



NATIONAL SHOWCASE

OCTOBER 5 & 6, 2024

HARBOURFRONT CENTRE THEATRE, TORONTO

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

dance Immersion's work is centred in Tkaronto.

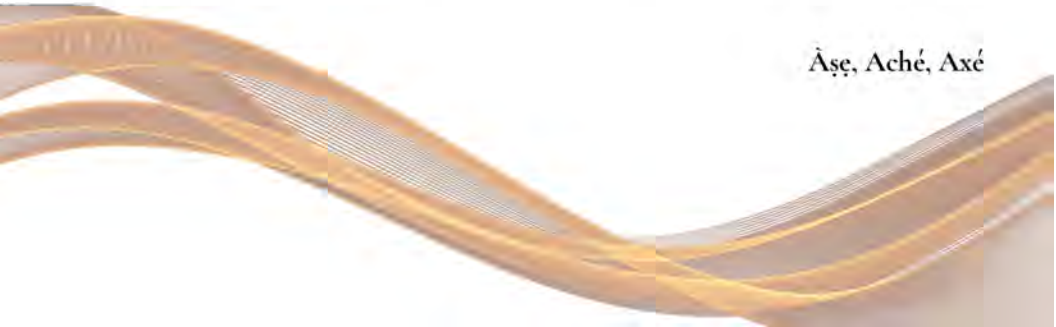
We GIVE THANKS for the many blessings that have enabled us to gather here. We GIVE THANKS to the ancestors for the path they have paved and for the protection and guidance they continue to offer as we journey forward. We GIVE THANKS to one another knowing that we can only do what we do by working together respectfully and peacefully.

We honour and acknowledge that the land we gather on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples.

This includes the many peoples, named and unnamed, who have stewarded this land before our arrival. The territory is the subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibwe and allied nations to peaceably care for and share the resources around the Great Lakes.

We are Treaty Peoples, including those of us who came here as settlers – either in this generation or in generations past – and those of us who came here involuntarily, particularly as a result of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. We are grateful to be able to share this space with so many knowledge-keepers, including the courageous artists with whom *dance* Immersion collaborates every day.

Àṣṣ, Aché, Axé



WELCOME

The *dance* Immersion Showcase Presentation is back!

For the 2024 National Showcase of Canadian Blacks in Dance, we are bringing you the works of artists of different generations from Vancouver, Calgary, Montréal, Ottawa, and Toronto/Tkaronto. Corporeal Imago, Marie-Nëika Obas, Vladimir “7Start” Laureore, Ambrose Tjark, BaKari Lindsay, Esie Mensah, and Lisa La Touche highlight the diversity of interdisciplinary African Diasporic expressions from across the country. **Visit the websites and social channels of the artists listed in this program to learn more about their work.**

Thank you for joining us for this exciting exploration of dance that spans the breadth of contemporary aerial dance, Krump, African street dances, hip hop/contemporary fusion, tap dance, Afrofusion, and contemporary African movement.

dance Immersion's curatorial and programming practice is driven by the rhythmic cultures that continue to be developed around the world by African and African Diasporic artists. We present performance works and educational and mentorship programs that embody the fluidity of the past, present, and future, viewing a connection to cultural traditions as a grounding base from which contemporary expression can take root to fly. Our work is founded in the spiritual, intergenerational nature of learning, sharing, and community. We platform artists with a view of passing on wisdom through art, and our medium is dance. May everyone touched by our work dance to the music of these universal rhythms!

Timea Wharton-Suri



NATIONAL SHOWCASE PROGRAMME

Master of Ceremonies: **Nicole Inica Hamilton**

1. "THROE" (excerpt)

By Corporeal Imago - Vancouver, British Columbia

2. "RETRACED" (excerpt)

By Vladimir "7Starr" Laurore - Laval, Québec

3. "BEHIND THE SCENES" (expanded remount)

By Marie-Neïka Obas - Montréal, Québec

4. "SOOT YOURSELF" (premiere)

By Ambrose Tjark - Ottawa, Ontario / International

INTERMISSION

- 15 minutes -

5. "TRINIDAD & TAP DANCE: AS FOLKLORE" (premiere)

By Lisa La Touche - Calgary, Alberta / New York

6. "MANIFESTATIONS" (remount)

By BaKari I. Lindsay - Toronto, Ontario

7. "ZAYO: Emergence" (excerpt)

By Esie Mensah Creations - Toronto, Ontario

THANK YOU

Produced and Presented by *dance* Immersion

Production Stage Manager/Lighting Designer: **Sharon DiGenova**

Curator & Executive Director: **Timea Wharton-Suri**

Programming & Communications Coordinator: **Jillian Greyson**

Administrative & Engagement Coordinator: **Zahra Badua**

Associate Producer: **Jillia Cato**

Founder/Global Engagement Advisor: **Vivine Scarlett**

Event Moderator: **Nicole Inica Hamilton**

Assistant Stage Manager: **Flávia F. Martin**

Lead Volunteer: **Nikki Chabrol**

Archival Videography: **S-Quire Johnson**

Archival Photography: **Dawit Tibebu**

Technical/Ticketing/Front of House Teams: **Harbourfront Centre**

SHOWCASE FUNDERS AND PARTNERS



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ABOUT *Throe*

From former Cirque du Soleil artists Gabrielle Martin and Jeremiah Hughes, *Throe* features six powerful performers in a world of aerial ropes, as they cling to what remains in the throes of survival. At the dynamic intersection of aerial acrobatics and contemporary dance, it explores interdependence in the aftermath of our future disaster. While *Throe* depicts us at the mercy of our circumstances, it also highlights the resilience and hope in collectivity.

This is an excerpt of a 45-minute work.

Concept: Gabrielle Martin

Co-choreographers: Gabrielle Martin & Jeremiah Hughes

Aerialist-Dancers: Marissa Wong, Brenna Metzmeier, Juan Duarte,
Jeremiah Hughes, Alex Tam, Brianne Chan

Composer: Jo Hirabayashi

Original Lighting Designer: Sophie Tang

Costume Designer: Amy McDougall



ABOUT CORPOREAL IMAGO



Company artistic statement:

Corporeal Imago explores contemporary tragedy through an intersection of aerial acrobatics, contemporary dance and visual theatre. Speaking to the disenchantment of our times, the company's work bridges the apotheosis of circus, and its metaphor for surpassing our human limitations, with the cathartic potential of dance.

Company biography:

Brought together by their shared background in dance and theatre, choreographers Gabrielle Martin and Jeremiah Hughes co-founded Corporeal Imago in 2018. They started collaborating while performing as principal characters with Cirque du Soleil's TORUK - The First Flight. For two artists used to performing circus as entertainment, CI has become a carte blanche to explore the shadow side of our human experience. CI's work has been presented at Montréal Complètement Cirque and La Chapelle Scènes Contemporaines (2019), Assembly Festival, Edinburgh Festival Fringe (UK, 2019), Dancing on the Edge Festival (Vancouver, 2021), Toronto International Dance Festival (2021), The Dance Centre's Global Dance Connections (Vancouver, 2022) and Shadbolt Centre for the Arts (Burnaby, 2023). CI was nominated for a TOTAL THEATRE AWARD in Physical and Visual Theatre (UK, 2019), and won The Dance Centre's Isadora Award for excellence in choreography (2022). The company was also a 2021-22 Artist in Residence of The Dance Centre, and will be returning as Artist in Residence in 2024-25.

Website: www.companyci.com

Socials:

Instagram: www.instagram.com/cie_ci_co

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Cie.Ci.Co



ABOUT *Retraced*

Retraced is an exploration of the essence of Krump. By first immersing us in the most complex and minute components of this style, choreographer 7Starr shares his obsession with the scientific observation of movement, presenting Krump's growth into its most extrapolated form. In dedication to all those who have influenced 7Starr's career through meticulous discussions, Retraced seeks to delve into and decipher the mysteries of body movement in search of absolute objectivity.

It is an invitation into the molecular world of Krump through the particular DNA of 7Starr, co-choreographed by Nindy Banks, performed by Jason Luce. Jon Cleveland's orchestrated light show accompanied by the Mark Magnanimous musical composition creates a unique world that allows one to zoom into the intricacies of the human body.

This is an excerpt of a 28-minute work that includes projections on the body.

Choreography: Vladimir "7Starr" Laureore with Nindy Banks

Performance: Jason "Goof" Luce

Design: Jon Cleveland

Music: Mark Magnanimous



ABOUT "7STARR" LAURORE & JASON "GOOF" LUCE



Choreographer "7Starr" Laurore is a multidisciplinary artist born in Montréal, Quebec. He is recognized as one of the first Canadian Krump artists and ambassadors. Since 2005, he has taught, lectured, choreographed, and mentored at over 200 schools, community centers, and events in Canada. He is the founder and president of the Montréal Krump Alliance and has been a competitor, judge, and guest instructor at some of the most prestigious Krump events in the world. In 2017, he received the Victor Martyn Lynch Staunton Award given by the Canada Council for the arts. In 2018, the Black Theatre Workshop awarded him the Gloria Mitchell-Aleong Award. His one-hour solo performance, *Anima/Darkroom*, which he co-choreographed alongside dance artist Lucy M. May, opened the door for him to perform at Théâtre LaChapelle in Montreal, and to be on the program for the prestigious Festival TransAmérique. He also received the Prix découverte awarded by Les prix de la danse de Montréal for his work on this groundbreaking project. 2020 was also the year in which 7Starr decided to reinvent himself as a Krump music artist by going back to his initial love of rapping, releasing his first solo Krump album, entitled *Diff Diff*.



Performer **Jason Luce**: Born in Montréal, Jason developed a passion for the arts at a young age. Discovering dance and the art of movement allowed him realize the mental, physical, and emotional potential of the human body, as well as his personal and professional potential. He started expressing his passion for dance with the world around him and his motivation was fueled by the notions of sharing, mutual support, innovation, learning, and connecting to history. Over the past 15 years, he has been able to perfect his craft by participation in training sessions and workshops/classes throughout North America, embracing various dance styles. Over the past 10 years, he has specialized in the art of Krump. Moreover, he continues to spread his knowledge, education, and passion through various artistic projects.

Website: www.7starr.com

Socials:

www.instagram.com/7starr_vzn

www.instagram.com/vivelegoof



ABOUT *Behind the Scenes*

Behind the Scenes depicts the challenging realities dancers face daily. Observers unfamiliar with the dance world often think everything looks easy when they see a dancer perform on TV, in films, shows, or battles. It's the artist's responsibility to make it appear effortless. However, the life of a full-time dancer is demanding. Dancers face numerous rejections, endure hours of practice, injuries, and both physical and mental exhaustion. The profession is not always lucrative; many contracts are unpaid, and early in their careers, dancers often accept volunteer work to gain experience. They often face a hierarchy that places them at the bottom, with additional challenges for black artists, such as colorism and quotas, leading to involuntary competition instead of support.

A preliminary version of this piece was presented in October 2023 in Montréal with PrimaDanse, and a revised version was showcased in January 2024. Today's presentation is of an extended version, blending hip-hop and deconstructed contemporary dance styles for a less conventional and more refined performance.

This is an extended remount of the work.

Choreography: Marie-Neïka Obas

Performance: Solène Filion Danis, Marie-Caroline Lemieux, Fredlyne Pierre, Marie-Neïka Obas



ABOUT MARIE-NEÏKA OBAS



Marie-Neïka Obas is from Haïti and was raised in Montréal. She is a versatile artist. Her journey as a performer, choreographer, and dance teacher showcases her dedication and passion for the performing arts.

Her experience in various dance styles has allowed her to develop a diverse array of skills and artistic perspectives. She has had the opportunity to dance alongside local and international artists.

Furthermore, her experiences of traveling abroad and making appearances on local TV programs have contributed to enhancing her visibility and expanding her audience.

She is an ambitious artist, eager to share her passion with others. Her determination to share her art has led to her having a positive impact on the artistic scene and inspiring those around her.

Socials:

Instagram: www.instagram.com/marieneikaobas

YouTube: www.youtube.com/@marieneikaobas92



ABOUT *Soot Yourself*

From Ambrose: “This work draws from my personal experiences and the realities in southern Nigeria, especially Port Harcourt, where rampant oil bunkering has led to an ecological disaster. Soot permeates daily life, symbolizing broader systemic failures. My father’s battle with prostate cancer highlights Nigeria’s broken healthcare system. My sister’s death from sickle cell crisis shortly after childbirth underscores the lack of medical support for genetic conditions. Losing my partner, Love Divine, to COVID-19 in a country with poor healthcare infrastructure further deepens this narrative of suffering and neglect.

Soot Yourself seeks to showcase these struggles through dance and physical art, mimicking Soot’s journey from inception to impact. This project aims to evoke empathy and awareness, using kinetic art, body painting, and contemporary African street dance to highlight the intersection of personal and environmental crises. By doing so, I hope to inspire social change and shed light on these pressing issues.”

This is a premiere of the work.

Choreography & Performance: Ambrose Tjark

Musical Composition & Performance: Karo Jasper



ABOUT AMBROSE TJARK & KARO JASPER



Choreographer/Dancer **Ambrose Tjark** is a Nigerian born dance performer, choreographer, and multi-faceted artist currently residing in Ontario, Canada. He is a founding member of Westsyde Lifestyle, a major propagator of the afro-urban culture in Lagos, Nigeria and is known for his vigorous yet sublime movement that originates from the Nigerian (Naija) street dance styles called "Konto" and "Shaku", fused with afro-diasporic dance influences such as Hip Hop and Afro-Caribbean. Ambrose's afro-fusion style is free movement, lyrical expression, contemporary with afro-oriented representation, and unorthodox sound representation.

As a dance performer and choreographer, Ambrose has been fortunate to work with many popular music artists such as SKEPTA, MAJOR LAZER, and WIZKID over the years. He was featured in the critically acclaimed production, Re:incarnation - produced by Qudus Onikeku (QDance Company - a contemporary dance company in Nigeria), which toured worldwide from 2020 to 2021. As a multi-faceted artist, he also functions as a curator, co-organizer, content creator, and educator for major international afro dance festivals such as GREC festival 2020, OYOFE Festival 2022 and 2023 (Spain), and AFRO BOOM 2023 (Russia). Ambrose is currently on a world tour with Oulouy's "Afrikan Party" produced by Africa Moment based in Barcelona, Spain as a performer and stylist.



Karo Jasper is a self-thought instrumentalist. Raised in the church, Jasper loved how beautiful sounds and melodies came from these instrument objects, which led him to gravitate toward the art as a music producer and songwriter. Jasper's sound soulfully blends RnB with an Afro urban melodic twist. Karo Jasper is currently based in Toronto, exploring new sounds and compositions.

Socials

Instagram:

www.instagram.com/ambrose_tjark

www.instagram.com/karojasper/

YouTube: www.youtube.com/amyflexi



Trinidad & Tap Dance: ^{ABOUT} As folklore

From Lisa La Touche: “This premiere performance piece displays a connection to my personal Trinidadian ancestry in relationship with influences of Tap Dance’s roots from the African Diaspora. This new work is in musical collaboration with world renowned Trinidadian born folkloric and jazz musician/composer, Etienne Charles. Since I made my first trip to Trinidad last year, engaging with Yoruba traditions, connecting with the land, and exchanging with a multigenerational group of steel and drumming rhythm sections, it became immediate for me to understand that it is essential that I honor this folklore and musical influence as it is a part of my core and likely the reason why I was drawn to the iron/steel I carry underneath my feet with my tap shoes. In fact, I have even recently been exposed to other forms of Caribbean masquerade where practitioners wear mango-wood soled shoes with aluminum underneath. That’s when it hit me, just how much Tap Dance has not just been a gift and a calling, but one given through ancestral connection.”

This is a premiere of the work.

Choreography & Performance: Lisa La Touche

Musical Direction & Composition: Etienne Charles

Musical Performance: Jesse Ryan and Andrew Marzotto



ABOUT LISA LA TOUCHE & ETIENNE CHARLES



As a proud Canadian and New Yorker, **Lisa La Touche**'s credits are world renowned. She was an original cast member in Broadway's *Shuffle Along*, choreographed by Savion Glover and Directed by George C. Wolfe, where she received both the Fred Astaire Award and the Actor's Equity Award for Outstanding Broadway Chorus. She is also

currently a multiple Dora Award nominee for her performance, choreography and co-direction (alongside Travis Knights) of the Tap Dance Legacy Concert with *dance* Immersion and Canadian Stage. She is the founder of production company Tap Phonics, and currently an artist in residence at the Louis Armstrong House as well as with the Apollo Education program in Harlem. She teaches at PACE University and Marymount Manhattan College and curates her own programming. Lisa also travels internationally teaching those who want to learn the fundamentals of Tap Dance in connection to Cultural History. Lisa recently premiered her film TRAX encompassing important American and Canadian Black history through Tap Dance. Her proudest achievement is being a mom.



Trinidad-born **Etienne Charles** is a performer, composer and storyteller, who is continuously searching for untold stories and sounds with which to tell them. Highlighting marginalized communities and engaging with them has been his mission, evident with projects such as *Carnival: The Sound of a People Vol. 1*, *San Jose Suite*, *Creole*

Soul, and *Folklore*. His concerts engage, enlighten, educate and enrich audiences with energized multidisciplinary performance utilizing original composition, thematic improvisation, dance, short films and spoken word to create a holistic experience. A firm believer in music and performance as a tool for provoking thought and dialogue, Charles's themes speak to the status quo while drawing parallels to history. To research his compositions, he travels to the regions on which he is focused, meeting with musicians and cultural leaders then observing and participating in rituals to be fully immersed into the cultures that he is studying.

Website: www.lisalatouche.com

Socials:

Instagram: www.instagram.com/lisalatouche

Facebook: www.facebook.com/LLTontaps



ABOUT *Manifestations*

Manifestations is a captivating dance work that delves into the profound depths of personal spirituality. Through an intricate interplay of movement and sound, this performance seeks to make the invisible visible, bringing forth the unknown forces that reside within and around us. Dancers embody the mysterious and intangible, translating these forces into a powerful, expressive language of the body. The choreography, inspired by the subtle energies of the internal and external worlds, weaves a tapestry of emotions and sensations, inviting the audience to witness the ethereal made tangible. Manifestations is a journey into the unseen, where spirituality and corporeality converge, revealing the hidden dimensions of human experience.

This is a remounted presentation.

Choreography & Performance: BaKari I. Lindsay

Understudy Performer: Michael Mortley

Music: Nimon Music - N'dere Adeifa

Costumes: A-Feeree Creations

“Manifestations” was originally commissioned by Dance Ontario



ABOUT BAKARI I. LINDSAY



BaKari Ifasegun Lindsay was born in Trinidad, West Indies and has refined his diverse talents for over 32 years. As a dancer, choreographer, singer, musician, costume designer, and researcher, he has trained at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre and The School of Toronto Dance Theatre. He holds a Craftsman Diploma in Style and Design, a Master's in Dance Ethnology, and a Bachelor's in Education from York University, Canada. His master's thesis developed "A-Feeree - The Physical Language," an innovative method for Africanist movement aesthetics and the choreographic foundation of BaKari's creations and the Afeeree Project.

BaKari co-founded COBA Collective of Black Artists and has performed with the Danny Grossman Dance Company, Jubilation Dance Co, and Artcho Danse Repertoire. He was an original cast member of Disney's The Lion King and was nominated for a Dora Mavor Moore Award for his solo in "Ancestral Calling." His choreographic works include pieces for Les Enfants Dance Company, Entre Deux, The National Dance Company of Trinidad and Tobago, and COBA. He has choreographed dance films such as "Rites," "Ase," and "Orisha Suite," and directed D'bi Young Anitafrika in "Esu Crossing the Middle Passage," which won a Dora Mavor Moore Award.

BaKari has taught at Metropolitan University, York University, Humber College, Lester B. Pearson School for the Performing Arts, and various dance schools and community groups. Currently, he is a vice-principal with the Toronto District School Board, advocating for equity and arts education. His artistic vision seeks to harmonize contemporary artistic practice with traditional cultural values, creating a legacy that bridges past and future.

Website: www.afeeree.com

Socials:

Instagram: www.instagram.com/a_feereeinc

Facebook: www.facebook.com/Afeeree



ABOUT *Zayo: Emergence*

ZAYO: Emergence tells the story of the summoning and preparation of the Ancestors who are about to embark on their quest. The world of ZAYO exists on the ancestral plane where time stands still. The Ancestors are guided by Togbe, The Lead Ancestor who is the overseer for whenever the world produces The Chosen One. She summons a Council of Ancestors who are specifically chosen to test the worthiness of The Chosen One, a soul moving towards their destiny of ancestral ascension. ZAYO invites you to dive deeply into your soul to inspire your Highest Self to come into fruition.

This presentation is an excerpt of a new full-length work set to premiere with *dance Immersion* and *TO Live* in Toronto in early 2026.

Director/Choreographer: Esie Mensah

Cast: Esie Mensah, Kwasi Obeng-Adjei, Monique Pascall, JA.Marie, Eilish **미정** Shin-Culhane

Costume Designer: Arianna Lilith Moodie

Composer + Live Drummer: Yohance Parsons

Outside Eye: Zahra Badua

Dance Dramaturge: John Alleyne



ABOUT ESIE MENSAH CREATIONS



Esie Mensah is an award winning choreographer, director, dancer, movement director, educator, and TEDx speaker. A member of the Canadian Guild of Stage Directors and Choreographers, Mensah was the choreographer of Canada's Got Talent Million Dollar Finale as well as a four-time Dora nominated artist. She has worked with megastars like Rihanna, Howie Mandell, Kenny Ortega, Janelle Monae, Nelly Furtado, Arcade Fire and historic brands like Holt Renfrew, Coca-Cola, TIFF, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto Raptors, and more. In theatre, Mensah has worked as a choreographer/movement director on the Dora award winning production *Three Sisters* (Soulpepper/Obsidian), *Ransacking Troy* (Stratford Festival), *Russian Play, Victory, Farmers' Revolt* (Shaw Festival) and directed *Serving Elizabeth* (Theatre Aquarius). Original creations include *ZAYO*, *The Audition*, *(INNER) Beings*, as well as Dora-nominated production *Shades*, and films *A Revolution of Love* and *TESSEL*. Last year, Robert Binet (Ballet) and Mensah (Afrofusion) were commissioned by Canada's National Ballet School to co-choreograph "The Call" for *Assemblée Internationale*. Lastly, she was the choreographer for Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha: A Musical Reimagining* that was named top 10 in the *New York Times* Best Classical Production of 2023 that recently received 6 Dora nominations.

Website: www.esiemensah.com

Socials:

Instagram: www.instagram.com/esiemensahcreations

Facebook: www.facebook.com/esiemensahtheartist

YouTube: www.youtube.com/@EsieAKACraige



dance
IMMERSION

Support 30 years of excellence in championing dancers and dances of the African Diaspora, and be an integral part of our expanding role as a home for the production of exceptional new Black Canadian dance works.

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