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50+ YEARS

ODC Theater Presents 2022 Fall Season

MARJANI FORTÉ-SAUNDERS | 7NMS

Memoirs of a... Unicorn

November 4-6, 2022

Digital Encore: November 18 - December 2, 2022

A Note from Chloë L. Zimberg

Creative Director, ODC Theater

Thank you for joining us for Marjani Forté-Saunders: *Memoirs of a... Unicorn*. I am thrilled to see this collaboration come to fruition as part of ODC Theater's fall season.

Memoirs of a... Unicorn was selected for ODC Theater by amara tabor-smith and Charles Slender-White. It was clear that they wanted this work brought to Bay Area audiences. From my earliest conversations with Marjani and her teammate Nathan Shreeve-Moon, I could feel what they felt - that the work, timing, and location were an alchemic match.

Marjani was last at ODC Theater in 2019 with the cast of d. Sabela grimes' *ELECTROGENOUS*. This presentation marks both a return to the Theater and a homecoming to her Bay Area heritage bringing her own work, poignantly derived from her paternal lineage via the stories of her father. Embarking on this project with Marjani and her team encouraged us to think creatively about ways to deepen our engagement.

I want to extend my gratitude to Julie Phelps and CounterPulse, as well as Elizabeth Gessel, Nia McAllister, The Museum of the African Diaspora and APAP's Arts forward grant program who dove in with the ODC Theater team to support this project, bring Marjani's work to the Bay Area, and offer chances for folks to meet, discuss, eat, and take in the art together.

It has been my absolute pleasure to work on this project. I hope you'll return next week to close the fall season with us for *Piece X Piece* by Rosanna Tavarez/LA DANSA DANSA and *Fever Dreams* by Bianca Cabrera/Blind Tiger Society.

In the meantime, please enjoy *Memoirs of a... Unicorn*.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chloë L. Zimberg', with a large, stylized loop at the end.

Chloë L. Zimberg
Creative Director, ODC Theater

About ODC Theater

ODC Theater exists to empower and develop innovative artists. It participates in the creation of new works through commissioning, presenting, mentorship and space access; it develops informed, engaged and committed audiences; and advocates for the performing arts as an essential component to the economic and cultural development of our community. This 170-seat venue is the site of over 150 performances a year involving nearly 1,000 local, regional, national and international artists.

Since 1976, ODC Theater has been the mobilizing force behind countless San Francisco artists and the foothold for national and international touring artists seeking debut in the Bay Area. The Theater, founded by **Brenda Way** has earned its place as a cultural incubator by dedicating itself to creative change-makers, those leaders who give the Bay Area its unmistakable definition and flair. Nationally known artists Spaulding Gray, Diamanda Galas, Bill T. Jones, Eiko & Koma, Ronald K. Brown/ EVIDENCE, Karole Armitage, Sarah Michelson, Brian Brooks and John Heginbotham are among those whose first San Francisco appearance occurred at ODC Theater. ODC Theater is currently under the Creative Direction of Chloë L. Zimberg.

ODC Theater is part of a two-building campus dedicated to supporting every stage of the artistic lifecycle—conceptualization, creation, and performance. This includes our flagship company, ODC/ Dance, and our School, in partnership with Rhythm and Motion Dance Workout down the street at 351 Shotwell. For more information on ODC Theater and all its programs please visit: odc.dance/theater

ODC THEATER IS GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY

Anonymous, APAP ArtsForward Grants Program, CalOSBA, Fleishhacker Foundation, John and Marcia Goldman Foundation, Hearst Foundations, Hellman Foundation, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Sam Mazza Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, U.S. Small Business Administration, Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation, and our many individual donors.

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Brenda Way
Carma Zisman, she/her/hers
Kimi Okada, she/her
KT Nelson
Chloë L. Zimberg, she/her

Garth Grimbail, he/him/his

Brian Williamson, he/him
Charlie Levy, they/he
Luna Sofia Ruiz, she/her/hers
Sima Belmar, she/her
Charles Slender-White, he/him
Pilar Marsh, she/her

Joseph Copley, he/him/his

Jack Beuttler, he/his
Thomas Bowersox, he/him/his
Chris Chamberlin-Miner, he/him
David Robertson
Kyo Yohena

Kellee McQuinn, she/her
Greg Meyers, he/him
Matt Shrimplin, he/him

Michael Davidson, he/him
Sophie Leininger, she/her
Ashley Johnson-Schwartz, she/they
Kara Nelson, she/they
Cecilia Qu'in
John Hill
Blake Zidell & Associates
Priss Penbrow

Emily Lieu-Harris, she/her
Zackary Forcum, he/him, they/them
Andrea Partridge

Carlos Lopez, he/him
Zarina Posada, she/her
Alex Zdanis, she/her/hers
Michelle Edwards
Lisa Askew

Jason Dinneen, he/him
Monica Ascencio

Kari Rurup-Coleman

Carlos Venturo
Molly Matuat, she/her/hers
Natalie Gutierrez, she/her
Katherine Orloff, she/her
Lucienne Alicea, she/her

Rachel Abair, M.S. she/her/hers
Chisom Nzerem
Celina Francesca De Borja, MD
Richard Couglin, MD

Dudley Flores, he/him/his
Maggie Connard, she/her/hers
Janet Roitz

ODC Theater Presents

Marjani Forté-Saunders | 7NMS *Memoirs of a... Unicorn*

Choreographed by: Marjani Forté-Saunders

Directed by: Marjani Forté-Saunders & design team

Performed by: Marjani Forté-Saunders

Music by: original composition & sound design by Everett Saunders feat. Violinist Juliette Jones

Narration by: Shana Small

Poetry/Lyricism By: Chris Baylor

HOT 97 *The Beginnings of Hip Hop Interview of GrandMaster Flash*

Interviewees: Richard Forté, Maraeus Dumas, Nathan Trice, Jaamil Kosoko, Alzo Slade, Yon Tande, Jumatatu poe, Nkosi Saunders, Vince Ballentine

Recorded Music Selections:

Nas *New York State of Mind*

Jay-Z *Public Service Announcement* (Instrumental)

D'Angelo *Really Love*

Seal's Crofts *Sweet Green Fields*

Grace Paley & Pat Stein *Chicken Soup*

Little Boy Blues *Seat of Love*

Costumes by: Marjani Forté-Saunders, Mimi Lien, Peiyi Wong, & Richard Forté

Lighting Design by: Tuce Yasak

Associate Lighting Designer: Damir Dado Čobo

Set Design by: Mimi Lien, Peiyi Wong, & Richard Forté

Set Build By: Richard Forté/Build With Forté & August Hunt

1st Draft Dramaturgy: Clarinda Mac Low

Production Support: Okwui Okpokwasili, Jim Fenley, & Collapsible Hole

Marjani Forté-Saunders is a Mother, choreographer, performer, and organizer. She is a 2021 Dance Magazine Harkness Awardee, a 2020 recipient of the Foundation of Contemporary Arts Grants for Artists Award, and a 2 time NY Dance & Performance/Bessie Award winning choreographer and performer for her latest work *Memoirs of a... Unicorn*, which had its international premiere in Brussels, Belgium at the Beursschouwburg Festival 2019 and will be present in Berlin at the Sophiensaele in October 2021. Marjani is honored to be an inaugural recipient of the 3 distinguishing fellowships: UBW Choreographic Center Fellowship (2017), Jerome Artist Fellowship (2018), and the DanceUSA Artist Fellowship (2019), as well as a 2 time Princess Grace Foundation awardee. Her work has been incubated in residencies at New York Live Arts, MANCC, LMCC Extended Life Residency invited by the late and mighty Sam Miller, BAX, 651 Arts, and Movement Research. As an extension of her choreography, and with support from the SURDNA Foundation Thriving Cultures Grant, Forté-Saunders curated a three-month exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary African Diaspora Art in Brooklyn, NY titled being Here... in Memory that housed the work of four multi-media and design artists, and partnered with neighboring Brooklyn-based organizations offering workshops in creative

writing, healing practices, and embodied storytelling for teen artists. Her work as an artist and organizer is informed by years in anti-racist organizer training with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond and as a lead facilitator with UBW's Builders Organizers and Leaders through Dance. Anchored in a steady collaboration with partner and composer Everett Asis Saunders (New Music USA Awardee), the duo has emerged as 7NMS| Marjani Forte & Everett Saunders (abbrev. 7NMS| M + E), with awarded residencies at The Petronio Residency Center (Sept 2019), BAM (2020) and Baryshnikov Arts Center (Nov 2019). They are recipients of the 2021 National Dance Production Grant, and the the New Music USA grants. They are also founding directors of ART & POWER (2018) a platform for artists, spiritualists, and scholars mobilizing regional and international communities through the transformative power of innovation. Commercially, Saunders has worked as Movement Coach/Creative Movement Director/and Choreographer with Sundance Award Winning director Kahlil Joseph (PROCESS, Pantene ProV - "Strong Is Beautiful", and FLYPAPER), and on Joseph's video installation FLYPAPER at the New Museum featuring Ben Vereen and StoryBoard P. She has also worked with Director Kevin Willmott on the feature film The 24th, Kevin Everson's short film Black Bus Stop and Tracee Ellis Ross' product launch video campaign for her new haircare line, PATTERNS . Saunders was a touring artist for five years, with Urban Bush Women Dance Company (UBW) and the first artist (beyond Cummings) to perform Blondell Cummings's American Masterpiece Chicken Soup, other than currently on exhibit at The Getty Museum and Art+Practice, in Los Angeles, CA. Humbly, she defines her work by its lineage stemming from culturally rich, vibrant, historic, loving, irreverent conjurers!

Everett Saunders is a Composer, and Sound Designer specializing in collaborative processes, score and soundscape development for theater and film. His latest production of Prophet: The Order of Lyricism premiered in NYC at Abrons Arts Center Fall '22, and was an awardee at the NEFA NDP Production and Touring Award, The MAP Fundm New Music USA Award, and the Mid-Atlantic Arts Fund. His ongoing work in the production *Memoirs of a... Unicorn*, received a 2018 Bessie Award for Outstanding Production, and had its International premiere in Brussels, Belgium with additional touring in Berlin, Germany. Saunders was awarded a New Music USA grant to research and develop a 3-Dimensional Binaural Soundscape and Score for the performance work being Here.../this time, and later featured as 1 of 5 installations exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary African Diaspora Art (Brooklyn, NY), funded by the SURDNA Foundation Thriving Cultures Grant. His work can also be found within Urban Bush Women's recent production of Hair & Other Stories, and as a composer and sound designer on choreographer Jaamil Kosoko's multi-platform project, Chameleon. Anchored in a steady collaboration with partner and choreographer Marjani Forté-Saunders (2020 FCA Awardee), and now emerging as 7NMS| Everett Saunders & Marjani Forte), the duo has produced 7 award-winning works over the last 10 yrs. 7NMS are also founding directors of ART & POWER (2018) a radical vanguard and platform for thought, innovation, and action.

Meena Murugesan (they/them) is a video and movement artist living on Tongva-Kizh land. Meena creates experimental non-linear narratives at the intersection of live performance, video art installation, and social issues. Grappling with the practises of collage, projection mapping, contemplative documentary, improvisation, somatic bodywork and bharatanatyam, Meena centers an anti-racist, anti-caste, feminist, queer, melanin-rich creative liberatory practice. They are directing a multimedia series entitled *Dravidian Futurities* about African-Dravidian connections, casteism, colorism, and trance/possession movement rituals. Meena is a current founding member of two collectives: SAEDA (South Asian Experimental Dance Artists, Mellon awardee 2021-2022) and SiriusShapeShifters (with d. Sabela grimes). Recently, Meena has presented their films or video projection design work at The Getty Museum, The Getty Villa, Underground Museum, The Broad Museum, MOCA LA, Jacob's Pillow, SOPHIENSALE, 651 Arts, EMPAC, BLACKSTAR, etc.

Mimi Lien is a designer of sets/environments for theater, dance and opera. Arriving at set design from a background in architecture, her work often focuses on the interaction between audience/environment and object/performer. Mimi was named a 2015 MacArthur Fellow, and is the first set designer ever to achieve this distinction. Recent work includes *Natasha, Pierre, & The Great Comet of 1812*, *An Octoroon*, *A 24-Decade History of Popular Music*. She is a recipient of a Tony Award, Drama Desk Award, Lucille Lortel Award, American Theatre Wing Hewes Design Award, LA Drama Critics Circle Award, and an OBIE

Award for sustained excellence.

Peiyi Wong is a Brooklyn-based designer and interdisciplinary artist. Recent NY credits include: sets + costume - *A Hunger Artist* (Connelly/The Tank & Sinking Ship), *How the White Girl Got Her Spots* (Ars Nova Antfest/Lonely painter); sets - *You're Healing is Killing Me* (Vicki Grise/JACK), *Charleses* (The Brick/The Tank & Glass Bandits), *Now is the Time* (Abrons Arts/Little Lord), *The Tower* (HERE Arts/Antimatter Collective). Costume designs for the feature film, *Namour*, can currently be viewed on Netflix. She is a member of the performance collective: the lonely painter project. MFA, California Institute of the Arts; BA Columbia University. www.peiyiameliawong.com

Tuce Yasak graduated from the Department of Industrial Design at Middle East Technical University in Turkey. Pursued the light to NYC in 2009. She designs for dance. She is interested in site-specific performances, light installations, architectural and urban lighting. Credits include: Urban Light Festival L.A.M.P, New Haven; MEX I AM Festival with Vicky Araico at the Yerba Buena Arts Center; 'Unsettled' in DanceMotionUS at BAM Fisher Hall with David Dorfman Dance and Korhan Basaran Company; Color Me Warhol at Dixon Place, Another 37 Reasons to Cry at JACK, Tropico at DanceSpace, Another Fucking Warhol Production at the Kitchen with the Feath3r Theory and Raja Feather Kelly; La Medea at BRIC Arts & Media with Yara Travieso; Shasta Pop at Bushwick Star and Under The Radar with Ayesha Jordan; Four Nights of Dreams at Japan Society directed by Alec Duffy; MayDayHayDay with Daria Fain and the Common Choir at BRIC Media Arts; Aroundtown with David Dorfman Dance at Next Wave Festival at BAM Harvey and the Bates Festival. Happy to be with the Unicorn on his/her journey to the Collapsible Hole.

Nathan Shreeve-Moon is a cultural producer, director and curator of live performance. Nathan's credits in theatre include: *Les Misérables* (Original West End Production, Queens Theatre London), *An Octoroon* (Soho Rep., OBIE Award-Winner), Nature Theater of Oklahoma's *Life and Times* (Public Theater, OBIE Award-Winner), *Old Times* (Broadway Revival, American Airlines Theatre), *A Public Reading of an Unproduced Screenplay About the Death of Walt Disney* (Soho Rep., OBIE Award-Winner), *Ghost* (World Premiere, Manchester Opera House). Nathan's work in dance has led him to collaborate with internationally renowned choreographers and dancers on projects including: Marjani Forté-Saunders and 7NMS (*Memoirs of a... Unicorn*), LA Dance Project (Multiple premieres), Benjamin Millepied (*Romeo and Juliet Suite*, *Be Here Now*), Bobbi-Jene Smith and Or Schraiber (*Solo at Dusk and Quartet for Five*), Ohad Naharin (*Yag*), Saburo Teshigawara (*Fly Me to the Earth*), Shannon Gillen (*Run From Me*), CONTRA-TIEMPO (Multiple premieres) and more. Live performances have taken Nathan all over the world, and he has been lucky to work on projects in North America, South America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

Richard Forté is, among many things, a storyteller. He came of age, with an insatiable appetite for Sci Fi, and fiction literature. Mr. Forté is an avid reader, with an extensive library. Some of his favorite authors are Walter Mosely, Stephen King, and Jim Butcher.

A man of many tools, Mr. Forté retired from computer network engineering to resume his own passion project of construction and carpentry. As CEO of Forté Construction Services for over 30 years, he is also a certified network engineer, an electrician, a master carpenter, a recent graduate (B.S.) and current Masters Student, and a 2017 NY Dance & Performance/Bessie Award winning set designer. Richard Forté is none other than a man of many hats.

Mr. Forté has traveled with 7NMS as their storyteller for *Memoirs of a... Unicorn* for the past 5 years, with highlight performances in NYC, Berlin, Germany, Los Angeles, CA, and now, San Francisco, CA.

A Note From The Artist

How to SEE: Notes for the Viewer

Offering 1:

Consider the stories of Unicorn like the faces of a prism. One thing does not beget the next. Cohesion is subjective.

Though this prism is reflective, whether or not you see yourself reflected is not essential. Revel in the mystery.

and should you get lost... LOOK me in my eye.

SEE your reflection there, and be found.

Offering 2:

In the few places I drop into Black-Speak, I am accessing a Divine Vernacular.

Offering 3:

I am a student. I study the occurrence of magic and the bizarre in seemingly mundane circumstances and concepts. I believe the infinite formulas for our elevation (of the human consciousness) are within our capacities to be both independent and deeply inter-connected. That is the work of one of my richest collaborations, 7NMS with partner and composing sound designer, Everett Saunders.. Our work oscillates between our individual and collective practices, moving through time as interconnected beings tethered by an intentional and metaphysical promise to be "Both, And".

In a time of hard-earned resurgence and renewal, in collective imaginings of liberation, Unicorn invites its audience to bend, flex, squint, and most of all, ACCEPT, that in the dimension of this performance, all are not always invited nor will all "relate"- as within the construct of race- based thinking and imprisonment, some simply will not and cannot find themselves reflected in this work.

Finally... Thank You. Thank You for going on this journey with me. For choosing now, here, us, and WE.

SPECIAL THANKS

Co-Commissioners Lower Manhattan Cultural Center Extended Life Residency

UBW Choreographic Center Initiative Fellowship- Da Bomb!

Fun Factory Burbank, CA- Thanks for the Dildos! :)

Edmund Deraedt – Lighting Equipment

LOVE|FORTÉ & Nia Love- can't wait to start our next round of dreaming! And Baba Antoine Roney for all the hip hop/jazz convo, parenting guru-ness, and nourishing meals early in this process

Mama Nonkuloleko Tyhemba- for helping us bring in our unicorn

Blondell Cummings and Family

Alma Jean Forte, Elaine Moore Emerson, Debbie Forte, Sharron Williams, Dani Reuben, d. Sabela Grimes

Tom Watson // Bucks County Playhouse

Rosalind Grush & Meghan Finn // The Tank

Stefan Dreisbach-Williams

Marya Warshaw, Vanessa Adato, & Brooklyn Arts Exchange- Your Patience, Advice, Readiness, and Willingness. So much love to you!

Stephanie Siegel & Bailey's Café- Never a better partner on the back end, You keep this machine rolling

The Team of Alkebulan Cultural Center Pasadena, CA- thank you for your patience and for trusting our leadership. #grolwalkebulangrow

Digital Encores

Digital Encores for Marjani Forté-Saunders | 7NMS: Memoirs of a... Unicorn will be available on ODC Connect November 18 - December 2, 2022. For more information, please visit: odc.dance/connect.

Memoirs Of A... Unicorn is a Co-Commissioned work of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Extended Life Program and the New York Live Arts Live Feed Residency Program [an offsite premiere at Collapsible Hole/Westbeth Building NYC]. This Project was made possible with the generous support of the PGF-USA Special Projects Grant, The MAP Fund, and The Jerome Foundation General Grant, Foundation of Contemporary Arts- Emergency Grant, and The Ford Ignite Series. This presentation of Unicorn was made possible by the APAP Arts Forward Fund!

This collaboration between ODC Theater and Marjani Forté-Saunders was made possible in part by the Association of Performing Arts Professionals ArtsForward program, generously supported by The Mellon Foundation, to aid the presenting and touring field's safe, vibrant, and equitable reopening and recovery. This work is co-presented by CounterPulse and The Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD).

MoAD



Photo by Maria Baranova



Opening Night Pre-Show Receptions

Subscribers and Supporter Level Ticket holders are invited to an **Opening Night Pre-Show** reception before each Friday Night performance. Open wine bar and light snacks provided from 6:00-7:00 pm.

Young Patrons' Affinity Night

Saturday Night ticket holders are invited to mingle and enjoy our **Young Patrons' Affinity Night**, a festive post-show event with drinks from Mezcal Amaras and music. Then, continue the night out with a complimentary community discount package (valued at \$50).



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TICKETS ON SALE NOW

Fall Season at ODC Theater

Ni'Ja Whitson | The NWA Project:

A Meditation on Tongues

October 28-30, 2022

Marjani Forté-Saunders | 7NMS:

Memoirs of a... Unicorn

November 4-6, 2022

Rosanna Tavaréz/LA DANSA DANSA :

Piece x Piece

Bianca Cabrera/Blind Tiger Society:

Fever Dreams

November 11-13, 2022



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