

EASTER EGGS: A NARRATIVE CHRONOLOGY

Adrienne Edwards and Thomas J. Lax



1. Ralph Lemon in rehearsal for *How Can You Stay In The House All Day And Not Go Anywhere?*, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, 2010. Photograph by Cameron Wittig

Collaboration is a touchstone for Ralph, who has turned family members into participants and made lifelong artistic affiliations with strangers. As a young girl, Chelsea Lemon Fetzer, the artist's daughter and one of his first collaborators, remembers methodically taking a bite out of dozens of apples used as props in his *Wanda in the Awkward Age*, of 1982. Twenty years later, her video documents of his Living Room Dances—in which Lemon cold called the oldest living descendants of blues musicians, showing up to dance in their living rooms and record their reactions—are fruits of an exercise in supreme observation. Under the auspices of the Ralph Lemon Company, founded in 1985 and dissolved in 1995, and of Cross Performance, Inc., founded in 1995 with the support of Ann Rosenthal and MAPP International Productions, Ralph has worked with movement artists and storytellers across the places he has traveled and then stayed: Minneapolis; New York; Port-au-Prince, Haiti; Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; Accra, Ghana; Nrityagram, India; Nagoya, Japan; Kunming, China; Little Yazoo, Mississippi; and many more. It seemed only fitting that the story of Ralph's work be narrated by those whose words, gestures, and likenesses have helped to make it.

What follows is a roughly chronological, wholly partial account of Ralph's forty years of art making, compiled through in-person, telephone, and email conversations conducted on the occasion of this publication. It is an imitation of Ralph's work, which, as Kathy Halbreich told us, always walks that very fine line between the carefully crafted and the amateur, engaging muscle knowledge so sedimented it looks untaught. His process is like a drug, a spirit, or an erotics that allows his dancers to access movement and submit freely in ways unavailable to those who are fully conscious. Then Ralph siphons the most salient parts of these experiences from the real world (whatever *that is*) and sets them into an artificial one: art.

Ralph's particular alchemy of reality and fantasy mines other people's histories—of dance, of love, of loss—as a way of showing us our own put-on selves, and by some refracted extension, his, too. It is, in this way, a kind of myth making or ethnography. The memories that follow lie somewhere between the warped and the true, holding out information like an Easter egg waiting to be found.

Cynthia Mayeda, 1976

Ralph and I both grew up in Minnesota, and it informs the way I see his work. Ralph founded Mixed Blood Theater, in Minneapolis, with Jack Reuler, whom he had met in college. Reuler has remained the artistic director throughout all of these years. Mixed Blood took Martin Luther King's dream and made it true for the theater. Back then, Ralph was also a member of the Nancy Hauser Dance Company. Hauser was a disciple of Hanya Holm, herself a disciple of Mary Wigman. Hauser was very dramatic. I don't really remember the other men in the company because the work was so female centered. That was Ralph's first serious training.

Meredith Monk, 1978

I met Ralph in August 1978 at Naropa Institute where I was teaching a series of workshops. He told me that he had seen my Minneapolis production of *Quarry: An Opera in 3 Movements* (1976) at the Walker Art Center, the winter before. I was beginning to work on material for what eventually became my film *Ellis Island* (1981). I noticed the clarity and elegance of Ralph's presence and encouraged him to come to New York and work with my group the House. He came in the fall of 1979. I asked him right away to be in the cast of *Recent Ruins* (1979), which I was rehearsing at the time, and which we performed in Milan and Paris. We had many adventures.

Ishmael Houston-Jones, 1982

In 1982, I organized *Parallels*, a series at Danspace Project with black choreographers who weren't coming directly from the Alvin Ailey tradition or what was thought of at the time as "black dance." I used the phrase "beyond the mainstream" to describe working beyond the mainstream of modern dance and of black dance. There were no tappers or ballroom dancers, no Lindy hoppers, for example. The series offered an intentionally narrow view—my own personal view.

I had never heard of Ralph. I contacted him based on Blondell Cummings's recommendation. Ralph presented a piece that included a film and one hundred apples, a

bite taken out of each one, scattered along the floor. Saxophonists lay on stage and moved about. The work was called *Wanda in the Awkward Age*. The beginning featured a duet with Ralph and a female dancer. He came out in this green linen skirt and danced around the apples; this bizarre piece of mixed imagery totally decimated me.

Mary Good, early 1980s

As a dancer, Ralph's work felt passionate yet abstract, unscripted, improvisation based, and intrinsically linked to whatever music Ralph was immersing himself in at the time. His direction evoked a wide range of physical and emotional intensity from his dancers. The movement ranged from long, lanky, lyrical gestures to quick, frenzied, full-body outbursts to moments of complete stillness intently focused on some simple, minute movement of the head, hand, finger, shoelace. It often felt as if he intended to offer his audience a glimpse into the dynamic intimacy between individuals—to show the blurred lines of complacency, complicity, camaraderie, and companionship, and their consequences on the individuals who experience them.

Hetty King, 1985

Ralph and I first met in my last year as a college student. He rented one of the studios a lot of us used down in SoHo. I remember he wanted to know how flexible I was—not just physically, but how I would interact with him. In college I had learned big repertory pieces but hadn't really worked in a partnering context.

We danced for a while, and he invited me to join him that summer at the American Dance Festival. Ralph was transitioning from Minneapolis to New York and didn't have dancers—there was only Veta Goler, from Minneapolis, and me. We made *Forest* with a live goat. I wore this crazy unitard wrapped in spandex straps. It looked like camouflage. I also had a bow. The piece started, the curtains opened, and I was sitting there near a baby goat that was supposed to walk to center stage. Of course the goat went instead to the stage edge to smell the orchestra. I worked with Ralph after that for almost seven years.

Wally Cardona, 1987

Ralph and I met for the first time at Jacob's Pillow Dance in the Berkshires. We were participating in Benjamin Harkavy's ballet project—me as a student, Ralph as a choreographer. I was in my first year at Juilliard. The students were told there would be opportunities to perform at the end of the project in one of three dances. I got into Ralph's piece, *Les noces*. It was performed en pointe. In one scene, I had to run at my partner and hug her to death. Her job was to go limp; my job was to try to keep her up for as long as possible, eventually leaving her on the floor, and walking away. She would stand, and I would run at her. We did this again and again, past exhaustion. Ralph's company later performed a reworked version of *Les noces* that wasn't en pointe.

I graduated in 1989 and immediately started working with Ralph's company full time. Hetty King, Kelly McDonald, Nancy Ohrenstein, Michael Nolan, Ted Marks, and I formed the core group of dancers. The six of us had a healthy, long run. We worked at the Dia Center for the Arts, which became Joyce SoHo. Occasionally, we rehearsed at Eden's Expressway and Pineapple Dance Studios, also in SoHo, but Dia was our long-time home; we worked there daily from two to six in the afternoon, right after Molissa Fenley.

Hetty King, late 1980s

Ralph's process was always very collaborative. Often he asked us to do exercises around group cohesiveness. I don't know if he was just making them up, or if he learned them from somewhere else, but having been a teacher for many years, I now realize that they were theater games, or even psychological games. For example, he would have us watch one another and then relay what we noticed about everyone else's movements. Sometimes we would have to say unpleasant things. Ralph wanted that friction. He wanted to draw us closer even if we didn't want that.

Ralph would make up words. We would call them "Ralphisms." He would ask us to do something using his invented language, and we would say, "Ralph, that's not a word!" Other times we would ask for what we

called "danger pay." He pushed us toward a more and more intense physicality, and it got harder for me, frankly. He was interested in defying gravity for longer and longer periods of time. In *Sleep* (1989), we performed the same repetitive phrase over and over. At the end we would be physically exhausted. He would take us to the wall to see what would happen. He also managed to synthesize movement with his personal narrative without being self-indulgent.

Bebe Miller, 1986

Liz Thompson from Jacob's Pillow introduced me to Ralph, presumably because we were two African Americans in the field of postmodern dance. I don't think we would have worked together otherwise. But abstraction turned out to be our common bond, and we made our first work together, *Tivo* (fig. 2). We initially worked separately. I would develop some phrase or material, and Ralph, independently, would do the same. Then we'd come together. Through improvisation, we found hooks and actions that seemed conversational. For example, if Ralph made a physically strong statement, I would circle him in response. We weren't seeking a common language so much as finding a point, choreographically, where we moved together. The piece ends a little enigmatically. The music stops. We're out of breath. He bites my hair. I pull it back and turn away. The lights go out.

It's surprising now that the piece was as dramatic and domestic as it was. I wore a skirt; I was the female. He wore pants; he was the male. It was tense: the dance included signifiers of what I recognized as being in the realm of the black storytelling traditions, but I don't think we talked about it in those terms. The dance was physical; we banged into each other. I remember, at one point, he just lifted me up and dropped me on my kneecaps. That hurt. But I figured out how to do it, and we kept it. We had this push-pull dynamic that came up subcutaneously; it was not necessarily something we articulated. *Tivo* won a Bessie and was well received.

Ishmael Houston-Jones, 1987

We worked together again on the *Parallels* in Black tour, traveling to Geneva, Paris,



2. Ralph Lemon and Bebe Miller in *Two*, a dance they co-choreographed, at the American Center, Paris, as part of the *Parallels in Black* tour, 1987. Photograph © Geneviève Stephenson/SAIF, Paris/VAGA, New York

and London. In London, we got embroiled in a conversation about funding for black dance. People were saying that what we did was not black dance. Yet we were black, we were dancers, so we called it “black dance.” We also shared lineages in common, whether personal, historical, or artistic. The Londoners’ reaction seemed to have been related to Britain’s colonial histories with Africans, and the privilege of the colonizer to name the activities of the colonized. This was also true in America, but in a different way.

I also remember the critic Elizabeth Zimmer writing that Ralph was black and led an all-white company. Why would a white critic feel the need to describe his company in those terms? It was weird to see this kind of analysis in a review of artistic work.

Wally Cardona, late 1980s

Ralph had a method in place. He made these mini phrases that we called “mother phrases.” We would each take these phrases,

make variations on them, take them apart, do them backward and forward and rearrange them. We were always reworking material. Sometimes these reworkings wouldn’t be used, and other times they would go verbatim into a piece (fig. 3).

Hetty King, late 1980s

In one work, Ralph would veer toward narrative or theatricality, and in the next he would retreat into abstractions like exhaustion and recuperation. He did the same thing when creating a single dance. We would learn one phrase, A, then another, B. After we performed AB, we would repeat it, in retrograde. He wanted to see what would happen. We were his guinea pigs, and our cohesiveness specifically came out of that.

Sam Miller, late 1980s

Liz Thompson was the director of Jacob’s Pillow and a firm supporter of Ralph’s. When I came to the organization as managing

director in 1986, Ralph was the first artist I presented. A friend who was the director of Mattatuck Museum in Waterbury, Connecticut, asked me to organize a performance series on the top floor, and I asked Ralph to be in it. That’s when we first started working together. During those years, I feel like I worked on a new piece of Ralph’s every year. We also did a book with the photographer Philip Trager called *Persephone* (1996) at the end of my time there.

Wally Cardona, 1991

In *Folkdance: Sextet*, there was nothing but six bodies on stage dancing. It premiered at the Joyce Theater, New York, and was a big hit. Certain people began to notice Ralph’s work. He had been accepting a lot of commissions for ballet companies, including the Boston Ballet, the Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, and the Lyon Opera Ballet, which meant he was spending time with people aiming to do different things. From them, Ralph learned and brought back a newfound interest in a certain kind of physical virtuosity. The company began to change. His interest in extremes continued.

Judy Hussie-Taylor, 1991

Certain ideas and movement phrases recur in Ralph’s work. In the 1980s, Marda Kirn (who was my mentor and the founder of the Colorado Dance Festival) saw him perform a duet called *Folkdance* (1988). In 1993, she asked him to perform it again; Ralph said no and offered to make something new. This became *Folkdance*, a solo buck dance. With his hands behind his back, Ralph performed to LaVaughn Robinson, a great tap dancer from Philadelphia who had talked to Ralph about buck dancing on the street. Years later, the buck dance showed up again at the end of *Come home Charley Patton* (2004).

Luciana Achugar, 1992

I first met Ralph at California Institute of the Arts when I was a student. He taught a composition workshop as a visiting artist. His teaching approach felt really open. We spent a lot of time with our eyes closed, not swinging our limbs around, jumping, or running. Instead we practiced a lot of different approaches to improvisation.

Ann Rosenthal, 1995

When Ralph approached me in February or March, he had recently decided to dissolve his dance company. A year before, I had started my own organization called MAPP (MultiArt Projects & Productions). Ralph wanted someone to help him transition into working in a more focused way, project by project. He already had ideas for four projects, each a different art form with a mix of collaborators. These works were deliberately not for the stage.

We were a team: while he was finding new artistic partners, I was finding new organizational partners. I couldn’t go to the usual funders for support because there was nothing to present on the stage. I set up new relationships with collaborating organizations that could get behind this way of working. I also implemented a structure where we would work with people who had expertise in different areas—book keepers, grant writers, publicists—but only as we needed them. This allowed Ralph to let work develop over time without rushing toward a premiere. Ralph has continued to make work in this way ever since.

Cynthia Mayeda, 1995

When Ralph disbanded the company, I don’t remember him making an official announcement. Instead he told us he wasn’t going to make dances for the stage with six dancers anymore. I think if ever you were to ask him—and this is my impression—he’d say he never actually closed the company. It just became something else.

Robin Schatell, 1995

It was radical for an independent choreographer with a successful company to decide not to work in that model anymore. Ralph influenced our understanding of what a choreographer can do; that choreography is not limited just to making dance for dancers on a stage. Part of what motivated him was the perception of funders and critics. He didn’t want his funders to continue saying things like, “Where’s your dance for the stage?” So he helped all of us rethink what dance meant.

Sam Miller, 1995

Ralph was clear about what he wanted to do, and what he would need to do it. Yale Repertory Theatre supported developmental-

stage work. So Cynthia and I introduced him to Stan Wojewodski, Jr., who was Yale Rep's artistic director. Then, Ann Rosenthal stepped in; she helped produce his works for the next twenty years. But of course, his works were very different to think about than to make. We used to joke that we were all part of a pre- and post-trauma unit.

Cynthia Mayeda, 1995

In 1995, the same year he disbanded the company, Ralph did a concert. I'd met him, but we were not friends at that time. It was the tenth anniversary of his company and the Joyce gave him a season, a big coup for any choreographer in New York. With Viola Farber, a legendary Cunningham dancer, he performed a duet called *Threestep (Shipwreck)*. I remember crying and not really understanding why. There was something so stunning about the two of them on stage. They shared a reverence for each other, but more than that, they were really *dancing* together.

Djédjé Djédjé Gervais, 1996

Ralph came to Côte d'Ivoire and saw the company I was working with. We were rehearsing material to Michael Jackson. We knew Ralph was there to look for some performers. He saw the show and chose four people: two dancers, Nai Zou and me, and two drummers. He told me straight: "My work, everyone has not accepted it yet. I came here to work with different ideas. What does it mean to be black? To be African? We're going to do something together." This turned out to be *Geography* (1997).

Nari Ward, 1996

Ralph asked if I would design the sets for a big project. He had seen my work in the 1996 Whitney Biennial. I was really apprehensive about being a set designer because I felt it was so removed from my interests as a sculptor. But he broke it down to me by saying, "I'd like for you to create a world."

Phillip Bither, 1997

When the Walker first supported *Geography* during a residency for Ralph, we quickly discovered that he was planning a three-part trilogy and had already mapped out its conceptual construction. After presenting the

powerful first chapter of the trilogy, we committed to the next two projects, whatever form they would take.

Ralph brought together a remarkable group of artists and creators. Negotiating the coexistence of all these voices was challenging. We hosted a weeklong spoken-word residency with Tracie Morris, bringing together musical and poetic design for the show with the whole company. During the residency there was tension in the group around trust and agency, and there were concerns around who had power in relation to creative acts. Making the work raised questions about the nature of global exchange and collaboration. While many artists wouldn't dare travel a road so full of buried explosives, Ralph has an ability to channel these questions into the work itself, rather than letting them freeze his creative process or lead to intense insecurity.

Joseph V. Melillo, 1997

I met Ralph in the late 1970s when he was a waiter at Miss Ruby's, a restaurant on 8th Avenue in Chelsea. My relationship with him at the time was purely social. I began my artistic tenure at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) in 1983 with the inaugural Next Wave Festival, a contemporary nontraditional performance arts festival. I monitored Ralph's artistic growth in many different performances in and around New York, and, in 1997, BAM presented *Geography* in what was then called the Majestic Theater. We've presented several of his works since.

Ishmael Houston-Jones, 1997

When I first saw *Geography*, I was admittedly critical of it. I felt that postmodernism had won, and Africans had lost. I was confused by the work, by Ralph's intent. The dance was really beautiful, and Nari Ward's set was gorgeous. But I questioned the value of seeing contemporary dancers from Africa. I felt like Ralph was putting a postmodern veneer on them, which might be false or misrepresentative on my part. That was my feeling then.

Trajal Harrell, 1997

Geography connected the legacy of the jangling, sliding, and tossing in Trisha Brown's aesthetic, and her ideas around "release"

technique, right back to African dance. Ailey had signified black modernism, but Ralph, like myself, didn't come from the Ailey school, even as we honored and appreciated that legacy. As children of postmodernism we were more invested in deconstructing and reconstructing notions of "blackness" as both limiting and historically relevant. It's a conundrum that the term "post-black" can only begin to address. *Geography* took us all by surprise because Ralph seemed to be resetting a missing link right in front of our eyes. That Ralph made this link on his own dancing body, and in a community with other dancers, was seminal. In that moment, the acronym "BAM" was superphonic.

Okwui Okpokwasili, 1997

I first saw Ralph perform after he had disbanded his company. I watched him in a dance that I recognized as classical and rigorous, but also something more than that. At the time, I was writing plays. I remember being astonished by the curtain of colored glass bottles; by Ralph's body against other West African bodies, who were at times performing traditional movements and at others moving in ways unknown to me. I was moved especially to see West African dance framed in a concert context instead of, say, in a circle, somewhere outside.

Bebe Miller, 1998

To prepare for *Three*, ten years after *Tivo*, we worked well over a year, on and off. We talked to bell hooks about writing a text. She agreed to meet with us, and then I realized she thought I was Blondell Cummings. She quietly backed out. Ann Rosenthal, of MAPP International Productions, helped us get in touch with Isaac Julien. We wanted him to help with the language and film the work. Isaac helped transform the piece into more of a story. By then we had publicly performed some in-progress improvisations. Then we brought in Cleo Sylvestre, a British actress, who triangulated the relationship, forcing the question, Who's with whom? It was wise to call it *Three*; it really was about three characters with history between them.

Isaac Julien, 1998

I was teaching at New York University when I made *Three*. I was most interested in breaking

down the barriers between various disciplines, in this case, dance, video, film, installation, and photography. The duet was shot entirely at the Cloisters in New York by cinematographer Ellen Kuras. It adopted the sepia tone of Trager's photographs from the book *Persephone*. Cinematically, I was influenced by the work of Maya Deren who created a choreographic vocabulary for the camera. This project was my closest collaboration at that time with a choreographer, and collaborations with dancers were just developing in contemporary art. I edited the film over a couple of years, applying for various grants during this time. It was the first work I showed at the Victoria Miro Gallery in London in 1999, and my first three-screen film installation.

My practice at that time was also deeply indebted to the work of Derek Jarman, where the creative process is documented in the work itself. It also involved a conversation between analog and digital filmmaking technologies, and I wanted to expand on that in the gallery presentation.

Ralph, Bebe, and I were all mediating different disciplines as a way of making space that was not just stage space. My interests and theirs converged, taking the world outside the studio as a space for experimentation.

Cheng-Chieh Yu, 1998

In the late 1990s, Ralph approached me about *Tree* (2000). Ralph's physicality, his ideas about falling and the body at risk, attracted me. Everything in my training is about control. Ralph's work is much more dangerous—you have to survive in the moment.

I watched the casting process. One by one, he brought together performers from India, Taiwan, Japan, and China. He was interested in how environments influence dance culture and how the people who practice certain forms of dance pass it down. The project also emerged from his long years of practicing yoga and Buddhism, and of reading Eastern philosophies.

Ralph was particularly interested in natural disasters—in how people are influenced by damaged environments and the body at risk. He was interested in my native Taiwan, a volatile land where earthquakes and typhoons are common. People have to survive in those environments. The whole

creative process of *Tree* was about crashes—about understanding and misunderstanding, gentle confrontation, and what were sometimes very heated encounters.

David Thomson, 1998

With *Geography*, Ralph ripped down the walls a bit more. I think he had to; the walls were in part his own. But he was willing to die at the walls—in the work, there's a beautiful image of him against one while somebody's throwing stones. The idea of sacrifice became crucial to the process.

In *Tree*, Djédjé runs through a roster of dance types found in West Africa. The performance, though virtuosic, creates a container of Africanness around him. When Ralph jumps on Djédjé, who continues to dance, it's a colonial act, placing postmodern concepts directly on top of traditional, regional ones. But it's also, literally, one human weighing down another who nevertheless continues to move.

There's this beautiful but also dangerous section in *Tree*, where the dancers on stage perform choreographed material, while backstage, on either side, the rest of us tossed rocks across the floor, creating a kind of rumbling or earthquake effect. We tried not to hit the dancers but weren't always successful. This pushed us to negotiate with one another. That act of negotiation is what's really interesting to Ralph.

Cheng-Chieh Yu, 1998

We were workshoping *Tree* with a full cast when Ralph was introduced to Asako Takami, a Japanese dancer living in San Francisco who had practiced Odissi for more than eighteen years.

When Ralph asked Asako to join, the dance already included a number of different movement vocabularies. Asako was fine with the mélange of all these different practices. Then Ralph brought in Manoranjan Pradhan, another trained Odissi dancer. At one point Ralph had one of us doing some modern and postmodern movements while Asako performed traditional Odissi dance. Mano was not at all happy about the mixing of styles. He resisted, claiming his guru wouldn't approve. Madonna had also worked with Odissi dancers, and Mano was reacting to this. He said the Odissi community was

against its disciples going out, engaging in commercial interests, and cashing in. But Ralph, somehow, after several conversations with Mano, convinced him to join the cast. I was surprised. Ralph had a way of honoring Mano. Ralph pushes, but he also shows a lot of respect.

Phillip Bither, 2001

To make *Come home Charley Patton* (2004), Ralph returned to the United States. He applied the same research methodology he had used in Africa and Asia to his own history. He balanced his search for roots in the South by also acting as historian or sociologist, examining with critical distance the region and its history. He then animated the experience with living testimonials, visiting various sites and offering private performance tributes.

During one of the Walker residencies, he and his daughter visited the site of a lynching in Duluth, Minnesota, on a Sunday morning. Chelsea video recorded Ralph laying on the empty street—this sunny, peaceful day in a small city in America, part of its history charred and hateful.

Chelsea Lemon Fetzer, 2001

My dad mentioned the possibility of traveling with him to do research for *Patton* and there was no question in my mind that I would join him. He gave me a job as his videographer. I always had a camera in my hand. When we would fall into conversations with strangers along the way, he'd tell me, "Film this, film this!"

We retraced the Freedom Rides, went down the Delta, performed Living Room Dances in the homes of the descendants of old blues musicians. I would film the people watching him or some empty bleachers or whatever, but never him. We also went to a lot of the civil-rights museums and memorials along the way.

For my dad, research and travel are often the point of his work, more so than the outcome. His work includes the product, what comes before it, and what comes after it.

I had written in a notebook a series of interview questions, and every day I would ask him a question and videotape his answer. The questions were about our family, about him. I made it my own project. We'd share a hotel

room with two little beds. At the end of every day, he'd write or draw. He would tune in. I don't know if it was a kind of meditation or a way of thinking about the day, but he would spend quiet time at the table in whatever cheap motel we were in. He would not want to talk much about what he was writing or drawing. Then at some point he would read to me the things he'd written, and I would almost always say, no, that's not exactly what happened.

We would listen to blues music everywhere we drove; Charley Patton and all of Delta's blues men and women became the soundtrack to all these landscapes. It was a saturation.

Kathy Halbreich, 2001

I desperately wish I had been a fly on the boom box for one of Ralph's Living Room Dances. Ralph pulls up to a house anonymously. He knows that a relative of a famous musician lives there, but the person is otherwise unknown, except by reputation. He knocks on the door and says, "Hi, I'm Ralph Lemon, I'd like to do a dance for you." To knock on somebody's door that you don't know—that's bravery. Or foolishness. You don't know if you're going to get laughed at. But he was finding a kinship artistically and, maybe, racially.

David Thomson, 2002

I don't want to say that the shift in Ralph's work was merely one of content. Partially, it was his age, and the process of working with his daughter, and of going to these places and talking to all of these people. His body was transforming. He was beginning to see mortality in a changed way. His daughter was growing up, becoming a woman, and by working together, their relationship changed his work on another level. When you get to a certain age you realize you hold various histories. You yourself are an accumulation of archival material. Ralph is very much interested in sourcing that material. It's part of translating and recombining ideas from the past. That material is not done yet.

Chelsea Lemon Fetzer, 2002

While my dad and I were shooting Living Room Dances, we came to this juke joint just outside of Yazoo City. The owner of the juke joint, Jimmy Duck Holmes, asked us

if we wanted to meet Walter Carter, who at ninety-five was the oldest living person in the area. My dad was like, "Yeah, sure. Why not?" Jimmy somehow got Walter to come to the juke joint another day.

When they met, my dad listened to a bunch of Walter's stories, and at a certain point asked if Walter remembered any old dances he used to do. Walter showed us the slow drag. He was a beautiful man with these thick, elegant eyelashes. He'd take some shuffling steps, then drag one of his feet; take more shuffling steps, then drag one of his feet. That was his dance. It was love at first sight. From then on, Walter was the muse that my father circled around. He was in excellent condition for his age. He could move.

Each time my dad visited, he'd give Walter these very coded instructions. I'd film as Walter carried them out. The instructions were very odd, like: bang on this, then walk on this, then climb this ladder, and then knit this basketball hoop. Walter would always mess it up. I told my dad that Walter's mistakes were for the better; that his messing up the instructions *was* the film. Releasing control of the situation—throughout the trip, we both had to learn and remind each other to practice this.

Darrell Jones, 2003

Patton contained a section called "Ecstasy." It was three minutes long and highly rigorous. At first I felt that there wasn't a logic to what he was doing; he was just trying to see how far we could push our bodies. I felt angry, and I would direct that anger, not necessarily toward Ralph, but toward what he was pushing us to do. The pain got me through it. I stopped caring about Ralph's logic because performing the sequence felt like a personal goal. Going through that with somebody breeds a certain type of love and admiration but also resentment. It was like what he calls a *koan*—a paradox that, in one's attempt to resolve it, hones the mind. Zen Buddhist masters give them to their pupils in order to understand the world. I came to consider Ralph's instructions to be questions of the universe that I could take on and try to answer for myself.

It was an interesting way to work with him. It didn't feel like there was a hierarchy because he, too, was researching his own body. His presence has been very different

in each of the works I've made with him. With *Patton*, he never demonstrated the movements; he practiced them. It's as if he were asking us to do things so that he could get his ass out there and do them too.

Nari Ward, 2003

For *Patton*, I wanted to use wooden pallets to build the "Attic Space" with a wall and mirror. I thought of the pallets as metaphors for movement and globalization. Ralph was into them as everyday accoutrements. But the stage director said that wooden pallets would weigh too much, and suggested we make imitations out of foam. The foam pallets looked amazing. If you were ten feet away, you could not tell the difference—the fiction was real. From then on, anything, everything seemed possible. Once I realized that I didn't have the burden or luxury of the viewer's body coming close to or touching the material, as in a sculpture, I understood that we could resort to insinuation.

R. Eric Stone, 2003

Patton was cosponsored by Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in Urbana, Illinois, where I was head of scenic design. My job was to figure out how the show would work in all the different venues. The project was expansive: the stage cascaded forward, undulating onto, in front of, over the seats—it broke into the house, deconstructing the boundary between audience and performer.

The "Attic Space" was skeletal and contained a sense of historicism. For instance, Ralph didn't want to use reproduction wallpaper; he wanted real wallpaper from the mid-1940s. Where does one find wallpaper from sixty years ago with the glue intact? But these kinds of details lend authenticity, which is something specific to the vernacular of sculpture in the art world.

Chelsea Lemon Fetzer, 2003

My dad and I organized a series of creative workshops with kids called the Memory Project. We started at this little community center in Yazoo City. We asked the kids to collect their family and community histories and share them through the arts—learn a dance from an elder or make a portrait of an elder or a community member, and so on.

We ended up doing the workshop in several places. Eventually he handed the reins to me, but in Yazoo City we worked together. Each day we would figure out our curriculum. He would be really abstract, because he is abstract, and try to steer the workshop toward his work and interests. Then I would offer insight into how the kids would benefit. What is relevant to them? How can we explain this in a way that matters to them? We tried to find a good balance. He brought the framework and artistry, and I grounded it all.

At the first workshop, there were a lot of kids. Then people started saying, "What are these guys doing? They're weird." Parents started pulling their kids. One day, only one kid showed up. I remember my dad sitting at the table where he was doing his writing and drawing, and he was drinking this Martinelli's apple cider from the bottle like it was whiskey. He was like, "It's a failure. It's awful. This was a terrible day. I just don't know what's going to happen tomorrow." I was cracking up. You can't foresee the outcome of that kind of project; it was beyond our control.

Ann Rosenthal, 2003

In retrospect, the most exciting works were those where I witnessed Ralph shift toward a new way of working. In *Come home Charley Patton*, the final section was an ecstatic dance during which form dissolved. It was challenging for me when I would see it in rehearsal. I was just like, what are you doing? But when I look at it now, I see he was trying to move off the stage and create a form that didn't have a structure. In the next theater piece, *How Can You Stay*, he moved even further from what you would expect to see on the stage. What excited me most was looking to his past work to inform my understanding of the new work. Ralph's work has a through line: process, collaboration, and thinking about new forms.

Edna Carter, 2005

I first met Ralph when he was working with my husband. I fell in love with Ralph. It's like I've known him a lifetime. My husband, he knew how to two-step and all of that. Just make it up as he went along. I can't do nothing else. I'm not a dancer. Ralph would take Walter and his friends all out there outside,

out in the trees and things, in the back of the house, and all that.

Louis Sparre, 2006

We were filming Walter and his wife, Edna, who was in her eighties, and their friends and community building a spaceship out of found objects. Ralph had a vision, and he needed someone to operate a camera. That was me. I kept wanting to make the situations and the people look more cinematic, more romantic. But Ralph was not interested in production value; he really wanted the footage to look natural. He didn't want the cinematography to produce the content because, for him, the art existed in what was happening, in the interactions between people.

Ralph always had a schedule, the whole week planned out. Everything was ordered and organized. That's, like, 50 percent of him. And the other 50 percent was completely open to improvisation and happy accidents. He would give Walter directions, Walter would do something completely different, and Ralph would be ecstatic.

Lloyd Williams, 2006

Ralph and Walter come and talk to me about building a spaceship. I got it built for them and everything. Ralph drew me a little picture showing me how he wanted it and everything. He gave me an idea of what he wanted it to look like. He just told me whatever I did, it'd be fine with him. I found a boat. I got one of them old fishing boats, and I cut it in half, closed up the back end, put all the design on and everything. I put a wheel on. The design's like an airplane. I took the boat, cut it in half, and put a lot of wood lights and stuff on it, and got it looking good. Ralph was real pleased with it when he seen me, real pleased with it. Ralph said he was going to put it in a museum or something. His show came to New Orleans and me and my wife went down there and looked at the spaceship. It looked good to me.

Judy Hussie-Taylor, 2008

I asked Ralph if he would perform some of his memorial dances—the private dances he calls Living Room Dances as well as the lynching-site counter-memorials he made

in the mid-2000s—at Danspace. He didn't answer me for a few weeks. Eventually he said, "It's the one-year anniversary of Asako's passing, and I would like to do something with an invited audience in the church." And I said yes. This became *Untitled*.

Louis Sparre, 2009

Ralph prepared scene lists for *How Can You Stay In The House All Day And Not Go Anywhere?* (fig. 1, see p. 70); he was really academic about it. He sent me references ahead of time for films by André Tarkovsky and Jean-Luc Godard. There were specific scenes he wanted to replicate, and he wanted the camera to mimic the framing. Our work directly referenced those films but with different content: instead of featuring a young couple in Paris, for instance, we focused on an old couple in Mississippi.

I always felt like Little Yazoo was a home for Ralph. I'd meet him at LaGuardia Airport, and he'd be metropolitan artist Ralph. We'd get down to Mississippi, and his accent would change slightly, his body would be more relaxed. He slipped easily into Southern Ralph. Traveling to Little Yazoo seemed for him a mix of going home and arriving on another planet.

Ralph would incorporate anyone who was around. I don't remember him ever excluding anyone. Ralph would find a way to bring in whatever elements were available.

Darrell Jones, 2009

Ralph removed his body from much of the creation processes in *How Can You Stay*. He had personal reasons for this. He was in too much pain—not necessarily physical pain but emotional pain—to be effective at using his body in the ways we were being asked to. He never showed us what to do using his own body, or even talked to us about it; instead he asked us what we needed.

He's not verbose. He'll distill instructions into a sentence that appears simplistic but in fact is quite profound. For example, in *How Can You Stay*, we created a score called "Wall/hole," its intent to reanimate the "Ecstasy" section from the end of *Patton*. The score describes what we're going to do. At one point David Thomson catches Okwui around the waist, and this acts as a catalyst for Okwui's solo exploration of "joy." Ralph

used words like “joy” and “ecstasy,” that for me, as a performer, are very hard to achieve physically. I was always trying to research these motivating ideas through physical form. As dancers, our charge to Ralph was that we needed structure. Ralph realized what he was doing, and that we were going to have strong reactions. He played the edge. He joked through the process. He negotiated all the way down to the bitter end.

Simone Forti, 2010

My first response to seeing *How Can You Stay?* Wild energy. But not just that. A feeling of interest. Later, talking with Ralph in the lobby of REDCAT, I remember genuinely telling him I liked the piece. Bodies and colors of shirts, pants, flailing on stage as on a rectangular page.

Kathy Halbreich, 2011

Ralph performed with Okwui in MoMA's Donald B. and Catherine C. Marron Atrium. He redid *Untitled*, a mourning performance he and Okwui had made for a private audience at Danspace in 2008. Connie Butler, the former Chief Curator in the Department of Drawings, had invited Ralph as part of her exhibition *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*. Connie, a dancer earlier in her career, and her curatorial partner Catherine de Zegher were both interested in performance and conceived the idea of drawing in space.

Unlike at Danspace, the MoMA audience was large and made up mostly of strangers. I remember Ralph telling me that he could feel, for the first time, the breath of his audience. There was no seating and the audience members moved with him, stayed close to him. He described it as Armageddon.

Judy Hussie-Taylor, 2011

When Ralph told me he planned to perform *Untitled* at MoMA, I was surprised. Because the work is a radical, wrenching, public act of private mourning. It's a beautiful piece, but also difficult for him, and for Okwui. I thought he was crazy, and I was nervous when I went to see it.

In the Atrium, unlike at Danspace, I was actually able to see Ralph's form, and that was interesting. Sometimes he would be in

the fourth position, and I was like, “Woah,” because of the presence of form in something that might appear to be formless.

Bebe Miller, 2011

Ralph and Okwui share physical acts. There's a push, an insistence, a violence in their exchange that I felt I also agreed to as a female partner in a duet with Ralph. When you work to create that state, it's important to consider how you both then can take care of it. It's a very particular kind of experience.

Watching the duet with Okwui, I thought she was responding to Ralph in a way that I never did. I was more reactive, whereas she seemed to be resistant. She would come back at him—not in an angry, biting way, but rather calling for more, more, more, more, more.

Maria Hassabi, 2011

As a mentor and friend, Ralph has completely spoiled me. Every time I present my work (even a short work in progress), shortly after I'll receive an email with his thoughts and an invitation for conversation. One thing in particular I remember him telling me: “A performance shouldn't smell like one.”

Ishmael Houston-Jones, 2012

In 2012, thirty years after the first *Parallels*, I organized a series under the same name at Danspace, this time inviting dancers beyond my own constellation of contacts who were troubling the idea of black dance. In 1982, audiences came out of curiosity, because they didn't know who we were or what we were doing. In 2012, people already knew this other dance universe existed. More people of color came. Audiences included more African Americans than in the downtown dance world in the 1980s.

Ralph came to me with an idea for the final piece in the series: *An All Day Event. The End*, a twelve-hour durational piece for twelve artists interacting with a set made by Nari Ward. I immediately embraced the idea, with the caveat that all the primary artists had to be black. Each artist was allowed fifty minutes, with an additional ten minutes overlapping with the subsequent dancer. Ralph had the first hour; I had the last. None of the performances were planned. Most people



3. From left: Wally Cardona and Ralph Lemon pissing on a tree, 1989. Photographer unknown

improvised with the sets and the space, setting it up in different ways. The transitions made for interesting, sometimes awkward, yet always productive moments. The one I most remember occurred when David Thomson replaced Okwui. David was wearing a black latex mask, a white linen dress, and black high heels. Okwui wore a long, dark-colored dress, and she had been singing, vocalizing. When the two of them came together, they looked explosive.

April Matthis, 2012

Ralph asked me to do *An All Day Event*. I wore one of my long, stupid wigs and glasses, and I had a bag full of crap that I just dumped on the floor as soon as I walked on stage. He later stole that for *Scaffold Room* (2014). I started singing Beyoncé's “Party” a cappella and it caught Ralph's attention. Later he talked to me about *Scaffold Room*; he said he was interested in Kathy Acker and Beyoncé and archetypes of femininity and sexuality. I think he was also talking about Moms Mabley back then. The pornographic

as acting out. I was interested but also wary because I find experimental dance, and the explicit nature of some of the material, challenging. I'm really cautious about how my body is presented and used; what's read on it and what it says. I've always been very careful about how much I use, and how I show, my body on stage. At the same time, I took off my pants during the *Parallels* performance. It's always an option, but I want to control that option.

Kathy Halbreich, 2012

The idea for *Some sweet day*, Ralph's performance series at MoMA, followed an ongoing conversation with Bennett Simpson, when he was a curator at the Institute of Contemporary Art, in Boston. Simpson was beginning to work on what would eventually become the exhibition *Blues for Smoke*, which ultimately didn't include the idea he and Ralph had been working on. Jenny Schlenzka, who was Assistant Curator at MoMA at the time, curated *Some sweet day* with Ralph. Ralph

is a remarkable person to have working with an institution because he asks questions that somehow make us all nervous—nervous being a good state of affairs.

Deborah Hay, 2012

When I was shown the Atrium at MoMA as the site for the work I would do there a year later under Ralph's curatorial authorship, immediately I noticed that he was the only person of color in that very white space.

Judy Hussie-Taylor, 2012

Ralph kept calling Some sweet day's organizing question—What is black music?—the Easter egg. So I asked him, "Why the 'Easter egg'?" Why would you hide this question from the audience? What's your curatorial responsibility?" He answered with something like, "It's too easy for people to go there, to think they already understand the performance being about race in a specific way, and then think they know what it is."

Ash Bulayev, 2012

4Walls was a live multimedia dance installation that provided four points of view on one dance, giving new shape to what Ralph calls a "dance with no form," a movement that began in 2003 with short sections originally titled "Ecstasy" and "Wall/hole." As with many of Ralph's projects, *4Walls* emerged from years of artistic inquiry. The work was sited in a giant black cube and addressed the new interest among visual-art institutions in courting and presenting the performing arts, and specifically dance, often within the framework of institutional critique.

Ralph and I decided to combine the premiere with an informal dinner inviting colleagues and peers from both the visual and performing arts to reflect on the institutional, infrastructural, and conceptual implications of collaborations and coproductions between performing-arts institutions and museums in the United States.

Phillip Bither, 2014

Ralph let go of one version of a successful career—the one where he'd make big shows for BAM and other large festivals—and instead created work that was unrepresentable in a performing arts context. *Scaffold Room* emerged

as the idea for the transition. Ralph asked me, "If I can build my own theater and make my own work, what do I need the Walker for? Why should I bother with all of your bureaucracy and rules and all the communication required?" He offered this provocation with great glee and a twinkle in his eye.

Curatorially, *Scaffold Room* was a difficult project—four curators ended up being involved. But it made us think more deeply about performance in an open-platform setting like a gallery. We realized that, for provocative work, we need to build community conversations into the project's development. Does an institution like the Walker have the right to explore questions of the female black body? Does Ralph as a male artist? Those were big questions for us, and for our community. A month and a half before the show opened, I asked Ralph to meet with some of the community's African American and feminist leaders and discuss aspects of the work. For example, why would he include Amy Winehouse in a work about great black artists? These conversations, along with the community and curatorial dialogues emergent throughout the project's run, brought greater understanding and ownership around the project and opened many new, fascinating lines of inquiry.

R. Eric Stone, 2014

Ralph initially contacted me a year after *Patton* with an idea of making a kind of bunk-bed ladder unit. But it wasn't until *Scaffold Room* that he followed through with the idea. Ralph wanted the exposed skeleton of the "Attic Space," but without the historicism of its interior. Once we knew the show would open at the Walker, we thought about the unit in relation to the size of the gallery and its ceiling height. What's the relationship of an object to the space it's in? Thinking about this question as a spectator in an art context provoked more discussion than it would as a spectator in a theater-for-entertainment context. Spectatorship is so fraught in the work, particularly the way it's mixed with surveillance. For example, Ralph created an amazing library of video footage of Okwui exhibiting various emotions—fear, love, laughter, hatred, and so on—that he integrated into the work. The technology exacerbates the feelings and vice versa.

April Matthis, 2014

For *Scaffold Room*, Ralph didn't use the same vocabulary as a theatrical director. He would say things like, "That was good"; or, "Can you be sad?"; or, "Why don't you cry?" But he'd never try to explain what a character was experiencing, or how the audience should feel. His directives were less psychological, more cosmetic. There were questions he could have been asking but wasn't—either because he didn't have the vocabulary, or he just wasn't interested in that stuff. But because I considered these questions, I felt I had an advantage, and it gave me a sense of agency, a sense of power. It was also freeing in that I didn't have to adhere to any particular through line or character development.

Okwui Okpokwasili, 2014

To build the text for *Scaffold Room*, Ralph would read me something that he'd written, and I would try to transcribe it as quickly as possible. Obviously I would get it wrong. Then I would write something from what I'd transcribed, which was two degrees of wrongness. That's the first part of my scaffold. We were reacting to a combination of Kathy Acker and—maybe I'm making an assumption—Ralph's shit.

The work contains a sense of the power and submission, and the deep love that comes with them. Can you open yourself? Can you let someone fill you? How overwhelming is it, and can you come back from it? Ralph projected onto me a part of him that I then projected back onto him. There's a part of him that wants to be filled. It's a weakness, perhaps, in a certain model of masculinity in western culture that makes it the ultimate taboo for a man to release and open like that.

Kathy Halbreich, 2014

Ralph and Okwui have a sadomasochistic relationship. There is something so intense and apocalyptic about the way they push each other, allow each other to be pushed—it's almost brother-and-sisterlike. They call each other out in very profound ways, but they're blood, and they're not going to separate, no matter what he tells her to do. That was what was so beautiful about *Scaffold Room*. At the Walker premiere, Okwui hadn't finished performing when she was supposed to have.

Ralph wanted her to stop. He was sending her time signals. But she was going someplace she wanted to go. He had pushed her to the edge, and she was damn well going to take her time to find her own floor again. That's how they play with each other, and it's great. He gets his performers to move in ways they never imagined moving, visit psychological places they never thought they would visit.

Okwui Okpokwasili, 2014

In *Scaffold Room*, we didn't explode the text the way we would explode movement phrases. At a certain point the text remained what it was. It was sacred. Ralph would take pieces of text, and then we would design movement phrases for them. I would create a phrase, then Ralph would look at it, and then together we'd shape it. We'd explode it, or distill it, or invert it, or reorient it, or perform it backward. The movement phrases always ended up far from where they began.

April Matthis, 2014

We were rehearsing at the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center; it's such a huge space, and we had it all to ourselves. One day, on a break, I started skipping through the space because that's what my twelve-year-old self would have done. Ralph was like, "Let's keep that—the skipping thing." I was just doing it for fun, and I wasn't wearing heels. But in *Scaffold Room*, I had to do it in heels.

One night, a lot of Minneapolis's black women performance makers came out, by invitation, to see the show. Afterward they had a kind of informal powwow in a different space. They were like, "We have to talk about this right now. We have to call a quorum and discuss." They isolated that moment of me skipping. I don't remember perfectly, but it was something about my shadow against the vast white wall. A woman told me it was striking to see a body like mine (I didn't ask her to define that) glorified in a space like the Walker. She didn't use the word "glorified," either, but something to that effect. I got the sense it was powerful for her.

There were several discussions about ownership of the work throughout the process. Yes, Ralph's name is on the wall. His name is on the program. His stamp is on the work. But,

for me, there's little or no conflict—it's Ralph's work because he asked me to take my time to think about these things for a little while.

Kathy Halbreich, 2015

Ralph inspires loyalty. Look at the number of people who have traveled with him a great artistic distance. Because of the intimacy he's bred, we can draw patterns, meaning, and history out of circumstance and movement. Ralph is most generous where cultures overlap; he's interested not in segregation but accumulation.

Right now, he is trying to put together a small group of likeminded souls to boycott dance for a year. He has been wondering whether MoMA could umbrella him, of course. Only Ralph would come up with this idea, which basically asks how we might all reclaim time to think. It's the central question of our moment. We are all inundated and depleted by the constant rush of words, fragments, requests, and questions that take us out of truly creative acts.

Ralph is always on the edge of trying to find that very fine line between something crafted and something amateur—his muscle knowledge is so deep that it looks untaught somehow. This is one of Ralph's real contributions to the idea of deskilling (which is an illusion, like affectlessness). He is searching for what comes before habit; it's almost like he's giving a drug to his dancers to help them find some movement and freedom that you can't find when you're fully conscious. But then he siphons what's most salient from that experience and puts it into an artificial one: art.

Wally Cardona, 2015

Ralph is at his best when he's able to take a particular person, set up a particular situation, and then sit back and watch it play out. I also think it's what brings him the most pleasure. As long as that same person in that same situation continues to be dynamic and fucking struggle in it, have fun with and be confused by it—as long as the person doesn't give up—Ralph is loving it. I can see the smile on his face. It's a kind of fuel for Ralph; it's the motor of his work.

The Collaborators

LUCIANA ACHUGAR is a Brooklyn-based choreographer from Montevideo, Uruguay, and Lemon's former student.

PHILLIP BITHER is the William and Nadine McGuire Director and Senior Curator, Performing Arts, at the Walker Art Center. He has been the organization's senior curator of performing arts since April 1997.

ASH BULAYEV is an independent curator and producer. Previously, he was curator for dance and theater at the Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center, New York.

WALLY CARDONA is a Brooklyn-based choreographer, dancer, and teacher, and the artistic director of the dance company WCV, Inc. He was a member of the Ralph Lemon Company from 1987 to 1995.

EDNA CARTER lives in Benton, Mississippi. She and her late husband Walter collaborated with Lemon on works and exhibitions including *(the efflorescence of) Walter* (2006), *How Can You Stay In The House All Day And Not Go Anywhere?* (2010), *1856 Cessna Road* (2012), and *Scaffold Room* (2014).

CHELSEA LEMON FETZER is a poet and novelist.

SIMONE FORTI is an influential artist and choreographer who has been making work since the 1950s.

DJÉDJÉ DJÉDJÉ GERVAIS is a dancer, choreographer, and teacher of contemporary and traditional West African dance. He was featured in all three parts of Lemon's *Geography Trilogy* (1997–2004) as well as *How Can You Stay In The House All Day And Not Go Anywhere?* (2010).

KATHY HALBREICH is the Associate Director and Laurenz Foundation Curator of The Museum of Modern Art, New York. From 1991 to 2007, she was director of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis.

TRAJAL HARRELL is a dancer and choreographer.

MARIA HASSABI is an artist and choreographer. She is Lemon's former student.

DEBORAH HAY is an Austin-based choreographer who has been making work since the 1960s.

ISHMAEL HOUSTON-JONES is an acclaimed dancer, choreographer, and activist. Jones invited Lemon to participate in his 1982 series *Parallels*, at Danspace Project, as well as its reprise in 2012.

JUDY HUSSIE-TAYLOR has served as executive director of Danspace Project since 2008.

DARRELL JONES is a dancer and choreographer who has performed in Lemon's *Come home Charley Patton* (2004), *How Can You Stay In The House All Day And Not Go Anywhere?* (2010), and *4Walls* (2012).

ISAAC JULIEN is a London-based filmmaker and artist. He directed the film *Three* in collaboration with Lemon and Bebe Miller in 1998.

HETTY KING is a dancer and, from 1985 to 1992, was a member of the Ralph Lemon Company.

APRIL MATTHIS is a New York-based actor, singer, writer, and member of theater group Elevator Repair Service. She has appeared in Lemon's *An All Day Event*, *The End* (2012) and *Scaffold Room* (2014).

CYNTHIA MAYEDA has worked in philanthropy and arts administration for over forty years, most recently as deputy director for institutional advancement at the Brooklyn Museum, New York.

JOSEPH V. MELILLO has been executive producer at the Brooklyn Academy of Music since 1999; he has worked there for over thirty years.

BEBE MILLER, a native New Yorker, is the artistic director of Bebe Miller Company. With Lemon, she choreographed and performed the works *Two* (1986) and *Three* (1999).

SAM MILLER is the founder and director of the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance. Previously, he served as president of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and president and executive director of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

MEREDITH MONK is a composer and artist who has been making work across disciplines since the 1960s. Lemon has worked with her group the House and performed in her works *Recent Ruins* (1979) and *Ellis Island* (1981).

OKWUI OKPOKWASILI is a writer, performer, and choreographer who has appeared in several of Lemon's works, including *Come home Charley Patton* (2004), *Untitled* (2008), *How Can You Stay In The House All Day And Not Go Anywhere?* (2010), and *Scaffold Room* (2014).

ANN ROSENTHAL is the founder and former executive director of MAPP International Productions.

ROBIN SCHATELL is director of public programs for the Madison Square Park Conservancy. From 1992 to 1995, she was managing director of the Ralph Lemon Company.

LOUIS SPARRE is the creative director of Tweed Video and traveled three times with Lemon to film in Mississippi.

R. ERIC STONE is a scenic designer based in Iowa. He developed the design for the "Attic Space" and "Roving Screen" in *Come home Charley Patton* (2004) and *Scaffold Room* (2014).

DAVID THOMSON is a dancer and choreographer who has collaborated with Lemon on works including *Tree* (2000), *Come home Charley Patton* (2004), and *How Can You Stay In The House And Not Go Anywhere?* (2010).

NARI WARD is a sculptor known for his systemically composed installations made from found materials. Ward created the sets and props for *Geography* (1997), *Come home Charley Patton* (2004), and *An All Day Event*, *The End* (2012).

LLOYD WILLIAMS lives in Benton, Mississippi. The spaceship he built has appeared in several of Lemon's works including *How Can You Stay In The House All Day And Not Go Anywhere?* (2010).

CHENG-CHIEHYU is a choreographer and dancer who performed in *Tree* (2000).