Bill T. Jones as he makes dances through disease and disaster, there is ultimately no contradiction. One leaves both *Can You Bring It* and *Afterwardsness* with the same knowledge: some of us will live; some won’t. Some of us will “move on”; some won’t. What is there to do other than dance until we are betrayed, whether by our own country or our own bodies? What is there to do besides gather in movement while we still can?

The New York Times

CRITIC'S PICK

'Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters' Review: Still Making Waves

A striking new documentary explores the enduring legacy of a dance piece created by Bill T. Jones at the height of the AIDS crisis.

A still from the documentary "Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters." Kino Lorber

By Glenn Kenny

July 15, 2021

Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters NYT Critic's Pick
Directed by Tom Hurwitz, Rosalynde LeBlanc Documentary 1h 34m

What happens to a work of art when time displaces it from its original context, and from the impetus that inspired it? That's a question that can elicit dry theories. But in "Can You Bring

It?: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters," a new documentary directed by Tom Hurwitz and Rosalynde LeBlanc Loo, the answer is passionate and moving.

Jones is the co-founder of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, a modern dance troupe. It grew out of the performing duo that Jones formed with his partner Zane, who wasn't a dancer when they met in the early 1970s.

Zane died of AIDS-related lymphoma in 1988. The movie gives a moving précis of their work-life collaboration before addressing the decisions Jones made in the aftermath of Zane's death. One of those decisions took the form of the piece "D-Man in the Waters."

The dance was inspired by a series of group improvisations. It was a reflection of the troupe's experiences, its struggles and its losses. As a piece of choreography, it's since been performed by dozens of collegiate and professional companies. "Can you bring it?" is what Jones asks a group of dancers at Loyola Marymount College in 2016 as they prepare the piece under the direction of Loo, a former Jones/Zane company member.

These students have little knowledge of AIDS, so Jones and Loo ask them to find points of struggle in their lives, as part of a student community and otherwise. The intercutting between vintage footage of the Jones/Zane company and the student production, as well as footage from another contemporary production of the piece — shot with an onstage intimacy that recalls the in-the-ring segments of Martin Scorsese's "Raging Bull" — make for an unusually lively documentary experience.

ADVOCATE

The Genius of Dancer Bill T. Jones Stars in *Can You Bring It*

The new documentary shows what Jones's signature dance piece still says to us.

BY TRUDY RING
JULY 22 2021 4:27 PM EDT

In 1989, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company premiered what became known as its greatest dance piece, *D-Man in the Waters,* created against a background of loss. Zane, Jones's partner in life and work, had died of AIDS complications the previous year, and a member of the company, Demian "D-Man" Acquavella, was suffering from the disease, which would take his life in 1990. The number, set to Felix Mendelssohn's *Octet for Strings,* was unveiled at the Joyce Theater in New York City to widespread acclaim and is now considered one of the signature responses to the AIDS crisis.

Now a new documentary, *Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters,* tells the story of the dance's creation and re-creation, and how it can still speak powerfully about social issues in

general.

“I became a dancer because I saw *D-Man in the Waters* when I was 16 years old,” *Can You Bring It* producer and co-director Rosalynde LeBlanc says in the film. She subsequently joined Jones’s company and later became a dance educator.

The film from LeBlanc and co-director Tom Hurwitz, also its cinematographer, shows LeBlanc, with input from Jones, putting together a production of the number at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles in 2016, along with archival footage of the piece’s development and interviews with Jones, the dancers who performed it originally, and others. Jones, a much-honored choreographer who is now the artistic director of New York Live Arts, is a gay Black man and long-term HIV survivor.

Bill T. Jones (left) works with Loyola Marymount dancers.

LeBlanc decided to make *Can You Bring It* because “the absence of AIDS from current political and social discourse in this country has left successive generations without any way to contextualize the spirit and intensity of the art made in response to it,” she says in press notes for the film. She brought on Hurwitz to shoot it in cinéma vérité style.

Can You Bring It makes the point that while *D-Man in the Waters* was a response to the AIDS crisis at its height, the beautiful, abstract dance can serve as a commentary on any number of challenges facing society. She and Jones asked the Loyola Marymount students to come up with what gives the number meaning for them, to “bring it.” What emerges is a compelling view of art in the making, along with a study of loss and survival.

Co-directors Rosalynde LeBlanc and Tom Hurwitz

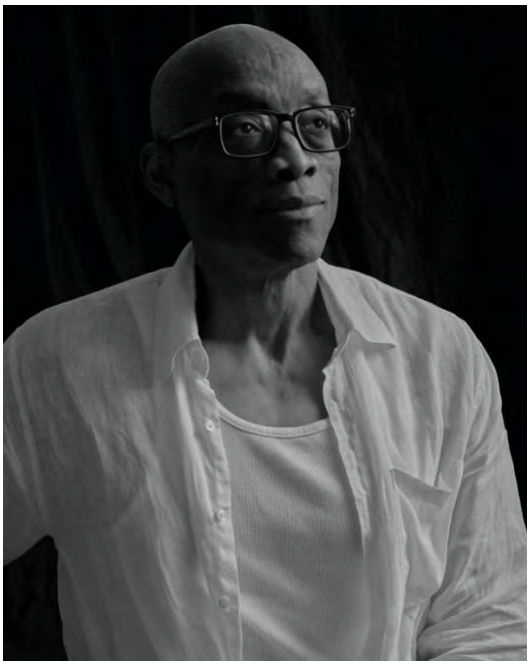
"Roz and Tom succeeded in telescoping the story of *D-Man in the Waters* into the future," Jones says in the press notes. "I look forward to the journey of this film. Because this film should not let people forget — you're lucky in your life if you have one moment where you're at once strong enough, brave enough, and resourceful enough to throw down and make something like *D-Man in the Waters* come into being. This work is not about anybody's epidemic. It is about the dark spirit of what is happening in the world and how you push back against it."

Can You Bring It opened last week at Film Forum in New York City and is having in-theater and virtual screenings at sites around the country. It opens Friday at the Royal Laemmle in Los Angeles and Laemmle's Playhouse 7 in Pasadena, Calif., as well as this weekend in San Francisco at the Roxie (virtual Friday, in the theater beginning Sunday). More screenings will follow in a variety of cities.

The New York Times

It Was ‘Cool Central’: Bill T. Jones Leads a Trip Through His Archive

The dancer and choreographer talks about his collaborations with Arnie Zane, Keith Haring and Robert Mapplethorpe — and the time the Vatican denounced him.



Vincent Tullo for The New York Times

By Michael Cooper
Published Aug. 20, 2019

“There are a lot of emotions in these stories,” the choreographer, dancer and director Bill T. Jones said one evening this summer as he rummaged through some of the hundreds of folders and document boxes that make up the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company Archive, which had just been acquired by the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

There were the outlines of a pathbreaking dance career that took Mr. Jones from the outer edge of the avant-garde to the cover of Time magazine to Broadway to the artistic

leadership of New York Live Arts in Chelsea — and time capsules of New York's recent artistic history.

As he rifled through document boxes — part of a collection that includes photos, production notes, costume designs, film and audio materials, and even T-shirts — Mr. Jones, 67, told some of those stories contained in the archive, whose acquisition was announced by the library on Tuesday.

He spoke about the politically charged, beautiful dances exploring race and sexuality that he made with Arnie Zane, his partner in art and life, who died of AIDS-related lymphoma in 1988. About his interactions with other artists at the intersection of the avant-garde and the New Wave in 1980s New York, including Keith Haring and Robert Mapplethorpe, and the toll taken by the AIDS crisis. And, somewhat reluctantly, about one of the great controversies of his career: how "Still/Here," his monumental 1994 meditation on mortality, was dismissed as undiscussable "victim art" by The New Yorker critic Arlene Croce.

Here are edited, condensed excerpts from that conversation.

Early Days: 'Blauvelt Mountain' (1980)

BILL T. JONES Blauvelt is a town in Rockland County where Arnie and I [who met at the State University of New York at Binghamton] lived after we left Binghamton, where we had been members of a collective called the American Dance Asylum, one of those crazy

counterculture collectives — asylum in the sense that you could take refuge, and a place you could be as insane as you want to be. We were very impressed by Robert Wilson's "Ka Mountain" [performed near Shiraz, Iran, over a week in 1972], with the Shah and all of these millionaires, so we grandly named ours "Blauvelt Mountain" — just a duet for these two men. This was synthesizing contact improvisation, [the choreographer] Steve Paxton and Arnie's love for German constructivist theater. These costumes we wanted to be exaggerated, but ultimately for some reason we did not use them.

Posing for Robert Mapplethorpe (1985)

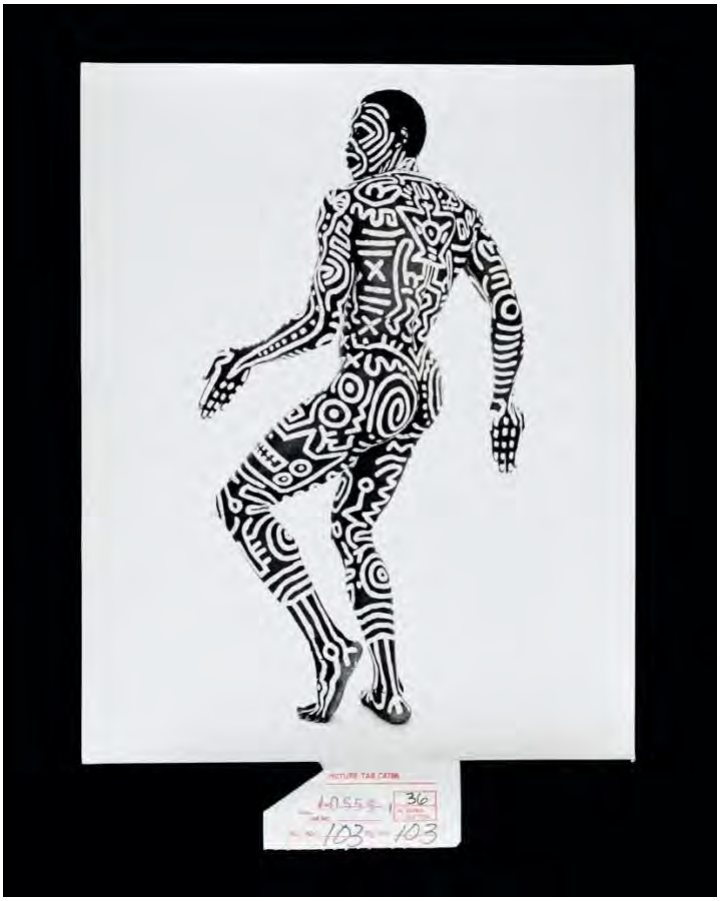
There are two things going on in this picture. Mapplethorpe had wanted to do my photo, and as you know, he made a celebrated series of naked black men. Arnie Zane organized that the photo be taken — but he couldn't show my [penis]. And what's more, it was not just another bit of rough trade or black boy flesh: This is Bill T. Jones. Arnie was very concerned that I be understood as a choreographer, and not a model. And Arnie was very concerned that he be strong, not the little guy being lifted around by the black guy all the time. He wanted this picture. And he's dressed in what he loved, jodhpurs. He's like the circus master.

Cool Central: Opening Night of ‘Secret Pastures’ (1984)

Willi Smith. Keith Haring. Arnie Zane. Bill T. Jones. Peter Gordon. That is the ’80s. Opening night of “Secret Pastures” was Cool Central — Andy Warhol was in the audience with Madonna, who were good friends of Keith’s, at BAM. Arnie’s mother and father came, and they had not had an easy time of it, but they finally were impressed when they saw Andy Warhol was sitting two rows back and the place was sold out. It was a very big, important moment.

What more can I say? The obvious is that three out of five of us are no longer here.

Becoming a Body Painting by Keith Haring (1983)



Keith had a show at the Robert Fraser gallery in London. He took four and a half hours, and he meticulously painted me with white body paint, and then he said, “Oh, by the way, the press is coming.” You can’t see it, but the paint, he started from the top down, so the top was already beginning to crack by the time they came in. [The photographer] Tseng Kwong Chi was the one telling me to do flattened figures, as flat as possible, so I credit him: That’s why they’re kind of stylized like this.

‘Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land’ (1990)

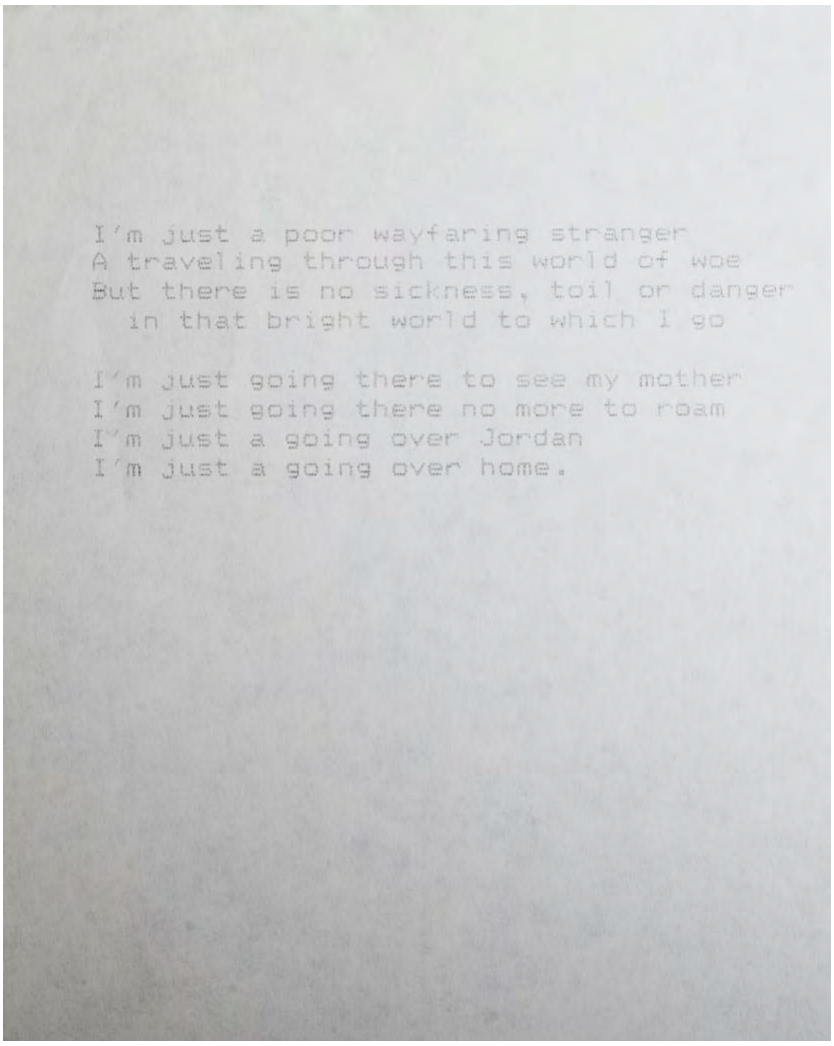
Huck Snyder [who designed the sets and costumes] was imitating what he called children’s theater in the 19th century. So it was all naïve, all these masks that Huck Snyder designed.

It started as “Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin Featuring 52 Handsome Nudes.” Little Rickie was a kind of hip, East Village novelty shop, and they had everything from paints and pencils to decks of kitsch playing cards called “52 Handsome Nudes,” handsome male nudes.

There was a concern — Jesse Helms was on the floor of the Senate, waving Mapplethorpe’s book, talking about filth and so on. And at places we toured, board members quit because they heard this immoral show, anti-family show, was coming. So it became: “Last Supper at Uncle Tom’s Cabin/The Promised Land.” The Promised Land: a place where we were no longer afraid to be together, naked. It ended with a stage full of people, standing naked, bathed in a golden light and singing Julius Hemphill’s “Children’s Song.”

Here’s a story for you. You see those lyrics to “Wayfaring Stranger?” We were invited to bring the piece to Spoleto. We were performing in a 16th-century chapel. This one section was called “The Supper.” The dancers are all doing an accumulated series of

gestures, moving from chair to chair — some of them suggest prayer, some of them suggest sex, all sorts of thing. And I'm singing "Wayfaring Stranger": "I'm just a poor wayfaring stranger."



There was always an improvisation which could spin in any way, a vocal improvisation on my part. And that night, I began to ask the question in front of this very Italian audience: "Where is the pope tonight? Tonight, I am the pope." I think that's what it was. And of course, this piece ended with all these naked people. The next day, I was denounced by the Vatican.

‘Still/Here’ (1994): Mortality That Unites Us

The archive contains a rich trove of materials related to the creation of “Still/Here.” This lyrical exploration of mortality and survival included oral histories that Mr. Jones, who had been open about being H.I.V. positive, collected in workshops from people facing life-threatening illnesses. He incorporated material gathered in those workshops into the piece itself, which was praised by The New York Times as “a true work of art, both sensitive and original,” but dismissed by The New Yorker as “victim art.”

I thought: We’re doing a piece about the journey of the body. We’re born. We grow. If we’re fortunate, we find someone who we fall in love with, we reproduce and then we die. That’s a kind of a noble arc. That’s what it was going to be about: mortality that unites us.

But it started an even bigger controversy because of that article, the “victim art.” And it seemed so unfair, because it was not trying to say that we were victims. Rather, the people who did the workshops, people came to me, I told them: I am a man. I am not a practitioner of any kind. I’m just someone who needs his hand held, trying to understand, myself — how can I live knowing what I know about my own body and life and death? And people were very generous. It was not supposed to be people who were sick wanting unsick people to feel sorry for them. It was supposed to be giving information, it was supposed to be about mortality and how mortality connects us. And the rest of it is kind of history, about how it came out. Something that was very divisive and very hurtful. In some ways, I’m still recovering from it now.

Errika Roussou

Bill T. Jones from New York Live Arts talks to ATHENS VOICE just before his Summer Nostos Festival.

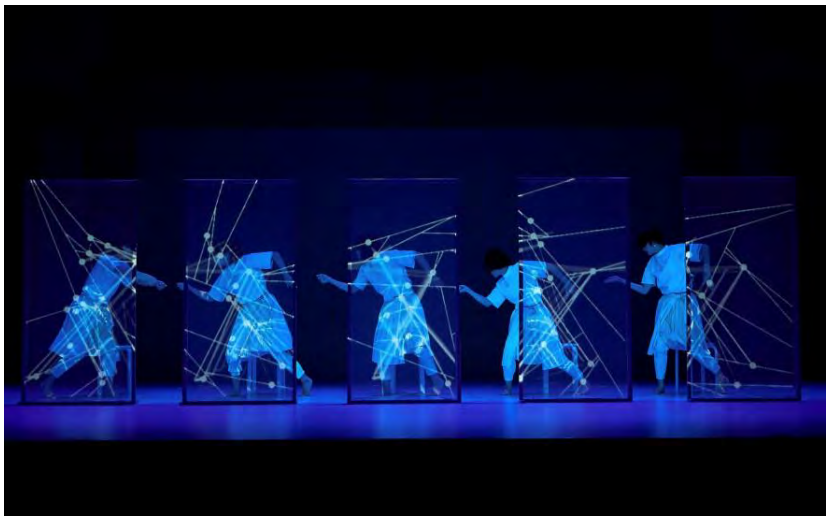
"I'm afro-American and we at home were dancing all the time. At some point, we also got a joke in our living room. " One of the best ways to find out who Bill T. Jones is, is to let him be self-assured through his relationship with dancing. Before this happens, however, it may be worth mentioning that this highly interesting "type" of the dancers and the nice, substantive reasons will be able to watch him during the 8th Congress " Summer Nostos Festival, June 24 and 25, 2019 at SNFCC.

But before all of this, let's get to know him: "My parents were immigrant workers who transported groups of people from the South to the North to harvest potatoes, fruits and vegetables. These people had some fun. Because of the racist policy, the

blacks did not feel comfortable going to the local bar along with the white people, so we had to 'enjoy' ourselves. Therefore, the joubbox gained great significance, and this was the first time I saw people actually dancing. Some of them may have once been in the theater but, most likely, they were people who were not so lucky, and now they were trying to survive by working as field laborers. So, I noticed people dancing in different ways. Modern dance as a profession I discovered only when I arrived at the university, watching Martha Graham's work and Alvin Ailey's team. That happened when I was about 19-20 and then I decided I wanted to become a dancer. "

The kinesiology of happiness

Co-founder of Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Company, Founder and Artistic Director of New York Live Arts, award-winning for your work, with great contributions to Broadway and Off-Broadway productions as well as very important collaborations. However, he believes that "one should be very careful by speaking of the 'myth' of one's life." And it explains: "Every new job is a new challenge and, personally, I often challenge all my skills and the truth of what I do. It is a battle, it is an emotional and psychological battle we face as artists. We should not just accept that we are great and keep away from things. The creative part of my life is guided by a series of questions whose answers I have been looking for for 14-15 years: 'what is the relationship of the person with the many', 'what is beauty', 'what is history' and 'what narrative of power', what effect does the latter have on my own world, my perception of beauty and what I think my work has to do. I hope this does not sound complicated, but the easy answer is that one must remain humble and equality, history and power, while some of them can not be identified. But what we are looking for there, with me as Artistic Director and Janet Wong as Artistic Director with me, is the constant involvement in new sets of questions and practices. " my perception of beauty and what I think my work has to do. I hope this does not sound complicated, but the easy answer is that one must remain humble and equality, history and power, while some of them can not be identified. But what we are looking for there, with me as Artistic Director and Janet Wong as Artistic Director with me, is the constant involvement in new sets of questions and practices. " my perception of beauty and what I think my work has to do. I hope this does not sound complicated, but the easy answer is that one must remain humble and equality, history and power, while some of them can not be identified. But what we are looking for there, with me as Artistic Director and Janet Wong as Artistic Director with me, is the constant involvement in new sets of questions and practices. "



© Tomoya Takeshita

A Tip to Young Dancers
"It takes a little time to understand artistic creation as a often painful way to live in this world. As far as dancing techniques are concerned, when I have young people in front of me or when watching an audition, I look for this human creature that seems to have a very intense appetite for movement and at the same time to think while moving. Usually when I find such a person I can not stop looking at it. Even though, technically, they are not the best, they have something to do with it, and that has to do with their 'hunger', the hunger of their body and their minds. You have to be close enough to this person on a daily basis to understand his driving power, what is his hunger. "

Some thoughts about Greece
"I feel really bad that I do not know much about the dancing scene in Greece. I look forward to seeing as much as I can in the short time that I will be there. I am very much afraid that Greece has the people of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, who seem to be dying and open to the hard work that needs to be done and to the commons that should be recognized and developed. What evolves in Greece is something very beautiful for the future. I hope, of course, to meet as many Greek artists as possible, from all walks of life. "

Participation in the conference of Stavros Niarchos Foundation entitled: "Untitled:"
"I think the issue is a very substantial and important round of questions. I hope we do not exhaust them and do not do an empty mental exercise. I will be there to hear, to provoke and accept challenges and I believe we will be able to share our hopes and optimism. I am not always hopeful and I am not always optimistic but I am confident that this opportunity to meet other thinking people working for culture can lead to something as much of the world's dialogue seems to be exhausted with an increasing controversial and land-locked way. Can this debate take off as a good performance, like a good project? It can mobilize people who are there to

talk to each other, can it mobilize the public, the media? Can it mobilize other people to feel that we can move forward or do something essential? That's what I expect from this conference. "

So you think you can dance

I appreciate all forms of art as an intellectual activity and say that dancing is a particularly noble form, because through this we use the most basic human element, our body, to express very deep feelings and ideas. And that's not the only feature. For me, dance can also be a cultural, more complex, visual experience. I like, however, to combine them all, and the elements concerning the feelings and the human spirit and the more complex elements related to the forms, the space and the time ".

© Paul B. Goode

New York Live Arts, an introduction

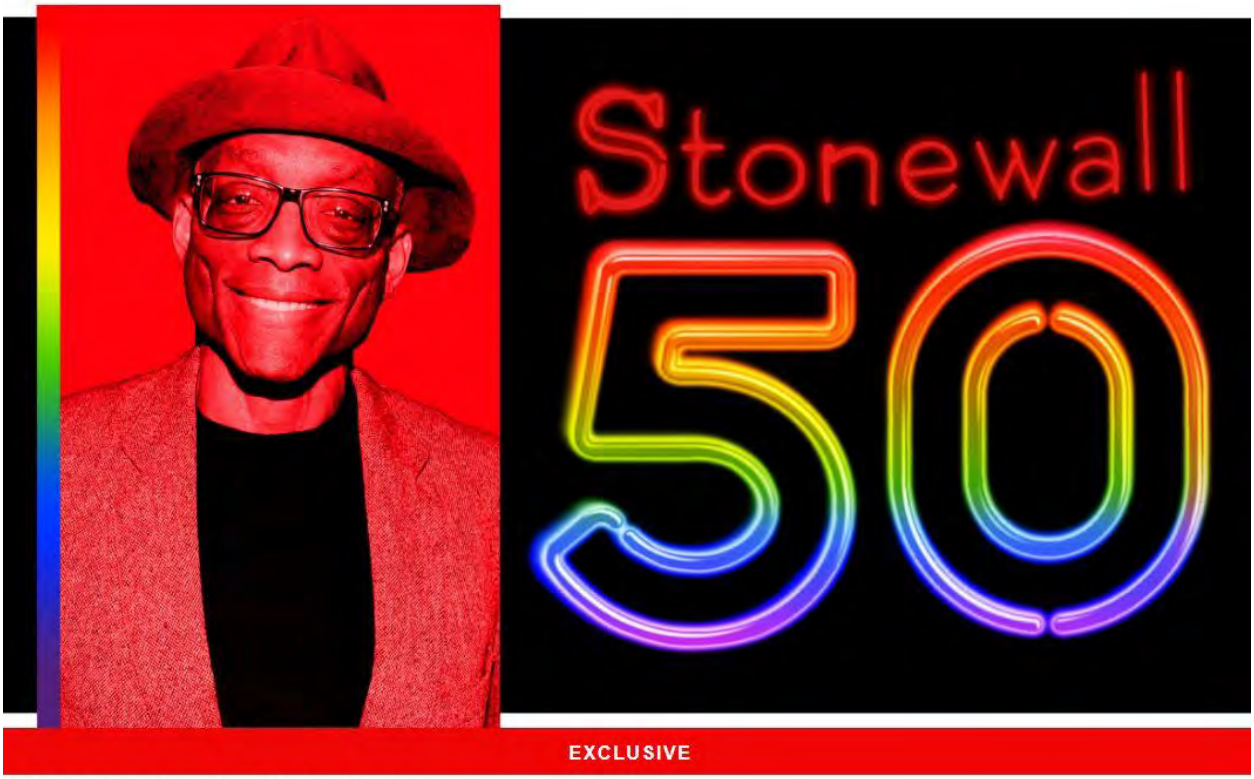
"New York Live Arts is the most recent feature of the merger of Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Company and a historic, legendary, culturally-inspired idea called Dance Theater Workshop. We merged eight years ago in 2011 to unite all our forces and, in doing so, continue to develop my work but also to support the world of creators looking to create a powerhouse in New York and around it, within and outside the U.S. We are currently focusing more on New York and the United States. We support artists at all stages of their career, we work with very young artists, some of them do their very first job, as well as artists who have been working for the last 30-40 years. Our work is based on the exploration of the body and the choreographers with whom we work and to which we assign a project deal with the body in many different ways, approaching the body's question as a way of answering many other questions. Some of these are formalistic and relate to space, time, style, other social content about equality, history and authority, and some of them can not be identified. But what we are looking for there, with me as Artistic Director and Janet

Wong as Artistic Director with me, is the constant involvement in new sets of questions and practices. " approaching the question of the body as a way of answering many other questions. Some of these are formalistic and relate to space, time, style, other social content about equality, history and authority, and some of them can not be identified. But what we are looking for there, with me as Artistic Director and Janet Wong as Artistic Director with me, is the constant involvement in new sets of questions and practices. " approaching the question of the body as a way of answering many other questions. Some of these are formalistic and relate to space, time, style, other social content about equality, history and authority, and some of them can not be identified. But what we are looking for there, with me as Artistic Director and Janet Wong as Artistic Director with me, is the constant involvement in new sets of questions and practices. "

Info: The Summer Nostos Festival is organized and implemented with the exclusive donation of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (ISN), in cooperation with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation for Culture (SNFCC). More information about the Congress . Bill T. Jones' entry to the lecture is free with pre-registration .

STONEWALL 50

Bill T. Jones: We Must Work Harder to Connect Stonewall to the World's Other Liberation Struggles



EXCLUSIVE

Photo Illustration by Sarah Rogers/The Daily Beast/Photos Getty

Jones wants the LGBT movement to reach out. 'Can we grow? Can we take leadership? Where is the first openly gay or trans president? You've got to have a breadth of vision.'

Tim Teeman
Senior Editor And Writer

Published 06.21.19 4:51AM ET

n this special series, LGBT celebrities and public figures talk to Tim Teeman about the Stonewall Riots and their legacy—see more here.

Bill T. Jones is a choreographer, director, author, dancer, co-founder of Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, and artistic director and co-founder of New York Live Arts.

When and how did you first hear about the Stonewall Riots, and what did you make of them?

I'm not quite sure. At the time I was a 17-year-old living in upstate New York, my head full of Woodstock. I had some inkling I might be gay. But a small community like that did not dominate our conversations. Our conversations were dominated by the Vietnam War and civil rights struggles. America was burning down for any number of reasons.

Stonewall did not loom large in the mind of this young black man who at that point was not sure what his sexuality was. I do remember sometime afterwards being picked up by someone involved with Berkeley when I was hitchhiking who used the term "queer politics."

"Queer" was shocking to me. Gay liberation I understood. They said, "like Stonewall." I asked what Stonewall was. They said it had been when "sissies" and drag queens had turned on the police and said, "We're not taking it."

That reminded me of growing up in a migrant labor camp. We were potato pickers. In the social system of that industry, black people were brought from the South and isolated in the farms and woods, and didn't mingle. I did. My parents wanted me to be acculturated into being a black Yankee.

In that culture, there was a certain level of tolerance for "sissies." Sissies were sometimes strapping guys hauling a 100-pound bag of potatoes all week. Then at the weekend they would go into Little Richard mode with their shirts tied in the front and with lovely skin. They were very camp.

The word was to be careful around them because a sissy had a supernatural strength. A lot of guys had their asses whipped by so-called faggots and sissies. There was this idea of sissies being capable of exploding. They were seen as an abomination in the eyes of god and a consternation to the eyes of the human beings around them who didn't understand them. When I heard of Stonewall, that was the image I had and it made me very proud.

At the time the headlines were dominated by Vietnam and the Martin Luther King

assassination. For a young black man, there were other things in the front of my mind. And I wanted the freedom promised by the counterculture: turn on, tune in, and drop out. In straight culture there was Mick Jagger and Bowie, all those guys doing gender-fuck. They were being free and cool and wearing makeup.

What is the significance of the Stonewall Riots for you now?

They were just one of many other riots about human freedom, and the disenfranchised being able to express themselves. That is how the mature man I am now understands my sexuality: What is left of gay liberation is just another volley in this ongoing battle for social justice.

How far have LGBT people come since 1969?

We've come damn far. I'm married to my companion (Bjorn G. Amelan), and that's a big deal. We've even run the risk of becoming completely co-opted by bourgeois complacency.

The generation that brought you *The Advocate* and all those magazines are well-heeled and using surrogate mothers and having babies. Suddenly, becoming very domesticated I guess is a privilege of a very successful social movement: You get to be boring, you get to be "normal."

That spirit of fighting is still there, when it comes to fighting for trans rights, immigration, and the environment. Who are our gay leaders? Where are the coalitions, collaborations? I try to keep a multi-racial, multi-ethnic group of performers. I try to be as open as possible. I show up and be visible.

Is this a blip? Or a watershed moment of opportunity, if progressives want to believe it is an opportunity? We are speaking on Earth Day. Are we all doomed to be swept away by a tsunami of our making, or will this bring us together to see more clearly the relationship of individuals struggling for agency to big historical questions? I sure as hell don't have the answer. I feel the same way about the Trump administration.

What would you like to see, LGBT-wise, in the next 50 years?

Let's go back to the civil rights struggle. I didn't know there was a group called trans people when I was a child. Fifty years ago, we couldn't have known that by now the binary notion of humankind would be eroded and we would have an ever-growing acceptance of a nuanced notion of gender. Having said that, Black Lives Matter have had to smack the whole country in the face how many years after the civil rights struggle.

We thought we'd be living in a post-racial world 50 years out from the civil rights struggle, and we're not. I hope there will be more opportunities in 50 years' time for more kinds of people. I hope it looks like right now but with cleaner air, and better education, and health for more people.

Can we work harder to connect Stonewall to the major liberation struggles happening around the planet now? It feels very bourgeois and a bit stuck, the way we talk about it now. We should connect to Planned Parenthood and the struggle for reproductive freedom. Half the candidates vying for the Democratic presidential nomination are women and women of color.

The biggest struggle facing humankind ever is climate change. Can we come into the real world as real citizens as opposed to the wounded group of boys, girls, and trans people still licking our wounds from being treated poorly when we were children?

Can we grow? Can we take leadership? Where is the first openly gay or trans president? You don't just get elected on one platform, you've got to have a breadth of vision.

What would you say to the Stonewall demonstrators?

Thank you, brothers and sisters. [As Martin Luther King said], "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last."

QUEERTY*
Free of an agenda (except that gay one)

inspiration

Bill T. Jones doesn't just "participate in the big conversations," he changes them

By Graham Gremore May 25, 2019 at 11:05am

Name: Bill T. Jones

Who is he: Dancer, choreographer, director, author, HIV/AIDS activist.

What he's accomplished: In 1982, Jones and his partner of over a decade Arnie Zane formed the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. To date, the troupe has created over 100 works, performed in over 200 cities in over 40 countries.

Throughout his career, Jones has combined art with activism. In 1989, during the height of the AIDS epidemic, he choreographed *D-Man in the Waters,* which aimed to raise awareness about the horrors of HIV/AIDS then tearing apart the gay community, and in 1994 with his groundbreaking show *Still/Here,* which was about his own experience of being diagnosed with HIV.

Still/Here was a huge success and received an international tour. Homophobic reviewers labeled it

"victim art." Most, however, lavished praise on Jones for tackling a subject that, at the time, was still considered very much taboo. In 2016, *Newsweek* declared "Jones is probably best known outside of dance circles for his 1994 work *Still/Here*."

In 2011, Jones was the subject of a PBS documentary titled *A Good Man* that followed him behind-the-scenes as he created a dance-theater production honoring Abraham Lincoln's Bicentennial titled *Fondly Do We Hope… Fervently Do We Pray*.

Why we're proud: Jones is one of the most influential modern-dance choreographers and directors. Over the years, he has received numerous honors and awards, including the Human Rights Campaign's 2016 Visibility Award, the 2013 National Medal of Arts, and the Kennedy Center Honors in 2010, among others too numerous to name here.

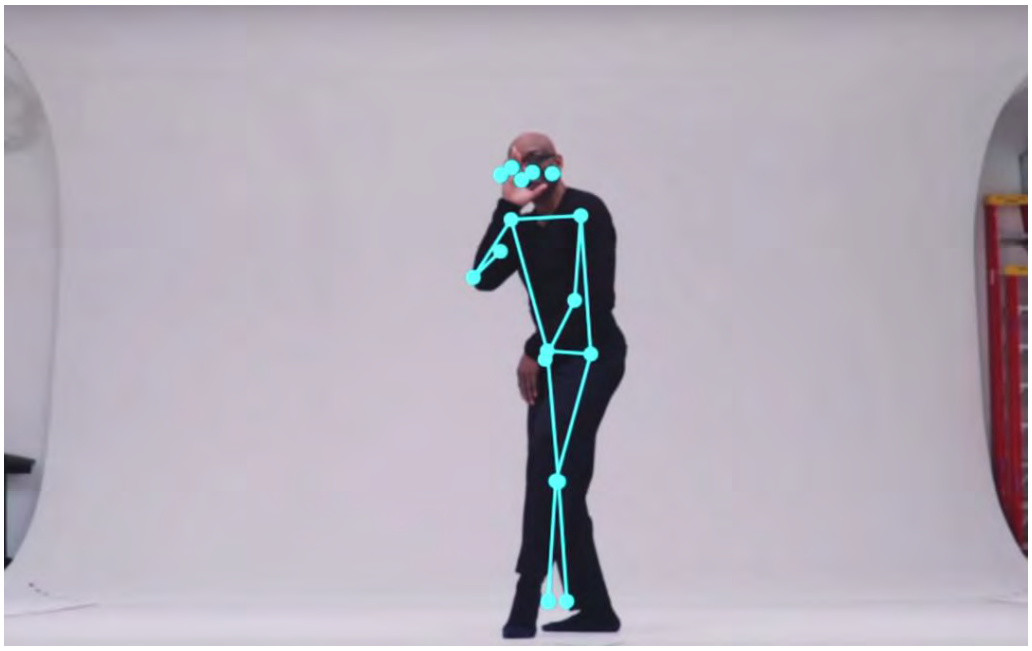
Much of his success comes from the fact that he has never been afraid to tackle uncomfortable or taboo topics in this work decades before anybody else dared. In a 2018 interview with *American Theater*, he said:

I am a man who is looking at 70 years old, have been a maverick for many, many years, and now I want to participate in big conversations, and I wanna do it in a way that I know how to do it

It's this attitude of dancing to the beat of his own heart that makes Jones such an inspiration and powerful figure to celebrate this half-century of pride.

GOOGLE AND LEGENDARY DANCER BILL T. JONES CREATE INTERACTIVE DANCE EXPERIENCE FOR ANYONE

by Sequoia Blodgett
May 14, 2019



Bill T. Jones (Image: Google Creative Lab)

Bill T. Jones and Google Creative Lab have collaborated to launch *Body, Movement, Language,* a collection of experiments that have resulted from a two-way residency between the writer, dancer director, and Tony Award winner.

Inspired by Jones' long history of intertwining live, improvised speech and dance, these open-source experiments use AI to invite people to explore the creative possibilities of their bodies and make new connections with Jones' iconic works right at home, using nothing more than a laptop and webcam. When asked why Jones partnered with Google he said, "The idea of machine learning intrigues me. The theme of our company's *Live Ideas Fest* this year is artificial intelligence. AI is supposed to take us into the next century and important things are supposed to be happening with this technology, so I wanted to see if we could use it to stir real human emotion. Maybe it's ego, but I want to be the one to know how to use PoseNet to make somebody cry. How do you get the technology to be weighted with meaning and import?"

The series of four experiments include:

Manifesto
An intimate message composed in digital space
Bill T. Jones is famous for improvising with speech and movement in performance– deftly weaving together deeply personal stories, and commentaries on culture. *Manifesto* allows the user to create a trail of words that respond to their movements in real-time. If you exit your camera's frame of vision, the trail of words will suspend on screen. With this process, you can compose a statement, a poem, or letter to someone you know. Jones has his dancers use this experiment to tell stories about their lives or write a letter to someone.

The Game
A kinetic conversation
This concept was discovered accidentally when Jones' dancers began playing with a glitch in PoseNet that allowed them to "steal" the shape rendered on screen from one another by modulating their poses. Inspired by their experimentation, Jones asked them to think of three words with strong relationships to each other that would imbue this new game with meaning and weight. This game begins with his chosen triad: "lover, stranger, friend," but you are encouraged to enter your own collection of words to give *The Game* more significance to you.

Hold That Thought
A soliloquy with digital props
Inspired by Jones' work with language and movement, this experiment started as a visual pun on the significance of speech. As the words you say appear on screen, they become part of your body and are affected by your movements. While developing this experiment, Jones prompted his dancers to speak and feel the physicality of the words in the stories they tell. *Hold That Thought*invites you to speak freely while contending with your words as if they were physical objects that you can enlarge, shrink, or tilt with your movements.

Naming Things: Approaching 21
A new way to experience one of the most iconic pieces in the history of American dance
Debuting in 1983, *21* has become one of Bill T. Jones' signature works. Jones cycles through 21 poses with spoken titles and improvised associations in a commentary on the body and its symbolism in culture. This dynamic performance is rooted in the time and space in which it is delivered. It is never executed the same way twice, making it impossible to archive. This experience, *Naming Things: Approaching 21*, is a complement to the live performance. This experience pays homage to the structure of 21 and allows you to experience each section uniquely. First, you watch him perform each pose. Second, you participate in the piece and must match his pose to advance the video and learn each poses' title–a function powered by Google PoseNet. Last, you hear Jones' reflections on the piece.
This project is an example of an innovative, socially responsible application of AI and even more specifically, the use of AI to explore and better understand the black and LGBTQ+ experience through art and dance.

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

Theater & Dance Review

Dancemaker Bill T. Jones isn't always sure art is useful. Here's why he keeps at it.

Bill T Jones in his New York office at Live Arts.
(Chris Sorensen/For The Washington Post)

By **Sarah L. Kaufman**
March 22

NEW YORK — Bill T. Jones walks into his office, and the room seems to shrink.

It's not just that his tall, broad-shouldered frame gains a few inches from the black wool beanie that stands upright, no hint of slouch, atop his clean-shaven head.

At 67, Jones inhabits this space the way he commanded the stage in his dancing years. He has a radiating presence that's both large-scale and contained.

Granted, his office isn't that big to begin with, on the garret-like top floor of the performance space and experimental dance haven New York Live Arts, which Jones directs.

Strange as it may seem, the singularly magnetic performer and two-time Tony-winning choreographer (for "Fela!" and "Spring Awakening") has a desk job. At least some of the time, when he's not researching a new piece or in the studio with his world-traveled group, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. It's an unusual mix of roles. There's little precedent in dance or theater for a nonprofit arts incubator to be led by an artist of Jones's stature.

A man of hearty appetites — for courting controversy, for expansive productions, for off-the-radar music and free expression of many sorts — Jones is a crusader for independent artists because (a) he's one of them, and (b) he's irrepressible.

Sitting on a sofa in his Live Arts office, in the West Side neighborhood of Chelsea, Jones leans forward and rests his elbows on his knees. Because there's not quite enough legroom before he hits the coffee table, his limbs are spread wide, in a casual demonstration of hip flexibility only a dancer could manage. He's wearing a scarf, a fuzzy cardigan, a bright yellow T-shirt and corduroys. Together with the hat, which stays on for most of the interview, it's a free-spirited look, with a dash of edge. This man, who was once body-painted by Keith Haring (the sensational photographs landed in museum collections), can pull it off.

He speaks with the no-nonsense bluntness of a motivational coach.

"I want to talk about what it means to survive," Jones says in an emphatic baritone, "and what a life is."

Jones knows more than a little about survival. His partner, Arnie Zane, died in his arms of AIDS-related causes in 1988. In his grief, Jones vowed not to give up on the dance company they had founded six years earlier, which he calls "the child Arnie and I had together."

[Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company to merge with Dance Theater Workshop]

He didn't give up. Through works such as "Last Supper at Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land," which called racism out of hiding, and "Still/Here," using interviews with those facing death, Jones continuously boosted a well-earned reputation for tackling the societal land mines even the most "woke" conversations tiptoe around.

[Bill T. Jones, who brought the avant-garde to Broadway]

Stories of survival course through Jones's newest work, "Analogy Trilogy," created with his associate artistic director, Janet Wong, which the company will perform at the Kennedy Center next week. Each night audiences will see one of three 75-minute sections; they tell different stories but share similar features. They all have spare, movable design elements (created by Bjorn Amelan, Jones's longtime artistic collaborator and husband), and the dancers speak and sing, as well as move, in Jones's smooth, slippery, boldly sculpted style. The three parts premiered between 2015 and 2017; this is the trilogy's first outing for Washington audiences.

The opening section, "Analogy/Dora: Tramontane," centers on the tales unspooled over dinner and wine several years ago by Jones's mother-in-law, who was a French Jewish nurse during the Holocaust and helped other Jews get false papers and escape.

The closer, "Analogy/Ambros: The Emigrant," is based on a character in German author W.G. Sebald's celebrated novel "The Emigrants." Ambros is a complicated, enigmatic figure, possibly gay, who travels through Europe in the early 1900s with a wealthy male companion and ends up in a sanatorium in Upstate New York, willingly undergoing electroshock therapy in an act of self-destruction.

But Jones didn't want a whole production about Europeans and the world wars, so he added a middle section, "Analogy/Lance: Pretty a.k.a. the Escape Artist," about his nephew, Lance Briggs.

The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company in Analogy/Lance: Pretty aka the Escape Artist. (Courtesy of the Company)

Briggs was once a San Francisco Ballet scholarship student. He was the dancing body double for James Earl Jones in a Verizon ad some years ago. But his life spiraled into addiction and prostitution. At one point, Briggs, in his 50s, was in the hospital, paralyzed from the waist down and needing surgery. Doctors gave him a 50-50 chance of survival.

Jones got on the phone, in life-coach mode, urging him: Lance, don't just lie there! You've always wanted to write songs. Write one! *Do something*.

"I was trying to talk to him as an artist to another artist," Jones says. "I'd say, 'An artist has to make. An artist has to *do*. Why don't you write a song about what's going on, rather than panic?' "

But what it took to extract that song! "It was like pulling teeth," Uncle Bill murmurs, "to get him to do this thing."

In time, Briggs did come up with a song. He sang it into the phone. Jones recorded it (he'd been taping their weekly phone conversations for years) and gave it to his collaborator Nick Hallett, who composed music for "Analogy Trilogy." Hallet scored it. Jones then stage-managed his nephew's surgery, arranging for the song to be played as Briggs went under the knife.

“I wanted him to hear it under the anesthesia, so in case he were to pass away, he’d hear it in his unconsciousness,” Jones says.

Briggs, thusly badgered (lovingly) back to life by an inexorable force, turned out okay. He’s living in Florida with his mother, working on more music. Jones, who’s equally demanding of himself, plowed the experience into “Analogy/Lance.”

“I wanted to make a piece about a man who saves himself through art,” he says. “I don’t want people to think he’s just a train wreck. The most important thing an artist has is the will to do something — it’s evidence of life and a spiritual wellness, even if the body is decrepit.”

Jones’s questioning — his openhearted wonderment about these people — runs through each part of “Analogy Trilogy.”

Dora, for instance, lost her family to the Nazis. She nearly died of typhoid; she wrestled with guilt over the Jews she couldn’t save. And yet she has no bitterness.

Jones finds her fascinating. (She’s now 98, living in a senior facility in Paris.)

“She’s a calm, organized, loving human being who is intelligent and curious,” he says. “She would tell me terrible things that would happen. But then she would tell me some instance of great kindness between people.

“And as a black person, dealing with what was going on with Ferguson [Missouri], dealing with the open wound that is slavery and all, I was thinking, ‘There's something I could learn from her.’ ”

“All I know is I’m trying to present a vision of a community of people that’s disparate ethnically, physically and socially.” (Chris Sorensen/For The Washington Post)

As for “Analogy/Ambros,” Jones says he relates mostly to the author, Sebald, digging up information about his character, who is more or less based on a real-life great uncle Sebald never knew. In “The Emigrants,” Sebald describes studying his great uncle’s journals and interviewing those close to him, drawing out the type of oral history that Jones also has used in his own work, as a creative strategy. Telling other people’s stories, Jones says, forces him to deal with “the crushing reality of time passing.”

“Artists have to present a portrait of a moment that by its nature is ephemeral,” he says.

That’s where the optimism of his nephew touched him. At one point, Briggs told his uncle, “I want to make something that’s going to be of service to young gay people who are going through what I went through.” That stuck with Jones, and we hear one of the performers speak those words.

“At the time I wasn’t sure art could be of use to people,” Jones says. “This is me reflecting on my belief system.”

And now, does he believe art can save people?

Jones doesn't lack for candor.

"I'm not sure if the kind of art where you have to go to a theater is going to save your life," he says. "But in this Black Lives Matter, hashtag-MeToo, TimesUp moment, people are trying to make statements that they say will save peoples' lives by raising consciousness."

He turns the question around. "Do you think the work that you see, by people who have traditionally been outcasts, who put their catharsis onstage — does that give you direction and catharsis?"

He doesn't wait for an answer; he has one ready: "I don't know."

"All I know is I'm trying to present a vision of a community of people that's disparate ethnically, physically and socially," he continues, "and they are all working together in my company. I'm working at a fractious time with a fractious identity, and yet I keep this thing going forward.

"On bad days, it's a habit and it's vanity. On good days, I'm adding my voice to a great and positive conversation that says, 'We shall overcome.' "

Overcoming — that, he says, is the subject of his next piece, the one he's working on now, although it doesn't have a name yet.

[Bill T. Jones at Wolf Trap]
Jones is in a good place, cozy office and all. His company has a permanent home at Live Arts. No more renting rehearsal spaces all over town. And if Jones needs inspiration, or the sustenance that only wide-eyed youth can offer, all he has to do is go downstairs and sit in the back of the theater and watch the artists who, through stipends, residencies and mentoring, he's helping to cultivate.

"It's fun for me," he says, sitting back and nestling into the sofa cushions. "It's exciting when you sit in the theater and see something that is off the wall. It's not even important if I like it — it's exciting. This is what New York should be.

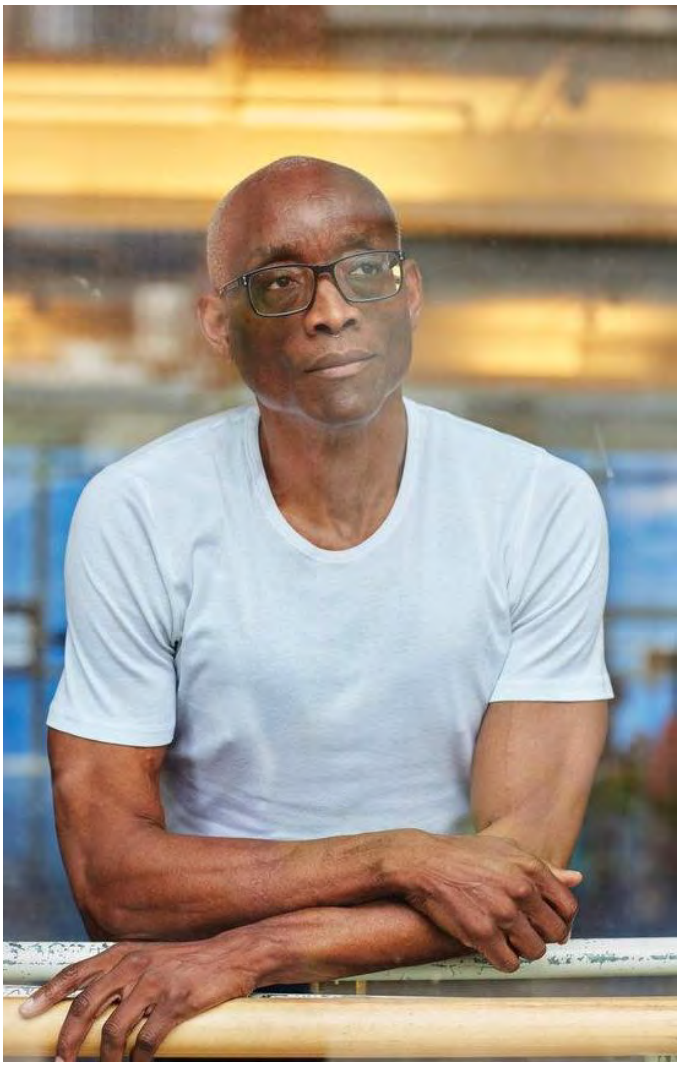
"This is what American arts are supposed to be. People taking chances."

Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company *March 28-30 at the Kennedy Center. kennedy-center.org.*

DANCE

The New York Times

Bill T. Jones Is Making Room in Dance for More Than Dance



The choreographer Bill T. Jones's "Analogy Trilogy," which braids text and movement into a theatrical collage, will be performed in two marathon sessions at N.Y.U.'s Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. Credit Brad Ogbonna for The New York Times

By Gia Kourlas

Sept. 18, 2018

Pure dance no longer holds the allure it once did for Bill T. Jones. So what's this award-winning choreographer to do? For one thing, he has removed the word "dance" from his company's name. "We're a contemporary performance ensemble," he said on a recent afternoon.

His ensemble, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, and his approach — braiding storytelling and movement into a theatrical collage — will be on display in his ambitious "Analogy Trilogy," which is to be shown in two marathon performances (with a dinner break) at the N.Y.U.'s Skirball Center for the Performing Arts on Sept. 22 and 23.

The trilogy is capped by the New York premiere of "Ambros: The Emigrant." The piece was inspired by a section of W.G. Sebald's novel"The Emigrants," in which the narrator tells the story of Ambros Adelwarth, his great-uncle, who becomes the traveling companion of a wealthy American.

The first two works are based on oral histories that Mr. Jones conducted with his mother-in-law, Dora Amelan, a French-Jewish nurse and social worker during World War II ("Dora: Tramontane"); and with his nephew, Lance T. Briggs ("Lance: Pretty aka the Escape Artist"), a dancer who became involved in drugs and in the sex trade in the 1980s and '90s.

A scene from "Ambrose: The Emigrant," the trilogy's final section, which was inspired by W.G. Sebald's novel "The Emigrants."Credit Paul B. Goode

The three parts — all created in collaboration with the company's associate artistic director, Janet Wong — explore similar ideas: What is the effect of trauma? What role does memory play in it? And how can narrative and movement work together to bring a person, or character, to life?

“Am I arguing that collage, assemblage, can be just as moving as Shakespeare, just as important and vital to us?” Mr. Jones asked. (The answer would be yes.)

While it may no longer be at the forefront, the dance element is still demanding, Jenna Riegel, a company member, said. “The difficulty is in the concentration to be able to recover your breath in a heartbeat and to sound composed and to speak again with thoughtfulness and not like a robot,” she said.

In his office at New York Live Arts, where he is the artistic director, Mr. Jones spoke about the trilogy and about how running Live Arts has affected him as an artist. But he frequently and jovially changed the subject to ask his own questions — “Do you think a middle-career artist should have a signature?” — or to tell stories, like the time he was in ballet class and accidentally kicked Martine van Hamel, the American Ballet Theater principal dancer, at the barre. “It was a wonderful moment,” he said with a giggle. “But I felt so stupid.

How did you become interested in oral history?

I think Sebald was reminding me of something when he has his young narrator looking for his uncle. The uncle is long gone, but there are people who knew the uncle, and he is interviewing them. Suddenly this novelist device is something that in our world we call oral history. I thought: You’re not an anthropologist. You don’t have a study grant from Columbia. But you do have access to people.

How can narrative and movement work together to bring a person, or character, to life? A scene from “Dora: Tramontane,” the first part of Mr. Jones’s “Analogy Trilogy.”CreditPaul B. Goode

Why did you starting interviewing Dora?

I was thinking there was something about her accent, something about her talking about the war that reminds me of Sebald. I wanted to put Sebald and Dora together, but I realized it was too much, so I put Sebald aside and focused on Dora and Lance.

Why Lance?

He was different. He never makes a distinction between Michael Jackson and George Balanchine. I don't think he knows who Balanchine is — it's all dancing. We were trying to rebuild our relationship, honestly. No more gossiping. Tell me your life.

What did you want to learn from Lance?

I thought that my nephew was an example of somebody who should have been saved. He was at the San Francisco Ballet School and all the good liberals — including his liberal gay uncle — were so glad. But he had his own ideas, so I think I was a little angry about how it had failed. And then after Lance, I thought, let's go back to the beginning, which is the whole reason you wanted to get involved in this origami of storytelling.

Mr. Jones at New York Live Arts, where he is the artistic director. CreditBrad Ogbonna for The New York Times

So you returned to the Sebald?

Yes. [Addressing himself] You after all, have always taken refuge in a work of art and now you've weighed it out into the Holocaust, you've weighed into whatever the question is around an at-risk person who is no longer young. Now you're going back to art.

Did you envision showing the entire trilogy at once?

Envision, no. From being an African-American counterculture person, life is about putting it together and seeing what happens. That is still the way I think about art. It's also something about this institution [New York Live Arts]. This is an incubator.

When I came here, I wanted to know: What is the voice of the place? We want to be producing the conversation for a general public. The conversation happens in the art world, but how but how can that conversation be retrofitted? And that's a question isn't it?

How difficult is it?

Every time the curtain goes up on another season, hallelujah. I remember saying to [the former Live Arts artistic director] Carla Peterson, "We should only do the really outstanding things," and she said, "There's only a couple of masterpieces at one time." It was amazing to hear. I said, "What are you doing for the rest of the time?" She said, "You're just letting people grow."

How does that make you feel?

Being the person I am, I want to win. I come from potato pickers. The thing that's still an artist in this person who is trying to become an administrator is that I've got to listen deeply to my preoccupations and my heart.

A version of this article appears in print on Sept. 19, 2018, on Page C2 of the New York edition with the headline: The Name Changes but the Movement Remains.

AMERICAN THEATRE
A PUBLICATION OF THEATRE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP

Bill T. Jones. (Photo by Stephanie Berger)

INTERVIEWS | **JANUARY 2019** DECEMBER 14, 2018

Bill T. Jones on Slumming, Stephen Foster, and Trump's Second Term

In 'Paradise Square,' the choreographer of 'Fela!' imagines the promise of New York's first slum and the violence of the Draft Riots of 1863.

BY ROB WEINERT-KENDT

Bill T. Jones, Tony-winning choreographer of *Spring Awakening* and *Fela!* and artistic director of New York Live Arts and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, next lends his talents to *Paradise Square*, a new musical with a book by Marcus Gardley, Craig Lucas, and Larry Kirwan and the music of Stephen Foster, at Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Dec. 27-Feb. 17, 2019.

ROB WEINERT-KENDT: It seems like you're very selective about your mainstream theatre gigs. This is your first since *Fela!* in 2009. How do you choose them, and what drew you to this one, particularly?

BILL T. JONES: *Spring Awakening* came about because I was invited by Tom Hulce and I met with Michael Mayer, who was a big fan of some of my work he had seen when he was a student at

NYU. That, and the Wedekind angle, I was curious about. So that's how that was chosen. Fela Kuti was someone who was very important to a lot of us, for political reasons as well as musical reasons, back in the '70s, and I had a friend who wanted to introduce an unknown musician to Broadway.

And yes, there's always an unexpressed fight with the Broadway tradition on my part. Because I come from the very esoteric and somewhat inward-looking world of contemporary modern dance, which I feel it is at times smug and not really appreciating popular theatre. So I'm looking for works that are going to be popular, which means they have a chance of being diverse in their appeal to various audiences, and can resolve the question of high and low.

As for *Paradise Square*, I was introduced to the producer by a man who had worked with him, and he said it's a play about the Draft Riots of 1863. I thought, bingo! The Draft Riots, what a scary topic. It's going to be talking about the world of African Americans and the Irish and the Five Points region, the first slum of America. All those things were very interesting to me. And the music of Stephen Foster: As much as I've been wrestling with Stephen Foster throughout my whole life, I've always been singing his songs, like every red-blooded American boy who was born in the 1960s. That gave me the idea that I would be able to go to the heart of the American project, and it was something that was going to be popular theatre, and that a lot of different people might be invited to come into it.

Was there ever a feeling after *Fela!* that you had a future as a Broadway director/choreographer, a la Bob Fosse or Susan Stroman?

My first duty in this life is to tend to Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane company. This is the child that Arnie Zane and I had. If I have outside projects, and I have intellectual curiosity and quite frankly financial needs, I look for something that will help me get out of that area I give most of my life to. When the projects come, I take them as they come, without too much cynicism, in the sense that this is gonna be a way to retire. Then you have to appreciate how much skill there is here, and how un-jaded people are about entertaining. It's like, "Okay, well go out and find what entertainment really is, Bill; go be with professionals." That's worth money in its own way.

The word "dance" isn't in your company name anymore. Why not?

Because I am developing an ensemble that can handle text, music, and movement with alacrity. We usually start with people who are primarily movers, and then we see, do they have voices? Can they handle simple text?

I imagine there's some violence in a show about the Draft Riots. Do you worry that if you aestheticize or stylize violence into dance, you sanitize it?

I just came out of a meeting with the director, Moisés Kaufman, and we were talking about the inherent tension in this storytelling medium versus the world of dance, which by its very nature is abstract. I don't think that on the stage you gain a lot by actually showing violence in the way that they do in Hollywood. So we have to do it by reducing the movements down to their essence, which is a choreographic process, and then playing them in counterpoint to what's said or what's musical. That's what we're doing right now—we're all kind of excited, we're all kinda scared about it. We don't know where we're going but we know how we're going to try to get there.

What do you think this show has to say to us now?

Well, it's starting to say a lot. We are making this show, potentially, for Trump's second term. This is talking about a community which was the first slum in America, where those who were

unwanted took refuge: slaves, Irish who were not yet white, Jews, Chinese, all living under the worst conditions. And yet it was a place where everyone wanted to come to be exposed to what was hot. This is where the term slumming came from. I always thought it was about the Cotton Club, but it was 60 years earlier that this was happening. Can a picture of this band of thieves and miscreants actually be an encouragement to our contemporary audience—that there truly was a time when people could love anyone they wanted to love, and that skin color was not the impediment to deep human relationships, and show us what it looks like to live in a community that's sort of making it up as they go along? I think that is a good thing for a piece of popular theatre to do. That's the spirit we're going into it with.

Obviously then it regresses at some point.

Well, the Draft Riots—that's America's dirty laundry. And it's looked at not with the idea that *you* did this, but the idea that *we* did this. I think that's what people want; they come to warm themselves against some great vision that might have discord in it but also has heat coming from it. That's what a work of theatre should be.
The question for me is how challenging can it be, where can it really run the risk of obscurity—just to destabilize audiences' assumptions about the world, how to really refresh one's eye to interracial tension. It's no longer an issue for us, but in the world that this was in, race mixing—whenever we say that word in rehearsal we think, oh God, race mixing! But that's a real term. How do you refresh the idea of "race mixing"?

You seemed to indicate earlier that you're attracted scary topics. Is that true?

Yes, I am. If not now, when? I am a man who is looking at 70 years old, have been a maverick for many, many years, and now I want to participate in big conversations, and I wanna do it in a way that I know how to do it. I'm not a picket line person, I'm a little too old to be out marching. I want to make something that the bourgeois—'cause God knows who can afford the tickets—will come to and feel entertained and nourished. That's what I want.

Do you have a favorite Stephen Foster song?

Well, I didn't know how much I loved "Someone to Love." Or "Beautiful Dreamer"—that was one they supposedly found in his publishers' desk after Steven Foster died mysteriously from a wound to his neck. It's not clear if he committed suicide or what happened. He was always struggling for money; he had been very successful when he was writing the quote-unquote plantation songs, but this was the new music he was writing, which we allude to in our show. We also allude to "Old Black Joe," which is quite beautiful—it makes you cringe to say it, but it is actually one of his most beautiful songs.

What's the last great piece of art you've experienced?

Anything by Annie Dorsen. Do you know her work? You know, she is making real inroads with the use of the internet and algorithms. And other than that, my company last weekend at UCLA did our complete trilogy—that's one of the works I'm most proud of.

Do you ever miss dancing, personally?

You know, I dance now when I'm very, very moved, or I feel it is the only way I can communicate my love for this form. It's not that I don't dance, but I can't run and jump like I used to.

Do you have happy memories of Florida, where you were born?

Yes. They are complicated memories. There is the child's Proustian memories of a place, and

then there's the reality of it. I am a Yankee now; my dad wanted me to be a Black Yankee, and he succeeded too well, so I don't feel too comfortable down there anymore.

You don't feel an affinity.

Not really. There are people I love who are still there, like my cousin Purlie May; she regularly gives me the family news about people I can't even remember. But she relates it, so I'm still in the African American pipeline.

You said you're making this show for Trump's second term. So obviously there's hope that it will have a life beyond the Berkeley run.

Yes, we hope the show has a future life. Also that we solve this question of how it can be part of a discussion we're having if Trump has a second inauguration. Maybe he won't, but there's every indication that he will. What does it look like on our stages? Another thing we're trying to do: How do we get people who have been dismissed as "deplorables" to want to see the show? We're not just a bunch of disaffected lefties—I mean, we are, but we also want to show that we're sophisticated and we understand what's going on. We want the deplorables to want to see the show too. How do we get there? I don't know.

THE NEW YORK TIMES STYLE MAGAZINE

The Transcendent Artistry of a Legendary Dancer, Four Decades In

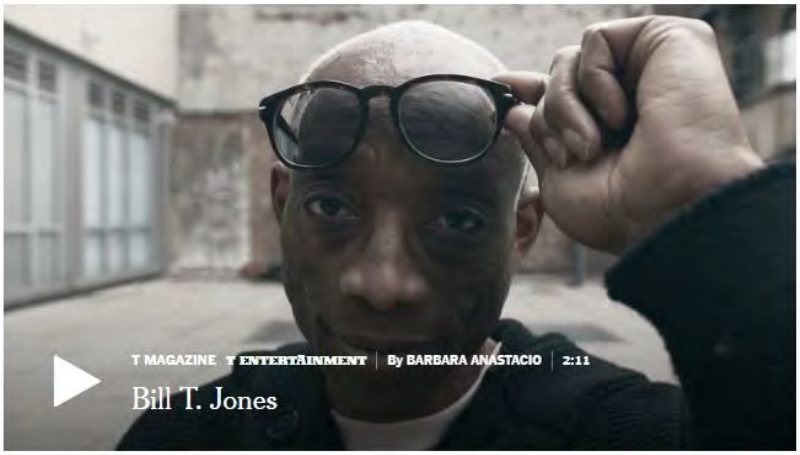
At 64, the choreographer, director, dancer and writer Bill T. Jones is making some of the most personal work of his career.

By WYATT MASON

JUNE 6, 2016

Bill T. Jones performs poses from his 1983 solo work, “21.” Inez and Vinoodh. Styled by David Vandewal

“FAME,” WROTE Rainer Maria Rilke, in 1902, “is, after all, only the sum of all the misunderstandings that gather around a new name.” The line appears at the beginning of a short book on Auguste Rodin that a 27-year-old Rilke published when the world--famous sculptor was 63. However much we think we know about Rodin, the young poet argued, we’re wrong. And yet, Rilke goes on to say, it’s not even worth taking the time to disabuse us of our errors, “for they gathered around the name, not around the work.”



Rilke's warning about confusing the artist with his work was on my mind one afternoon last fall when I sat in a still-lush garden on the Rockland County property of the 64-year-old choreographer, director, dancer and writer Bill T. Jones. Arguably the most written-about figure in the dance world of the last quarter century, Jones is inarguably the most broadly laureled, with a National Medal of Arts and a Kennedy Center Honor and Tony Awards and a Dorothy & Lillian Gish Prize and a MacArthur Fellowship and, without hyperbole, scores more. Jones has received as much praise from avant-garde aficionados (in 1998, the Village Voice critic Deborah Jowitt wrote, approvingly, of Jones's "politically charged pieces," in which "even beauty seems to pose an enraged challenge") as from the mainstream (in 2009, the Times critic Ben Brantley gushed that Jones's Broadway musical "Fela!" left audiences feeling like they "have been dancing with the stars ... And I mean astral bodies").

Jones and his late partner, Arnie Zane, performing excerpts of "Valley Cottage" for the photographer Lois Greenfield in 1981.

And yet, Jones has also been critiqued with uncommon rancor. In her 1994 piece "Discussing the Undiscussable," the New Yorker critic Arlene Croce argued that Jones had become "literally undiscussable." The premise of Jones's major midcareer work, "Still/Here," offended the critic so profoundly that she refused even to see the piece — a meditation about mortality in which Jones incorporated the movements of terminally ill people whom he'd met in the free dance workshops he'd set up for them, the patients becoming, in a sense, collaborators. "By working dying people into his act," Croce wrote, "Jones is putting himself beyond the reach of criticism. ... the most extreme case among the distressingly many now representing themselves to the public not as artists but as victims and martyrs."

It's difficult to read Croce's assessment today and not see the critic as having misunderstood Jones in the very way that Rilke cautioned against; by 1994, Jones, already famous as a gifted dancer and choreographer, had also become famously associated with AIDS after the death of his partner, Arnie Zane, and after the publicizing of his own HIV-positive status. But Croce's piece also went precisely to how, since the 1970s, Jones's own story has been variously at the center of his art: an aesthetic choice to initiate a dialogue over the place that a gay black man has in contemporary American life. For two generations now, his work has attempted to provoke, in the manner of a person intent on steering a conversation toward the uncomfortable, in order to yield understanding.

Dancers during a 1994 performance of the once-controversial dance-theater piece "Still/Here," in which Jones incorporated the movements of terminally ill patients he had met in workshops he organized.

Beatriz Schiller/Courtesy of New York Live Arts

Jones is himself a gifted talker, as I discovered under an umbrella shading the worn wooden wheel of a table on his deck, where he was giving me a sort of master class on 20th-century dance. The reason for my visit was to discuss the genesis and evolution of his newest work — an ambitious three-part cycle of dances called "Analogy," which I'd been watching his company develop. While invisibly refilling our water and wine glasses

as we ate chicken soup and fresh cornbread that his husband and companion in all things, the artist Bjorn Amelan, had made us for lunch, Jones was also talking about his love of W.G. Sebald's "The Emigrants," its nested narratives telling the stories of four Jewish lives touched by the Holocaust, as well as the struggle he had lately been having with Joyce's "Ulysses," which he and Amelan have been reading to each other.

Jones in Charleston, S.C., wearing the costume from his solo work "Absence" in 1991. Courtesy of Bill T. Jones

Amelan, a warm and decorous French Jew who retains a central casting accent despite two decades in America, was indoors while Jones and I spoke, keeping half an eye on his 95-year-old mother, Dora, a Holocaust survivor, who visits them for several weeks every year and calls Jones "her third son." As Amelan worked, Jones explained how dance had evolved in the 20th century, from what he called "the well-made dance" of George Balanchine, with its exquisite precision and elegant, finished forms, to the postmodern dances of the '60s that disrupted that soothing elegance to admit novel features: singing and talking, for instance. Also: not dancing, in the way that John Cage's music had showed us that silence in expectation of music that never begins can itself be music. Jones gave me a sense of what it meant when he took his first steps onto those first stages, in the 1970s. His dances were designed to get the audience — almost completely white, then as now — to examine what they were doing, sitting there, watching an aggressively beautiful, half-naked, young, gay, out black man dance for them. It was, absolutely, an intimidation.

"In the era of when people were discovering identity politics," Jones said in his rambling baritone, "for someone to step up and say: I am aware of what you see when you look at me. 'Oh such narcissism! Such self-involvement!' " Jones adopted a different voice here as he collated past responses to his work, essentially performing the argument. "Well, no," Jones said, returning to his own voice, "Quite frankly, you — usually it's white people — have a lot of problems actually looking at me, at who I really am. And I am

now giving you permission to do so. I am going to move; I am going to gesture; I'm going to be speaking in a way that's very personal, and yet I'm going to be dancing in another way, and you will be obliged to decide how to process it all and make it into a thing which you and I agree is supposed to be happening here: an artistic event is supposed to be happening here."

Jones's mother-in-law, Dora Amelan, whose experiences as a Holocaust survivor inspired the first part of Jones's latest work, "Analogy." Bjorn Amelan

Jones's mother-in-law, Dora Amelan, whose experiences as a Holocaust survivor inspired the first part of Jones's latest work, "Analogy."CreditBjorn Amelan

Conversation, for Jones, is itself an artistic event. Confrontation is at its heart, and his tactics are varied and surprising. I saw Jones's jousting mode last spring, before an audience at Bard College where I teach. His company had just performed an early version of the first part of "Analogy," called "Dora: Tramontane," which draws on his mother-in-law's personal history, that of a Jewish girl in a Jewish family that, like so many families of the era and the region, was, during the war, vandalized by fate. After the performance, during a Q. and A. with Jones and his company, the moderator asked a question about what it takes for someone like Dora to stand up and resist, and whether a piece like this can inspire people to act. Jones took the question seriously. "I am making this work to satisfy my artistic desires," he said, "but behind it I'm also trying to make a work that might be like in the black church, when somebody stands up and says: 'Yes! I have a problem!' They say it to the community. 'I am weak! I wanna be strong!' And somebody in the community says. '*Amen*! I hear you! I hear you!' And that's why the black church has been a political organ. Literally, it starts there. Now, what's your church? And those of you who are breeding and having children, what is the creed that you will demonstrate every day?"

Jones's question to the audience wasn't entirely rhetorical. He had given, and now he wanted the students to give back. "What about you?" he later asked one of them. "What are you pushing against? Is this your world? Do you feel this world wants you?"

Jones and Zane circa 1973 outside Binghamton, N.Y., posing for one in a series of photos taken by Zane of the couple.
Arnie Zane

Like his conversation, his dance compositions require a give and take. Consider Jones's first solo on a big stage, at the Delacorte Theater in Central Park, in 1977, from a piece called "EverybodyWorks/All Beasts Count." During the course of the solo, Jones tells a true, brief story about visiting two of his mother's sisters, his "aunties." The text, which quotes them, goes:

> *When I was a little boy about 12 years old, I received a little _____ card in the mail. When I was a little boy about 12 years old, I went back to the place I was born, Bunnell, Florida. I was sitting on the porch with my two old aunties: Aunt Mattie, and Aunt Purity Rodgers. Aunt Mattie said to me, "Billy, you ain't gonna do like your brother Iry did. He went up north and married a _____ girl. And if you marry a _____ girl, you can't come down here and visit us no more." And I said, "Auntie, I love you. I love you."*

Those blanks aren't blank, just silent, as Jones mouths, big and clear, so that even the non-lip-reading among us can't miss it, "WHITE," as if white were a dirty word, something you shouldn't say out loud. As Jones is telling this story, his hands are busy, repeatedly, constantly telegraphing a series of numbers via sets of extended fingers — a set of three, a set of two, a set of four — the pattern of a Social Security number, in this case Jones's actual Social Security number. Thus the question of identity — what defines each of us as a human being, the features by which we are measured — was being performed. As Jones has said: "When I came into the art world in the '70s, it was the time of Minimalism. It was extreme aesthetics. Extreme formalism." In "EverybodyWorks," Jones was adapting that aestheticism to his own, more political aims.

"We want to say that dance is supposed to be the freest medium of them all," Jones told me after lunch, adopting as he sometimes does the first person plural, asking his listener to think along with him. "Dance is supposed to transcend language. Dance is supposed

to be universal language. When I move my arm, we all have an arm: We can feel this. When I run, we can all feel it."

Jones Inez and Vinoodh. Styled by David Vandewal

"When you leap, we leave the ground," I said.

"Yes. 'Now what's this?' " he said, assuming the voice of a dismayed audience member. " 'You're leaving the ground but you're talking about … 1942? Would you just shut up and let me enjoy leaving the ground?' Well, no. You've left the ground many times. You can go see that all the time. But I'm going to expose you to my preoccupations. There's something about that ephemeral moment on stage that I want to be as intimate as what we've had this afternoon."

"A conversation?"

"A conversation."

INSIDE, JONES'S mother-in-law slept on the couch, her iPad resting on her lap. Amelan worked at the dining table. Surrounded by family, Jones's current artistic dialogue with himself and his audience mines that territory. "Analogy" comes from the Greek *analogos*, meaning "proportional," with respect to a thing or person's share, allotment, lot. The importance of Dora's story, Jones has said, is that she lived through a time of unspeakable barbarity, which took the lives of her younger sister and numerous other family members, and yet she emerged free of cynicism and bitterness. "I'm bitter as hell yet about slavery," Jones said in a talk at Bard last year. "I'm really angry. I've accepted that I'm always going to be angry. And here you have this woman, whose mother's side of her family were deported to Auschwitz," he said, speaking now as if his

mother-in-law were there with us. “How dare you, Dora, come out of that war and say people are basically good?”

The second part of “Analogy,” which will debut at the American Dance Festival in Durham, N.C., in July, is equally focused on family. Called “Lance: Pretty a.k.a. the Escape Artist,” it explores the story of Jones’s nephew Lance Briggs — a boy who wanted to grow up to be a combination of Michael Jackson and his famous uncle. He could sing like an angel, won scholarships to dance with the San Francisco Ballet and the Ailey School, and had begun a successful career as a model and performer and songwriter. But it all unraveled quickly. A life of promise became plagued by drug use and sexual exploitation. Addiction led to prostitution, and then AIDS, and then hospitalization for much of last year, and paraplegia and, at 45, a life closing in on death.

Jones’s nephew Lance Briggs in 1989. His journey from promising dancer to drug addict and prostitute inspired the second part of “Analogy,” for which Briggs has also been writing songs and raps. Courtesy of Bill T. Jones

“We say black lives matter,” Jones told me. “Well, this is a black life.” Jones’s sense of guilt at having failed to protect his nephew feels urgent, painful, pure. By telling Briggs’s story, Jones initially hoped “to jump-start the heart of an artist.” In the months that have unfolded since I began to watch Jones work on “Lance,” the story itself has changed. Lance was at last released from the hospital, where his uncle feared his life could end. Since the start of 2016, he has been collaborating with Jones, writing songs and raps for the production, as well as working on his own piece based on his life.

To tell his “Analogy” stories, Jones interviewed both Dora and Lance, setting down in type the events that he’d heard from them throughout their lives. Rather than simply translating them into dance, Jones has included his interviews with his subjects in the pieces. We hear Jones’s questions, and his subject’s answers, typically voiced not by Jones himself, but by the dancers.

Jones modeling for Zane on the rooftop of a boarding house in Amsterdam, 1971.

Arnie Zane, courtesy of New York Live Arts

"Now, at this late hour in the game," Jones told me, "to be the artist who I am and with the kind of notoriety or reputation that I have, and to be doing something very vulnerable and exposed like this, just a step away from the indulgence of publishing one's most intimate letters. ... But there's something about this device of these young anonymous people, that they are the channels for this hyper-personal discussion. That's my experiment." In other words, he is beginning to hand off control of the voice that has always been at the center of his work: his own. The change in method is a necessary evolution, if Jones's work is to outlive him, and it is, indeed, an experiment, what Jones is reaching for. But it is experimental in the way of the seeker, rather than the provocateur, more prayer than sermon.

I'VE BEEN WATCHING Jones develop this new work for the past year, as it has grown in length and form. As for Jones's early solo work, I know about it not because my 8-year-old self, living three blocks away, had the wherewithal to three-wheel-it over to Central Park in 1977. Rather, I know about it because Jones performed it for me at his house, after one of our lunches. He also performed another dance, called "21," during our springlike November afternoon.

"Want to bring your pillow over?" Jones said.

A photograph of Jones being painted by the artist Keith Haring in 1983. Haring's hieroglyphic-like paintings mirrored Jones's expressive dance poses.

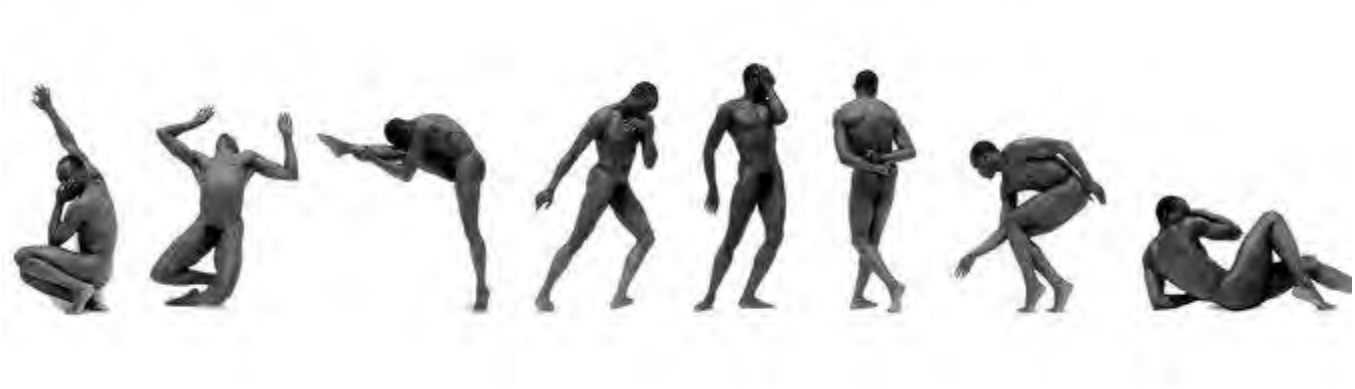
Keith Haring body painting Bill T. Jones, 1983, Photograph by Tseng Kwong Chi/Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York

A photograph of Jones being painted by the artist Keith Haring in 1983. Haring's hieroglyphic-like paintings mirrored Jones's expressive dance poses.CreditKeith Haring body painting Bill T. Jones, 1983, Photograph by Tseng Kwong Chi/Muna Tseng Dance Projects, Inc., New York

Standing before me, on the weathered planks of his deck overlooking his manicured garden, Jones, in very worn wide-wale midnight-blue corduroys and a slate gray long-sleeved T-shirt, began to move. Jones has so often stripped his body bare or nearly as to make any reasonable human have to acknowledge its perfection, the act of its revelation less a brag or a dare than a statement of fact, as when the poet Christopher Logue, in his version of the "Iliad," describes the sound that Achilles's new armor made when it was first presented to him: "Made in Heaven." As if to prove its perfection as an art object — Jones refers to his body as an "instrument" — the painter Keith Haring once used Jones himself as a canvas, painting even his penis, five bright-white stripes on a fancy black sock.

As Jones began to move, he adopted 21 different poses, each something to decode, each a manifestation of something pure, moving from one to the next, elementally, as water flows down a mountain, pooling here, pooling there.

"I used to trust my instrument," Jones had told me, earlier, "so much that I could throw down anywhere." Point being, trust was gone; idea being, whatever this was, it wasn't throwing down. "Now, you're seeing what's left of the old Billie Holiday. All you can hear is her phrasing," Jones said afterward. As his spectator, I'd have to disagree.



“Bill T. Jones I-VIII” by the late photographer Herb Ritts, 1995.

Bill T. Jones I-VIII, Los Angeles 1995, Herb Ritts/Trunk Archive

“Bill T. Jones I-VIII” by the late photographer Herb Ritts, 1995. CreditBill T. Jones I-VIII, Los Angeles 1995, Herb Ritts/Trunk Archive

The first time he worked through the poses, he was silent. The second, the same poses were introduced by numbers, from one to 21. The third time, the numbers were replaced by names, captions that let us know where the poses had come from — “One, Italian Renaissance, contrapposto, David. Two, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Three, Muhammad Ali” — each an icon, a stance a person could, in life, adopt. And then, as Jones began a fourth series through the movements, he began to collate the conversation we had been having into the dance, along with his passing thoughts, a stream of consciousness scissoring in of phrases said into the shapes he was adopting and discarding. What was most striking in these minutes was how his thoughts about his current project — about his nephew Briggs, who at that hour was lying paralyzed from the waist down in a Florida hospital bed — rose into the air, as Jones moved, with great tenderness, something achingly open and empty in the motions of his large calm hands. “I … I … I … I …” Jones now sang. “Durer. ‘The Expulsion,’ ” he said, as he adopted the pose of Adam expelled from Eden. “Go. He has to go soon. Don’t go to hell. Lance, do I want you to go?”

It occurred to me, watching Jones move, that, like all great attempts at artistic expression, his art manages to model compassion for the spectator — to make us feel what it’s like to be dealing with an intense feeling not our own, but one that becomes ours to deal with. When we add in the way in which Jones’s mind and body are changing, the dances themselves take on a new sort of vulnerability, a new riskiness far from the formalism of the ’70s. When performing “21” for his audience of one, Jones seemed less like a man intent upon confronting his audience than confronting himself. Watching him, I wondered where he got the strength to do all that looking.

Before the last lunch I had with Amelan and Jones, inside now, Jones reached his right hand to his husband’s left and his left to his guest’s right. As we sat in silence, I recalled something Jones had said to me on an earlier visit when we were talking about his ambitions for “Lance.” “I’m going to step out on the word — that term my mother speaks about, in her notion of the ecstatic nature of worship. ‘Child, you have to step out on the

word.’ The word of God, she’s talking about.” Jones paused after he said it, wondering at it. “What is my word?” he asked, finally, as though that will always be the question.

A version of this article appears in print on June 12, 2016, on page M270 of T Magazine with the headline: The Transcendent Artistry of Bill T. Jones.

backstage

News

Sigourney Weaver and Bill T. Jones Honored for LGBT Activism

By Benjamin Lindsay | Posted Feb. 8, 2016, 3 p.m.

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) honored three-time Academy Award-nominated actor Sigourney Weaver and two-time Tony Award-winning choreographer Bill T. Jones on Saturday, Feb. 6, at the annual HRC Greater New York Gala. Jones was presented the LGBT nonprofit's Visibility Award by actor and activist Kathleen Turner, who said of the "Spring Awakening" choreographer that "his work crosses all lines—class, race, sexuality." Emmy winner David Hyde Pierce presented Weaver with the Ally for Equality Award.

"I think the extraordinary thing about her is [that] in her choices of roles and films, and in the choices she makes as an actress, she reveals such humanity, such wisdom, such humor," Pierce said in his introduction. "We sit in the theater and we are empowered by osmosis."

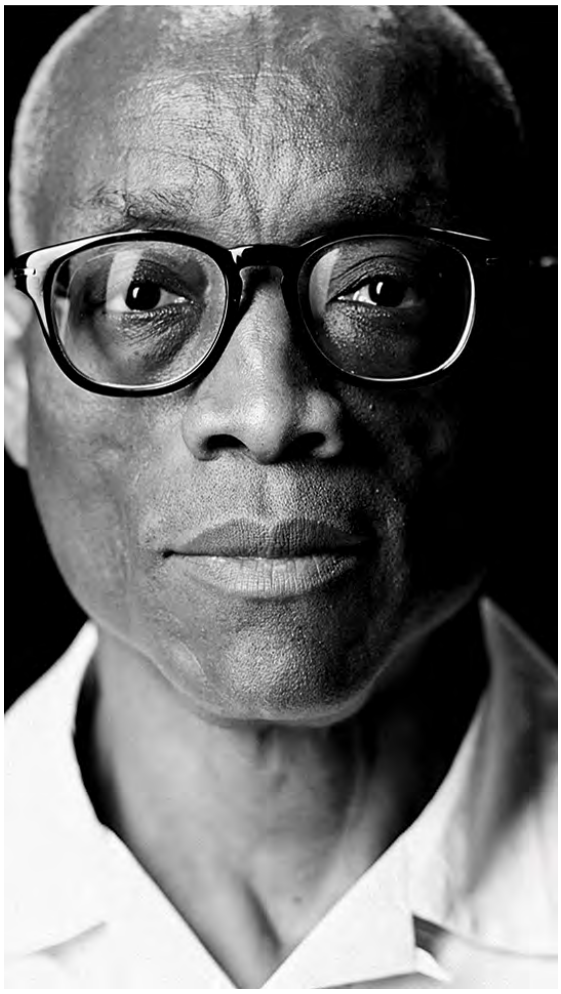
When Weaver, also a Tony Award nominee, took the stage, she reflected on her start in the theater, calling it a “lifeboat for people who are different—a place where it is safe to be exactly what you are.”

New York Governor Andrew Cuomo was also honored with the National Equality Award. In his acceptance speech, Jones thanked Cuomo and the gala’s attending politicians (including U.S. Senator Charles Schumer) for continuing to fight for the LGBT community—and therefore, the arts.

“I want to thank all those brave soldiers who believe that art-making makes us better as a democracy,” Jones said. “This art world, we need what this room has tonight. We are not a luxury. We are not something that you do as a charity. You’re fighting for hearts and minds here. I want to thank all the artists who I call soldiers.”

For more information on the HRC’s work for equality in the Empire State, visit hrc.org.

Inspired by this post? Check out our audition listings!



Harvard Business Review

LEADERSHIP

Life's Work: An Interview with Bill T. Jones

Dana Lissy
Alison Beard

FROM THE NOVEMBER 2015 ISSUE

Bill T. Jones revolutionized modern dance through the company he founded in 1982 with his partner Arnie Zane, who later died of AIDS-related lymphoma. He's since choreographed over 120 works (including the Broadway hit *Fela!*). Now 63 and the artistic director of New York Live Arts, he returns to the stage for a solo performance this season.

HBR: Where do you get the ideas for your performances?

Jones: Some people say my work is about feelings that run smack into realities of economics, politics, and power. You build a foundation with questions—How do I express the conflicted feelings I have right now? How do I find the language? What has been done? What could be done? Who will the collaborators be? How are we going to crack open another way of doing it? How do we move? What will the environment and music be? Who is this for?—and then show diligence and bravery every day in the studio. There are a lot of people who think, "We know what Bill does." How do you get them to think again?

You've said that doubt "burns like fire" in you. How do you overcome it?

I'm depressive. Six or seven years ago I didn't know if I had the stuff to stay alive. This was after a MacArthur grant and two Tony awards, but still everything was like sawdust. So what do you do? One way through is to keep working. Going to therapy is another. So is looking into the eyes of the people who love you. For me, that's the man I married,

Bjorn [Amelan], as well as my associate artistic director, Janet Wong, who whenever I'm despairing, looks at me in a way that says, "Why are you indulging in this? It's not who you are. We have work to do." So doubt is fought by love and commitment to something bigger. And I take it to be sacred doubt. I come from potato pickers, poor people. Why am I not a doctor or a stockbroker? Because when I discovered the magic of arms and legs and time and space and an audience being moved by someone going from there to there, suddenly that was my religion.

Many of your team members have been with you for years. How do you inspire such loyalty?

Considering how volatile and confrontational I can be, it's a wonder that there's this corps of talented people around me. Some of it is luck, but I think it's also showing vulnerability. You've got to know how to say, "I made a mistake." People also forgive a lot when they know what you love. They might say, "This guy I work with is crazy. But there's something about him. He's so real." To stay around for almost 40 years in this field, you've got to have something past bravery. People recognize there's something authentic here, that I'm coming from someplace deeply committed and not cynical.

How would you describe your leadership style?

I'm not a George Balanchine who walks in and says, "Now, dear, you do this, you do this," and, boom, it's genius. I come in and say, "I like this movement at the beginning. Let's work awhile and see what you do with variations on that." You've got to have people you trust. With Janet, sometimes I just say, "Well, you know what has to be done. I'm dreaming about what I'm going to do tomorrow, but this is not finished, so you're going to do it, then I'll respectfully acknowledge and critique your work." When one has a problem—this comes from a social therapist named Freda Rosen—a good leader knows how to ask the right questions, listen carefully, and organize the answers the team gives back. On my good days, I relax and think, "You don't have to have all the answers or win this argument. What's the best idea on the table?" One thing about being an artist: The ego is ferocious. It's my company, my name. That's true, but it's not going to get done without these people. So I lead by throwing out: "How can we do this?" And when the time is right, I give that passionate embrace, that "Come on!" that "Free at last!" that "Let's move!" The group doesn't need it every day. But at times they've got to feel like your heart is on the line.

When does your tough side come out?

Sometimes I get frustrated. But No Drama Obama has been a lesson to many people of my description. When you are a black man in a milieu that is primarily white, you've got to be really careful. You cannot afford to be written off as brutal, because the world wants to make you that anyway. So, you've got to learn how to be cool. When the demons come howling out, I suffer. But then I say, "That meltdown yesterday had less to do with you than with me. I felt inadequate." They say, "You felt inadequate?" and come a little closer, and when they're close, I ask, "What do you think we should do next?"

With Janet and me together, we have a mom and pop. If I'm a terrible daddy—a fire-breathing dragon—they still have a female presence who is gentle but tough as nails, always on point, knows exactly what has to be done. It's a healthy, wholesome place to work, and you will leave knowing more than when you came in.

How do you find talent?

In a dance audition, you might have 450 women, 125 men looking for two parts. Which one in that cattle call can you not stop looking at? Not because they're cute or even the best in the room but because you feel like they have a hunger for the material they've been given to do. They're voracious, and they show you something in the work. I learned from masters of karate: They look for the freshest minds. You need the seasoned ones, too. But sometimes the idea from the new person, who you'd expect to just shut up, is the one that's gold. If you're asking about other kinds of talent, like an executive director, the answer is sometimes you have to make them, to find a bright person early in their career and give them a challenge.

What advice do you give people who aspire to lead an arts organization?

How are you with raising money? It seems like a crass question, but it's true. To make this model—a company that wants to support the experimental; a research and performance facility with 184 seats—viable, you've got to be beating the bushes. In the visual arts world, they can sell a painting, a sculpture, an installation piece, but with dance, what's the thing a rich person gets? You've got to find a way to connect with their sense of adventure and the notion of art-making as a participation in the world of ideas.

You choreographed two very successful Broadway shows. What were the benefits and challenges of joining that mainstream?

There was a time when I would have been embarrassed to say that I made a Broadway show. But with Spring Awakening, the director Michael Mayer said, "I've seen your work, and I think your aesthetic would really lend itself to this piece I'm making." So he was speaking my language. I thought, "I'll give a little time to it. If it doesn't work I'll walk away." Then, of course, you get invested. With *Fela!,* the producer Stephen Hendel thought Broadway needed this new music and wanted a director that didn't come from that world. He believed in me and indulged me with five weeks of previews. So I was taken care of. I'm working on another show right now with a very experienced producer, who said, "We've got to work together." Broadway's a very conservative place, but I hold out hope that I can still contribute—and maybe it will be the cash cow that helps me retire.

Do you think about retirement and who might eventually succeed you?

It's hard when your name's on it, isn't it? Janet Wong is the first associate artistic director. Does she want to keep this thing? I don't know, but I think she loves it. One

thing we're doing with New York Live Arts is figuring out how to use the Bill T. Jones brand—the vision, the practice, the dream, the legacy. It's the foundation, not the end.

What have been your biggest career turning points?

Going from being a young soloist to working with Arnie and having that relationship mature in public. Then Arnie, when he was dying, he said to me, "Why don't you just let the company go and do your solo thing?" and I decided, "No, this is our child, so I will do what I have to do and find the collaborators to keep it going."

How do you deal with grief?

Identify the qualities in the person that you lost and cultivate them in yourself; that way, you keep them alive. Also Janet coming into the company. She and I met at a gala. I was ranting about how hard this business is, how people don't have faith, and she came up to me and quietly said, "I have faith." That was 23 years ago. She meant it. Oh, and my retiring from performances—deciding that I was no longer going to be in my sweat clothes in the studio. The last full-evening solo work that I did was at the Louvre, in Paris. It was a very special thing. But I had knee and back problems, and I decided to stop dancing. Of course, I still dance when I'm very happy or moved—sometimes in the living room, when guests are over, or at the end of a run by the company that's had a special energy. In fact, I'm performing my first solo commission in eight years onstage this season. It's an interesting problem to make it physically low-impact but with deep feeling.

A version of this article appeared in the November 2015 issue (p.156) of *Harvard Business Review*.

John Kander, Bill T. Jones, BAM & More to Receive 2013 National Medals of Arts

July 22 3:07 PM 2014

by BWW News Desk

President Barack Obama will present the National Medals of Arts in conjunction with the National Humanities Medals on Monday, July 28, 2014, at 3:00 p.m. ET, in an East Room ceremony at the White House. First Lady Michelle Obama will attend. The event will be live streamed at WH.gov/Live.

NEA Chairman Jane Chu said, "Whether its animation or architecture, writing or music, these artists' creativity and passion have made an enormous impact on our nation. I join the President in congratulating them and celebrating the arts in our country."

MEDIA REGISTRATION: This event will be open press, but space is limited. Members of the media who wish to cover the President's remarks must RSVP by 12:00 PM ET on Friday, July 25 to the White House. Press holding White House hard passes must send their name, media outlet, and email to media_affairs@who.eop.gov with the subject line "Medal of Arts and Humanities Medal." Press not holding White House hard passes must include their full legal name (including middle name), date of birth, Social Security number, gender, country of citizenship, and current city and state of residence. All press will enter the White House via the northwest gate. If the White House is able to accommodate your request for credentials, you will receive a confirmation after the deadline to RSVP has passed with further instructions and logistical details.

The official citations for the 2013 National Medal of Arts recipients are:

· Julia Alvarez, novelist, poet, and essayist, for her extraordinary storytelling. In poetry and in prose, Ms. Alvarez explores themes of identity, family, and cultural divides. She illustrates the complexity of navigating two worlds and reveals the human capacity for strength in the face of oppression.

· Brooklyn Academy of Music, presenter, for innovative contributions to the performing and visual arts. For over 150 years, BAM has showcased the works of both established visionaries and emerging artists who take risks and push boundaries.

· Joan Harris, arts patron, for supporting creative expression in Chicago and across our country. Her decades of leadership and generosity have enriched our cultural life and helped countless artists, dancers, singers, and musicians bring their talents to center stage.

· Bill T. Jones, dancer and choreographer, for his contributions as a dancer and choreographer. Renowned for provocative performances that blend an eclectic mix of modern and traditional dance, Mr. Jones creates works that challenge us to confront tough subjects and inspire us to greater heights.

· John Kander, musical theater composer, for his contributions as a composer. For more than half a century, Mr. Kander has enlivened Broadway, television, and film through songs that evoke romanticism and wonder and capture moral dilemmas that persist across generations.
· Jeffrey Katzenberg, director and CEO of DreamWorks, for lighting up our screens and opening our hearts through animation and cinema. Mr. Katzenberg has embraced new technology to develop the art of storytelling and transform the way we experience film.
· Maxine Hong Kingston, writer, for her contributions as a writer. Her novels and non-fiction have examined how the past influences our present, and her voice has strengthened our understanding of Asian American identity, helping shape our national conversation about culture, gender, and race.

· Albert Maysles, documentary filmmaker, for rethinking and remaking documentary film in America. One of the pioneers of direct cinema, he has offered authentic depictions of people and communities across the globe for nearly 60 years. By capturing raw emotions and representations, his work reflects the unfiltered truths of our shared humanity.
· Linda Ronstadt, musician, for her one-of-a-kind voice and her decades of remarkable music. Drawing from a broad range of influences, Ms. Ronstadt defied expectations to conquer American radio waves and help pave the way for generations of women artists.
· Billie Tsien and Tod Williams, architects (receiving individual medals), for their contributions to architecture and arts education. Whether public or private, their deliberate and inspired designs have a profound effect on the lives of those who interact with them, and their teaching and spirit of service have inspired young people to pursue their passions.
· James Turrell, visual artist, recognized for his groundbreaking visual art. Capturing the powers of light and space, Mr. Turrell builds experiences that force us to question reality, challenging our perceptions not only of art, but also of the world around us.

The NEA has podcasts with Julia Alvarez and Maxine Hong Kingston, as well as an interview with Bill T. Jones. Please see additional information on the National Medal of Arts on the NEA website.
The 2013 National Humanities Medals will be presented at the same ceremony. Among the recipients is producer and director Stanley Nelson. The NEA has a podcast with Nelson about his film Freedom Riders.
The National Medal of Arts is the highest award given to artists and arts patrons by the federal government. It is awarded by the President of the United States to individuals or groups who are deserving of special recognition by reason of their outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support, and availability of the arts in the United States.

The National Endowment for the Arts manages the nomination process on behalf of the White House. Each year, the Arts Endowment seeks nominations from individuals and organizations across the country. The National Council on the Arts, the Arts Endowment's presidentially appointed and Senate-confirmed advisory body, reviews the nominations and provides recommendations to the President, who selects the recipients.

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than $5 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. To join the discussion on how art works, visit the NEA at arts.gov.

The Washington Post

2010 Kennedy Center Honors

One wild ride to the mainstream

By Sarah Kaufman
Sunday, December 5, 2010

IN VALLEY COTTAGE, N.Y. It was opening night for the hip-quaking Afrobeat musical "Fela!" at London's National Theatre and, for a few minutes during the feverish encore, the director and choreographer became its impromptu star. Elated by the standing ovation and the thunderous proof that he'd won success before a notoriously staid British public, Bill T. Jones - forever a showman - sprang onstage and danced half-naked with cast members young enough to be his children.

In that moment, one of the dance world's great contrarians was made whole, his contradictions reconciled: the collaborator and the exhibitionist, the orchestrator of spectacles and the soloist, the crowd-pleaser and the loner.

"That audience was up, and that audience was *hot*," Jones recalls. He's curled up on the sofa in his home in this small Rockland County town about an hour outside New York City. It's a comfy picture: He's in his socks; there are stacks of art books and tribal rugs on the floor. Windows offer views of a sloping Japanese-style garden, a fluid terrain of boulders, shrubs and long-legged sculptures by Jones's partner, Bjorn Amelan, the set designer for Jones's modern-dance troupe, the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. His home, in fact, feels like a set design, as if the rustic decor and tranquil landscaping have been composed to frame their owner, to make him "pop."

And he does: Against his quiet surroundings, Jones looks retro-flamboyant in his thick black glasses, navy cardigan and plaid slacks - in blood red. Barry Goldwater meets the drama club.

Those pants assure us there's still some outrageousness in him. After all, we're talking about the dancer known to flash a sequined codpiece under his miniskirt. (That was in "Last Night on Earth," Jones's indelible 1992 solo in which he sang, improvised and mimed vigorous sex acts.) He has courted controversy throughout his 30-some year career, as an outspoken choreographer who has put issues of race and homophobia up front and finds beauty in surprising places ("Last Supper in Uncle Tom's Cabin/The Promised Land" showcased scores of naked Washingtonians). His works have drawn ire as well as praise. "Still/Here," which examined mortality and illness, was the subject of a laudatory Bill Moyers special on PBS; it was also denounced in the New Yorker and picketed by anti-gay activists.

At 58, Jones appears as lean and granite-muscled as ever. The only outward indicator of his age is the whisper of gray on his close-shaven head. But it's rare that this once-electrifying performer dances anymore. He let loose on that night in London two weeks ago "for the young people in the company who look at me as this older man who they work for, and they tremble in front of me - well, maybe they don't tremble, but I can be quite a monster," he says, his voice low and rolling, a mix of Nat King Cole, hot fudge and swallowed growls.

"At that moment I danced for them, I took my *shirt* off, all the things I only do when I feel very safe," Jones continues. "And it was an outpouring of love that just lifted me up. There were ladies pinching my [rear end]. I don't think they've ever had that at the National."

Oh yes, it's safe to say they've never had that at the National, house of Shakespeare - never seen anything like the explosive sensuality and blistering provocations that Jones funneled into "Fela!," plunging audiences into a two-hour dance party, fueled by the energy and loud, funky sound of Nigerian Afrobeat pioneer, polygamist and political activist Fela Anikulapo Kuti. It earned Jones this year's Tony Award for best choreography, to go with 2007's for "Spring Awakening," the rock musical about teen sexual tumult.

Jones's commercial success has been sudden, but not surprising. The depth of yearning he drew out of the young characters in "Spring Awakening" and the fierce pride and audacity that drive "Fela!" have their roots in the more than 100 works he has created for the dance company he founded in 1982 with his late partner Zane. From its beginnings, the troupe was diverse - Jones is black, and Zane, who died of complications from AIDS in 1988, was white. Inclusivity was an authentic quality for two gay men who were open to just about anything and anyone - one of their dancers weighed about 300 pounds. Jones's works show us the radiant beauty of the marginalized.

Combining dance, theater, text and multimedia, they look like none other: Consider the loopy vaudeville romp "A Quarreling Pair," based on a puppet play by Jane Bowles, and the wide-ranging meditation on Abraham Lincoln, "Fondly Do We Hope . . . Fervently Do We Pray," coming to the Kennedy Center Feb. 24-25.

But you can also view Jones as a misfit, a polarizing gadfly-and since when does the establishment celebrate gadflies? This moment-hallelujah! - feels like some kind of cultural shift, a reversal of the culture wars.

Jones views the Kennedy Center Honors - which places him alongside mass-market entertainers Oprah Winfrey, Paul McCartney, Merle Haggard and Jerry Herman- with some amusement. "It must be for my formalism, right?" he says, eyebrows spiking wickedly.

He'll claim it for individualists everywhere. In pursuing an idiosyncratic path in a white middle-class art form, Jones has often been a loner. In his long career as a choreographer of the avant garde, he has never shied from weaving in the most intimate aspects of his personal story.

It was the deeply personal quality of his art, in fact, that led to him to the spotlight on Broadway and in London's National Theatre. Jones's understanding of "the role of art in society, art in politics, and being a black man in society" made him perfect for "Fela!," says producer Stephen Hendel, who landed Jones after seeing his company perform with a wild garage band. "Bill had the wiring to tell the story in a way that would be truthful, through movement . . . to bring out the force of the music."

Stepping out

The wiring was hard won. Born in Florida, Jones was the tenth of 12 children raised by migrant farmworkers. Earliest memory: a "phosphorescent-green snake" winding its way down a tree toward him as his sisters fixed him breakfast somewhere in South Carolina. Natural beauty and communal labor formed him. So did realities of race and class. His father, who could command the attention of any barroom, would physically transform himself when he encountered white men, avoiding eye contact and muttering "yes suh."

Jones mimes the posture, then lifts his head. "I'll be damned if I'll ever drop my eyes to anyone," he says evenly.

In 1970 he entered the SUNY Binghamton as a sprinter, but he left a dancer, having fallen in love with Zane and with dance. Eventually the pair moved to Manhattan, where they fell in with the austere experimental wing of modern dance. To do anything "popular" was to sell out.

But Jones, unlike most of his downtown colleagues, was too extroverted, too much of a people person to be entirely indifferent to his audience. Particularly in his own uninhibited and overtly sensuous dancing, he enjoyed playing to the public, as much as he might push into uncomfortable territory.

Back in the 1980s, he says, "Arnie and I were saying what was truly transgressive was to take our values intact into the mainstream." They kissed during curtain calls. One memorable evening in the early 1990s at the Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater, the company's male dancers gyrated stark naked at the footlights, forming a chorus line of merry jiggling.

He can also raise eyebrows off the stage. In 2000, Jones walked away from a lucrative engagement at the Spoleto Festival USA to join the NAACP's protest of the Confederate flag at the Charleston, S.C., statehouse. Jones blasted the state's "troubling acquiescence to an historic symbol with brutal associations hurtful to many."

Jones "speaks out more than any other choreographer," says Leah Cox, a longtime company member. "I think it's part of what has made him somewhat of an outsider and a misfit. Much as he might wish it otherwise . . . he makes people a little bit on edge, because they know he's going to push and he's not going to remain quiet if he finds something suspicious."

He has at times frustrated the core of the dance world. In 1994, in an infamous six-page diatribe in the New Yorker, dance critic Arlene Croce proclaimed her refusal to see "Still/Here" because it was, as she termed it, "victim art . . . deadly in its power over the human conscience."

"Still/Here," which included videotaped interviews with the terminally ill, was an audience success, and roundly hailed by critics. But Croce's piece felt like "almost soul death," says Jones. It was also bewildering: "The thing that really unites all mankind is the fact that we're born, we grow and then we die. That's age-old. Shakespeare talked about that, and Euripides. So how did that turn into identity politics?"

Broadway has brought him a whole new public. First lady Michelle Obama attended "Fela!" in New York last month. In January, the National Theatre will beam live broadcasts of "Fela!" around the world; Washington's Sidney Harman Hall will screen it Jan. 17

Meanwhile, Jones is breaking new ground in the dance world by merging his company with New York's Dance Theater Workshop (DTW) a presenting organization - meaning it hosts performances and covers some of the artists' costs - that owns its own building in Chelsea. Jones's company will pay off most of DTW's $3 million debt.

The new nonprofit that the two organizations will form, pending approval in January by the New York State attorney general, will be called New York Live Arts. Jones's company, which like most dance troupes has had to rely on rented rehearsal space, will be headquartered in the building. It will perform small-scale works in the 200-seat theater every other year, and Jones will also serve as executive artistic director of the new entity, which will continue to present work, with his input.

"I want to feel the energy I felt at the National Theatre," says Jones. "They have their 'Hamlets' and obscure Scottish plays but there's also room for puppets and live music and lots of things." The new organization has "got to understand the world is changing and we can't sit by smugly and feel superior to pop culture. We have to go in there and participate."

His idea reflects a bit of a quarrel he has with the modern dance world.

"Modern dance," Jones says, drawing the words out with flourish, "it has made me what I am today." He chuckles aridly, gazes out at the garden.

"I've had an on-again, off-again love affair with it over the years," he says of the dance field. "Part of it is, I no longer want to be in the cool club, thumbing my nose at the bourgeoisie."

He has tired of postmodern aloofness. Broadway "is where the edge was, where the power was, for me, and where the satisfaction was.

"Now, you pay for that satisfaction," he continues. Especially galling: glad-handing for publicity with those who know nothing of his dance company.

"It's, 'Now you've *arrived* because you won a Tony.' When that assumption is in the air, wait a minute, hold it, whoa, whoa, whoa." With a sweep of his arm, Jones holds off an imaginary entertainment press. "I come from a world that was taught that Broadway was actually the death of creativity."

He pauses, considers the tea Amelan has discreetly set before him. "But then it sounds like I'm biting the new hand that's being offered to me."

And by all appearances, that hand is wide open. Jones is in discussions about directing and choreographing another Broadway project, planned for 2013. He'll only divulge that it's based on a movie from the 1970s with soundtrack by an African American. "It's going to raise a lot of eyebrows," he says.

It's bound to. Busting us out of our comfort zones is his specialty. And heck, in this new stage of his artistic life, he's even challenging his own assumptions.

"When I first started out, it was, 'if it's for a lot of people it can't be good,' " says Jones. "I'm in another place now. I'm living in parallel universes."

Bill T. Jones Receives 2014 Doris Duke Artist Award

April 25th 2014 -

Choreographer, dancer, theatre director and writer **Bill T. Jones** has been honoured with the 2014 Doris Duke Artist Award. The awards programme, founded in 2011, by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation in partnership with Creative Capital, is designed to "empower, invest in and celebrate artists," within the fields of contemporary dance, theatre, jazz and related interdisciplinary work, via flexible financial support

The Doris Duke Artist Award celebrates those who have "proven their artistic vitality and commitment to their field". The US$225,000 grant, over a three to five year period, is "a deeper investment in the potential of dedicated artists, empowering them through the freedom of unrestricted support while celebrating past achievement." In addition, Mr Jones will have access to financial and legal counselling and additional promotional and operational services.

Bill T. Jones has created over 140 works including 2012's *Story/Time*, a multidisciplinary programme featuring Mr Jones' narration of his short stories illustrated by music and dance; and 2013's *A Rite*, a collaboration with Anne Bogart, celebrating Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* through the mediums of dance and theatre. He is currently developing his next work, inspired by the writings of W.G. Sebald, set to premiere in 2015.

Since 2010, he has served as Executive Artistic Director of New York Live Arts (formed by the merger of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company and Dance Theater Workshop). One of the most honoured and awarded choreographers today, Mr Jones is a two-time Tony Award® winner for Best Choreography (*Spring Awakening* – 2007; *FELA!* – 2010) and the recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors (2010), the Eileen Harris Norton Fellowship (2007), The Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize (2003) and the MacArthur "Genius" Award (1994).

Content in quotation marks from the Doris Duke Artist Awards press release

Photo Credit: Christina Lane