

W O W



M E D I T A T I O N S

BRIANA ASHLEY STUART

HUMANITY

UNITY

COLLECTIVE

DANCE

STEPPING



ABOUT

Moving Meditations is a multidisciplinary creation around healing, an autonomous and collective alchemical process generated through experiences. Through disciplines such as contemporary dance, stepping and singing, the choreographer ***Briana Ashley Stuart*** explores the importance of movement and sound as essential elements of human expression.

Whether it is clapping hands in a surge of enthusiasm or shouting out in pain: sound and movement have always played an important role in the way we connect, relate to each other, express ourselves and understand each other. Over time, these individual forms of expression evolved into codes, which spawned collective forms and rituals within groups, which in turn became personal introspective experiences that put things into perspective.

Moving Meditations reminds us of the infinity of things which connect ourselves and the value of our voices and bodies to channel, feel and release them.



PHASES

OF MOVING MEDITATIONS

1 COVEN

Coven is the opening of the piece which is slowly built up by music and body percussion in order to bring the audience into the universe of the performers. This section is a call or a question patiently waiting for an answer, which is revealed throughout the piece. As this phase builds, movement and sound deconstruct into reconstruction, showing the power of the group, the rituals and sounds we create to find meaning and feel connected to each other.

2 SEVEN STAGES OF GRIEF

Seven Stages of Grief is the first moment accompanied by music. It explores the *non-linear process of healing*, what happens when we lose touch with ourselves and those around us. Through a series of duets and solos characteristic of contemporary dance, we begin to see each dancer as an individual. They face moments of pain, coping, acceptance, depression, denial, shock and anger. The music is perceived as an external weight on the performers, and a distraction that places them out of step with themselves and with others. *They react to the outside world and to others in unpredictable and aggressive ways.*

3 COMEBACK TO ITSELF

This part is a reminder of the essential *rhythms* of all living beings, such as our *breathing* and the *beating of our heart*. The deeply audible breathing of the dancers slowly turns into a trance song that calms the room and brings it back to itself, while inviting the audience to join in.

4 AND IN THE SILENCE... COME JOY

This phase takes place entirely in *silence*. After the tumultuous soundscapes that preceded, we reach a stillness that is broken only by movement. The movement is fluid, yet crisp and precise, and we see the dancers *reconnect* with each other.



THE LIFE

This reconnection emerges as a sense of play by transforming the heavy heartbeat into a robust rhythmic phrase that sounds joyful and moves in an *energetic circle* that leads to a room-flooding sound bath. The voices of the performers cross the space in echoes and canons.

THE CHANGE

In this part, voice and body are used as a *soundscape* to externalize the inner experience of the performers. Through *song, poetry* and *body percussion*, we see the evolution of dancers' connection and support to each other, as we delve into the powerful yet delicate qualities of *percussive movement*.

TOGETHER

The final section, the *resolution*, uses the art form of *Stepping* to create a strong and energetic section of movement and rhythm that shows the *dancers' restored connection and evolution*. This section seeks *to fix what has been broken*. An embrace of ourselves, each other and the knowledge that we are stronger as a *unit* and therefore as *individuals*. The renewed energy allows the piece to end in a raw and *hopeful way*.

INTENTIONS INTENTIONS INTENTIONS


TOWARDS THE PUBLIC

A photograph of three dancers in a performance space. The dancer in the foreground is wearing a red and black outfit, looking down with her eyes closed. The dancer in the middle is wearing a black outfit, looking forward. The dancer in the background is wearing a red outfit, looking up. They are all in a red and black color palette.

The audience feels transported to another world where each dancer personifies an experience. The stage is designed to symbolize **a space of tranquility and possibility**. The 3 performers wear white suits and are supported by the creation of their own rhythm with their bodies or by background music composed by **Mathieu Le Boudec**. I chose an all-white, understated color palette to avoid external references or guesswork as much as possible. **Movement and rhythms are the main brushes we use to paint space**. The light patterns will vary in color and will only be used to highlight certain moments and conduct the public.

ABOUT STEPPING





The Stepping, is an **afro-american form of body percussion** in which the body is used as an **instrument** to create rhythms and sounds with the hands, feet and voice. This form belongs to a wider artistic genre called **Body Music**, but the accent put on the movement and the dancing aspect of stepping distinguish itself from other art form styles.

The Stepping has been created at the beginning of **1900** by students from ancient black universities within organizations called “fraternities” and “sororities”. At that time, racism was institutionalized and Afro-Americans were not authorized to go around with the same schools as white students. Therefore, they created their own schools, universities, cultures and traditions. The Stepping was one of many traditions developed **to promote strength and solidarity between Afro-American people**.

This dance tradition of the **African diaspora** finds its origin in **gumboot dance** from South Africa. Throughout time, the cultural expression of stepping evolved by integrating **hiphop elements, cheerleading and from the army**. Since then, the stepping has transcended the faculty campus and can be seen in films, on television, on concert stages (especially on one of **Beyoncé’s performances at Coachella**) and beyond!

ARTISTIC TEAM



BRIANA ASHLEY STUART

Briana Ashley Stuart is an international **dance artist, pedagogue, choreographer and entrepreneur** from Detroit (Michigan/USA) who currently lives and works in Brussels. After earning two bachelor's degrees in **dance and sociology** from the University of Michigan, she performed and taught as a professional dancer with the contemporary dance company **SJEwing & Dancers ent StepAfrika!**, the only dance company in the world dedicated to the art form of stepping.

Briana started **stepping** at the University of Michigan when she joined the student union **Zeta Phi Beta Sorority**. She then deepened her passion and training at Step Africa! She has seen the incredible impact of this art form on new audiences, children and adults, performing and teaching in the United States, Guadeloupe and at the Guantanamo Naval Base. With **StepAfrika!**, she began to find her own voice within this art form by focusing on movement and creating choreographies in collaboration with choreographers and fellow artists. Since 2017, Briana has lived in Brussels and broadened her experience as a performer by working with **ZIKIT, 4Hoog KinderTheater, Les Brigittes, Dominique Models, BOZAR** and as an artist in residence with **Citylab Pianofabriek**. Her expertise and skills in **Stepping** have been used by Belgian artists and arts organizations for projects such as **Her(e)** by **Dalila Hermans** at NTGent, **Disintegration Culturelle** by **Nadine Baboy** at KVS, **Upside Down Festival** in Ghent, **On the Roof Dance Festival** in Zinnema and more recently with the KVS for the **PUNKT** production created by **Bahar Temiz**. These projects and events called on her Stepping skills as an essential and striking complement. Currently, Briana is the only artist to practice and transmit this art and this form of dance in Belgium.

In addition, Briana has developed her own creations. In September 2020, she presented her first solo: **Becoming Together**, produced by KVS. Solo also presented following **CC De Factorij (Zaventem), Zomerfabriek (Antwerpen), UZ Ziekenhuis with KVS (Jette), Podiumkunsten at Beursschouwburg, Matong'Art Festival (Ixelles)**, as well as **CC Le Jacques Franck during Brussels Body Music Festival**, at **Schouwburg Kortrijk, Le Delta (Namur), CORSO (Antwerpen) and STUK (Leuven)**. All these opportunities are the result of her **collaboration with Citylab Pianofabriek and Camille Philippot from the agency Get Down - Dancers Management**. In 2021, Briana created her first show for young audiences: **Be The Rhythm**; an interactive family show for children aged 7 to 11. This show was performed at the **Kaaitheater (Inside Out festival)** in July 2021, in the streets of Brussels in September 2021 during the "**Fête de Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles**", as well as at the **Atelier 210** in December 2022.

In **2021**, Briana was selected as one of the 6 artists from Brussels for the **WIPCOOP edition of Mestizo Arts Platform** with **Moving Meditations**.

In addition, Briana is currently collaborating with **Somalia Williamson** for **Mother at Het Bos** - Antwerp and **The Golden Stool** by Gorges Ocloo at Toneelhuis - Antwerp.

MANON KANJINGA JANSSEN

Manon Kanjinga Janssen (interpreter) studied with many dancers and choreographers such as Thao Nguyen, Audrey Pascal, Freya Pauwels, Majid Ghadiri, Marijn Celea, Joseph Garbar and Raquel Suarez in dancehall, contemporary dance and house. For her, dance is an artistic practice that invites us to share stories and emotions; an outlet in which her body carries different identities and the stories that go with them. Physical, theatrical, fluid and explosive are some of the terms that describe her. She has created two dance-theater pieces, **We are the dreams of our fathers** (2012) and **WithOutMAN** (2013). She toured with these works at OPeK in Leuven and Arenberg Schouwburg in Antwerp between 2013 and 2015. She was part of the RDKL Crew from 2013 to 2016 and performed for different artists such as **Major Lazer**, **Sean Paul**, **Ward21**. Manon's experience in different forms was a real asset to the work of this **Moving Meditations** creation, especially in the fusion of styles and the emphasis on rhythm.

MARIE-LAURE LESAGE

Marie-Laure Lesage (interpreter) is from Senegal and Belgium. She is a freelance dancer, dance teacher and co-founder and director of **The Dancing Society**, an artist collective based in Brussels. Between Antwerp, Brussels and Paris, she co-choreographed and performed **Bombe d'Amour** and **Beyond** at the Cité Internationale Universitaire in Paris on the stage of the Biermans-Lapostel Foundation. In 2020, she created the **Trio Résonances** and choreography **Phantasticus Suite**, a project selected for the Festival Courants d'Airs 2021, organized by the *Royal Conservatory of Brussels*. The same year, she made dance videos for a project supported and developed by **The Dancing Society: Co · LAB**. In August 2021 she danced at the **Zomer Van Asiat** in Vilvoorde for the event **Asiat klinkt!** and also presented the duo *Symbiosis* with violinist **Cecilia Rezaval**, as well as the work-in-progress **Le Temps Lisse** at the Bruegel Cultural Center as part of performances organized by The Dancing Society. She was also invited to dance the duo *Symbiosis* at *the Parcours d'Artistes de ProfondsART-Limal* in September 2021. Marie-Laure's experience as a performer and choreographer in contemporary dance has also been an asset for the work and the creation process.

MATHIEU LE BOUDEC

Mathieu Le Boudec (musical composer) had studied **classical and jazz music** at the Lier academy. He played in many groups as *Avenue and Cody* and *the Albatross* at festivals and private events before turning himself towards instrumental pieces' writing for piano. He composed music for many dance projects, especially: *Beyond Exercise I*, a duet by *The Dancing Society*, choreographed by **Maya Balam Meyong** et interpreted by **Marie-Laure Lesage** (2018), *Du battements des jours*, a short film by **The Dancing Society** (2022), *Ode à Demain*, a short film from collectif **Cœur à corps** (2022), and *IVOUVÔH*, a short film by **Maya Balam Meyong** and **Itai Zwecker** for the collective **Company XV** (2022). His experience in creating music for dance pieces and his ability to capture the essence of movement and atmosphere in his previous works have been complementary to the choreographic work.



DISTRIBUTION

Artistic director, choreography & interpretation

- *BRIANA ASHLEY STUART*

Dance, interpretation et co-choreography

- *Marie-Laure Lesage*
- *Manon Kanjinga Janssen*

Light creation

- *Michael Janssens*

Sound creation

- *Mathieu Le Boudec*

Costumes creation

- *Jana Roos*

Dramaturgy

- *Aurelie Disasi*
- *Dina Dooremans*

Choreographic gaze

- *Moya Michaels*

Artistic support

- *Berthe Tanwo Njole*
- *Rosslyn Wythes*
- *James Hogan*

Co-production

- *Citylab*
- *KVS*

Support and residences

Citylab Pianofabriek, Detours Festival, Mestizo Arts Platform, De Singel, KVS, Le Flow, Ultima Vez, Batard Festival, De Factorij, KaaiStudios, Destelheide Vormingcentrum

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Communication and diffusion

- *Get Down - Dancers Management*

CONTACT - DIFFUSION

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