

Studio Residency: Okwui Okpokwasili

Artist and collaborator bios

Directed by Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born

Production manager: Michaelangelo DeSerio

Collaborators: Bernice Brooks, mayfield brooks, Brittany Engel-Adams, McKenzie Frye, Audrey Hailes, Will Johnson, NIC kay, Samita Sinha, Stacy Lynn Smith, AJ Wilmore

Okwui Okpokwasili is a Brooklyn-based performer, choreographer, and writer who creates multidisciplinary performance pieces. The child of immigrants from Nigeria, Okpokwasili was born and raised in the Bronx, and the histories of these places and the girls and women who inhabit them feature prominently in much of her work, including *Bronx Gothic*, *Bronx Gothic: The Oval*, *Poor People's TV Room*, *Poor People's TV Room Solo*, and *Adaku's Revolt*, among others. Recent works include installations at the New Museum, the Hammer Museum in LA, Kunsthall Trondheim in Norway, and commissions at the Highline, Danspace Project, and Jacob's Pillow. She has worked with many artists and film and theater directors, including Carrie Mae Weems, Ralph Lemon, and Arthur Jafa, and is the recipient of numerous residencies and awards. She will be the inaugural artist in the Kravis Studio Residency program at MoMA.

Peter Born works as a director, composer, and designer of performance and installation work, most recently in collaboration with Okwui Okpokwasili on their installation *Poor People's TV Room (SOLO)* at the New Museum. Other collaborations with Okpokwasili include *Sitting on a Man's Head*, *Adaku's Revolt*, *At the Anterior Edge*, *Poor People's TV Room*, *when I return, who will receive me*, *Bronx Gothic: The Oval*, *Bronx Gothic*, and *pent up: a revenge dance*. Their work with Okpokwasili has also appeared in the Berlin Biennale and at the Tate. Four of Born's collaborations have garnered New York Dance Performance "Bessie" Awards.

Michaelangelo DeSerio is an artist, technician, and adventurer from Brooklyn and based in Malmö, Sweden, and New York City. DeSerio works predominantly in experimental theater and dance, with some commercial projects to pay the bills. He has been working with Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born for several years, and is excited and honored to be part of this new production.

Bernice Brooks is a drummer, producer, and teaching artist who brings passion, creativity, and inspiration to drumming. As a performer and musician, Bernice has shared the stage with the likes of Talent Mac, Tito Puente, Gregory Hines, Patti Labelle, and numerous jazz and R&B greats. She has presented at various national and internationally renowned venues such as the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and Radio City Music Hall, among others.

mayfield brooks is a movement-based performance artist, vocalist, urban farmer, writer, and wanderer. brooks teaches and performs practices that arise from Improvising While Black (IWB), their interdisciplinary dance methodology, which explores disorientation, dissent, ancestral healing, and ecology. brooks will be a 2022–23 Hodder Fellow at Princeton University.

Brittany Engel-Adams is an artist working at the intersection of dance and technology. Her work is typically live, and uses online data and software to look at modern civilization from a synthesis of cultural, social, economic, and environmental perspectives, as a way to enhance the human condition, and the condition of our planet for future generations to come. Engel-Adams's work has been presented at, among others, the Guggenheim Museum and Symphony Space, and appeared in *Movement Research Performance Journal* No. 55. Engel-Adams teaches modern dance and choreography at Rutgers University and dances for Yvonne Rainer.

McKenzie Frye is a multidisciplinary performing artist, songwriter, and choreographer from Detroit, Michigan. She is a Howard University graduate with a BFA in musical theater. Frye's Broadway credits include *for colored girls who have considered suicide / when the rainbow is enuf*. Her off-Broadway, regional, film, and TV credits include *Syncing Ink*, *Wig Out!*, *River Deep*, *wishing...*, *The Stronger*, *My Brother*, and *Law & Order*, among other productions.

Audrey Elaine Hailes (she/hers/we) is a dance-theater artist based up and down the Eastern Seaboard. She is associate artistic director of MBDance, and has had the privilege of performative and collaborative relationships with Paloma McGregor, Ebony Golden, the Dance Cartel, Nina Angela Mercer, and Okwui Okpokwasili, among others. Her own choreography has been commissioned by Gibney Dance, Dance Theatre Etc., Movement Research, BAAD!, and New York Live Arts. She served as assistant choreographer for Atlantic Theatre Co. and is also movement director and co-video editor for the NYU Abu Dhabi *Reality Show*. She is always grateful to be able to tell stories that honor ancestors and reflect the bright Black future.

Will Johnson is an audio artist from the Bronx. His work centers on Blackness—the material and immaterial conditions of inner/outer space that shape sound into movement and historical record. He holds a BA in interdisciplinary studies from NYU-Gallatin and an MA in multimedia composition from Brown University. He is the recipient of the Jerome Foundation Fellowship for Sound Art/Composition and the McKnight Foundation Fellowship for Musicians. His commercial work includes licensed sound and original composition for Acura, GAP, Beats Electronics, and HBO, and vocal contributions to the 2016 Grammy-winning Best Electronic Album *Skin*. His live performances have been commissioned by Lincoln Center, the Kitchen, 92Y and Mass MoCA. Recent collaborative work includes *Meta-*

Simulacrum, an immersive audiovisual performance co-presented by the Walker Arts Center and Cincinnati Symphony. His sound and speaker installation work was featured in artist Hebru Brantley's *Nevermore Park* in 2019–20. Johnson is currently a research associate for VIAD-University of Johannesburg and a PhD candidate in music composition at Brown University.

NIC Kay is an interdisciplinary artist, performer, and conceptual choreographer from the Bronx who works with movement to explore relationality and yearning. They employ choreography to excavate relationships between spaces, bodies, and objects in order to shift meaning and change perceptions of place. Kay works site-specifically, informed by the architecture and the inner workings of performance spaces—theaters, galleries, nightclubs, sidewalks, and the Internet—to create moments of glitch, interruption, or pause. In the course of their practice, Kay has made durational performances, evening-length dances, experimental theater, performances for the Internet, an artist's book, sonic interventions, installations, and sculptures. Kay was a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award in 2020. They published their first book, *Cotton Dreams*, in 2020

Artist and composer **Samita Sinha** creates multidisciplinary performance works that investigate origins of voice. She synthesizes Indian vocal traditions and embodied practices to create a decolonized, bodily, multivalent language of vibration and transformation.

Stacy Lynn Smith is a neurodivergent, mixed-race/Black performance artist, choreographer, director, and Green Circle Keeper at Hidden Water (by and for those affected by CSA). Psychic Wormhole (their research platform) reckons with the devastations of trauma and its relationship to memory and the body, ultimately centering the body as memory-keeper and radical creator.

AJ Wilmore is a Philly native, intra-disciplinary artist working with sound, voice, and movement. She hopes to question language and propose foolishness while contending with identity and visibility. AJ studied at the University of the Arts (UArts) with the guidance of Donna Faye Burchfield. Her adventures in pursuit of a BFA in dance led her to perform at Camping dance and performance festivals in Paris and Lyon, France. She has also worked on two different occasions with Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born. The first was for their premiere work, *Adaku's Revolt*, at Abrons Art Center for the Tilt Kids Festival by the French Institute Alliance Française (FIAF), followed by *Sitting on a Man's Head* for the PLATFORM 2020 Utterances from the Chorus at Danspace Project. Recently, she performed a solo in-process for Leah Stein Dance Company's Studio Works, called *Untitled (434)*. Some other artists she has had the pleasure of working with include Lauren Bakst, Isabel Lewis, Kaneza Schaal, Sidra Bell, and Nia Love. AJ's interests sincerely align with storytelling and activism through performance art. Making love to her fears is the engine driving her creative practice, as her work spans the terrain of investigating the quality, degree, and stakes of her social and sexual life.