

# MAKING STAGE

Dance & Performance Institute



LET'S DANCE!

# MAKING STAGE

# ***“Find a place! Make a stage!”***

- Faye Ann Lyons

## MAKING STAGE: THE DANCE & PERFORMANCE INSTITUTE

In 2010, when de Republic of Sydenham - a collective of artists, writers, social and environmental activists in St. Ann's, Port of Spain - ceased to exist in a physical location, the Institute emerged as an equally unique space, but undefined by walls, its moving spirit made by the gathering of dance and performance artists who locate themselves within the Caribbean and its diasporas. This inherent fluidity also reflects how I make work as an artist - as I've sought to simultaneously insert my work not only in more than one geographic place, but also in different practices. I've found this way to be in rhythm with my own social, economic and even political realities. So similarly, the Institute space is not entirely conceptual. It still lives and is structured within specific boundaries – some of which, of course, I work to transgress.



Artist in Residence, Binahkaye Joy photographed by Arnaldo James

## Artist + Residency

The development of the Artist in Residence Program has been largely informed by the figuring of space in this way and by the residencies I've participated in as a choreographer and dancer. The format was simple at first. I invited artists into my home, then at The Republic. Artist and scholars from around the world applied to conduct self-directed residencies of 2 weeks to 2 months in length. Events were held throughout de Republic: a huge loft space was the venue for Celia Bambara's performance of "Improvisations for Love". The living or "joining" room was another rehearsal and performance space. As was the defunct art gallery next door. The space behind the outdoor kitchen was where Brittany Williams rehearsed and performed "...Poverty has taught me otherwise." When the Republic shifted, the Institute collaborated with Alice Yard to host residencies.

By the third session, the Resident Artists lived and worked together at Mango Tree House – a top floor executive apartment with a pool and air conditioning. Radically different from the hundred year old gingerbread house that was part of a "commie commune" on a hill. But again, many Institute programs were held in-house. The Artists in Residence now included dancers, performance artists, ethnographers, and anthropologists. Omise'eke Tinsley, a writer who'd just published "Theifin' Sugar" was a guest of the Institute. The artist residency projects included Chevon Stewart's investigation of the history of Chinese migratory struggles in and contribution to the Caribbean and Ananya Chatterjea's development of a new book, *Tyranny of the Pointed Foot*. Chicago brought forth two academic/artists: Celia Weiss Bambara and Meida McNeal, who collaborated with Trinidadian Chanzo Greenidge and Nicole Castor on *Consuming Blackness Diasporically*. Tasha Connolly continued her study of the moko jumbie tradition and Brittany Williams developed pedagogic and choreographic methods. Trinidadian artist, Michelle Isava received a Malcolm Fellowship for the Arts to conduct her monthlong residency.

## Collaborations + Partnerships

The Institute began to build partnerships with local organizations to present its programmes – Alice Yard, University of the West Indies, University of Trinidad and Tobago, Academy for the Performing Arts, The Philosophical Society, Studio 66, Tobago Division of Culture, and several individuals. Not "owning" a space or a building became the obvious centres of the Institute, encouraging us to initiate and nurture these collaborations to share resources, further expand our network and develop programs. When Binahkaye Joy conducted site specific and spontaneous space activations along the Western Main Road, at Temple in the Sea, on Las Cuevas Beach, and in Independence Square (among others) she enlivened and radicalized our ideas about and relationship to public and private spaces. All 20 public programs of the Institute - including master classes, talks and workshops - were offered free and held in spaces throughout Port of Spain.



Self-directed residencies are opportunities where the artist is free to experiment and explore new directions in the production of their work. Interaction with other artist residents is encouraged through creative collaboration and informal discussion. Artists in Residence are professional artists and scholars, with years of experience in cultural production and many with PhDs in Theater Arts & Dance, Cultural Anthropology, Performance Studies, International Relations, and Critical Dance Studies.

In 2010, the Artists in Residence of the Dance & Performance Institute presented more than 20 public programs alongside their artistic residencies. These programs involved 200 participants and hundreds more from the general public.

**The Mother Dance-Dialogue Workshop**

Saturday, 4 December at Trinidad Theatre Workshop, Port of Spain. 10am-12pm

**Site Specific Space Activations** - Ramgoolie Trace, Curepe, Las Cuevas Beach, Tunapuna Market, Woodford Square, Temple in the Sea at Waterloo.

**THE MOTHER PROJECT by Binahkaye Joy**

Saturday, 27 November at 8PM and Sunday, 28 November at 7PM, Alice Yard and Bohemia.

**Kshoyl/Decay Workshop & PERFORMANCE with Ananya Dance Theatre**

Monday, 26 July at 1pm. The Dance Studio at APA, Port of Spain. PERFORMANCE at 4pm.

**Contemporary Indian Dance: Exploring a Feminine, Feminist Vocabulary**

Master class with Ananya Chatterjea. Monday, 26 July at 11am. APA.

**Interrogating Diaspora: Issues in Geopolitics, Connection & Dissonance Online**

with Meida McNeal, Nicole Castor and Chanzo Greenidge

Thursday, July 22 @ 5:30 pm - CBD Public Dialogue at Studio 66

**History of Odissi: Reconstruction of a Tradition**

Wednesday, 21 July at 7pm at Studio 66

**Consuming Ourselves: Exploring Contemporary Ethnographic Methods & Ethics**

Tuesday, July 20 @ 7pm - CBD Public Dialogue at Studio 66

**Salon #2: Trinidad Masculinities and Femininities with Dr. Gabrielle Hosein**

Tuesday, 20 July at 7:30pm at Mango Tree House

**"PaperChase" Community Workshop & SHOWING with Chevon Stewart**

Cascade Studios/Bentley Potter School of Dance

**A new site-specific work-in-progress by Celia Weiss Bambara**

25 March at 8pm at Alice Yard - 80 Roberts Street, Port of Spain

**Dancemaking/Choreography with Celia Weiss Bambara**

18-20 March for Tobago Division of Culture

Monday, 22 March at University of the West Indies

Centre for Creative & Festival Arts

**Talk with Robert Young of THE CLOTH, Race, Identity & Being Here**

Wednesday, 17 March

**OPEN HOUSE/Dinner**

Friday, 29 January from 5-6pm

Sunday, 17 January at 6PM at The Republic of Sydenham

**Talk with Burton Sankeralli, author of Of Obeah and Modernity**

Monday, 11 January 2010 at 7pm at The Republic of Sydenham

**Performance: "Kenbe, Amour, Colère, Folie: Improvisations for Love"**

by Celia Weiss Bambara

Saturday, 9 January 2010 at 9pm at The Republic of Sydenham

**Salon #1: Pedagogy**

Thursday, 7 January 2010 at 7pm at The Republic of Sydenham

Artist-in-Residence, Celia Weiss Bambara performs at Alice Yard in Woodbrook, Port of Spain.



# Thoughts on HISTORY OF ODISSI: RECONSTRUCTION OF A TRADITION

By Vishala Parmasad on Tuesday, July 27, 2010



Dr. Ananya Chatterjea presented tonight at Studio 66 on the history of Odissi, an event which I was privileged to be a part of. I choose the word privileged because I believe I was there to witness - and to make this - the first of many more engagements of the space of Trinidad and Tobago by Dr. Chatterjea, in both her creative and academic endeavours. Indeed, it is my firm belief that contributions such as Ananya's and those of other artistes and thinkers of her ilk have the potential to rejuvenate the local cultural presentation/performance spaces by transforming them into sites of engagement: about creativity, identity, culture and self.

The arts, especially the dramatic/performance arts, have the potential to be much more than an exhibition of expertise/artistry by performers to a passively receptive audience. Instead a performance can be revelatory, jarring, thought-provoking and delighting in an immediate and visceral way. A performance has the capacity to invoke as many responses as exist within the human repertoire of emotion.

Envision a performance that is a dialogue - one which is both an expression of creativity and an engagement in discourse - one in which a response is not only expected but required of the audience. For those of familiar with the Indian dance form Kathak, envision it as the dialogue between the tabla-player and the dancer, with one responding to the challenge of the other. For those of familiar with the principles of debate, imagine a performance as a proposition being put forward by the artist, to which the audience is then required to respond. For either of these scenarios to take place, the performers and the audience must speak the same language: for discourse to occur, there must be a mutual understanding of the nature of discourse. The only way in which this is possible is through the development of the skill of discussion/debate - engagement of a discourse - through events such as this evening.

Dr. Chatterjea presented a lively, informal but highly informative exposition on the development of the classical dance form Odissi in India. Sketching a brief historical outline of the pervasiveness of dance and song within the state of Orissa as far back as 1 BC, she filled this in with details that brought to life the historical process by which a traditional form became a classical form. Dance and the arts in the region of Orissa flourished around the period of 1 BC and for 300 years after, receiving extensive patronage from the then-king Karavela who was himself an artiste. In this period there were temple dancers, Deva Dasis or Maharis, who were dedicated to the temple as young girls, where their dance and song formed an integral part of worship. Their performances were crucial to the highly ritualistic form of worship most commonly practiced over this period, and the women received extensive patronage (food, shelter, grants of land) in accordance with their vital function. They were able to pass these received benefits on to their female children since the tradition itself was highly matriarchal. Maharis also composed the poetry and song to which they danced, much of which was in their native tongue of Orya. Some played musical instruments such as the cymbals, flute and mridangam (drum) while they danced, though often musical accompaniment was provided by a separate band of male musicians.

As evidenced by the temple sculptures, the content of the dances included all the activities of daily life, such as dressing, adorning oneself, walking, embracing and so forth. The dances, further, Ananya described as "a celebration of the sensuality of the female form and body". There was emphasis on the "generosity of the hips", or the roundness of the hips, on rotation of the torso and the breasts, and on the presentation of the female figure in a manner that was natural to a form of worship in which eroticism was an accepted part of life. The poetry and song of the period was also consistent with this underlying celebration of sensuality, being erotic in nature. Such performances in temple worship was not, however, consistent with British/European concepts regarding religious expression. These dances were condemned as lascivious. The women performing such dances, the Deva Dasis and Maharis, were further regarded by the British as prostitutes. Thus Deva Dasis and Maharis were grouped with the travelling "Nautch" girls and court dancers, all of whom were considered to be prostitutes, and the temples lost the patronage of the rulers upon which they depended for survival. The Maharis became destitute. In 1864 a law requiring medical examination of all prostitutes for contagious disease in effect legalised their harassment and further increased the disempowerment of these previously empowered matriarchs. Many committed suicide or ceased dancing entirely in this period. Others, no longer having patronage, became what they had been condemned as.

By the 1930s and 1940s, however, the anti-colonial movement in India had begun to seek out forms of cultural expression as a part of the developing iconography of the National. As with most formations of nation building, "traditional" forms cultural expression were sought as a means of self-definition. There was a nation-wide move to identify those aspects of the diverse cultural milieu of India that would be nationally acceptable and accepted by the fledgling nation. Thus Bharatnatyam was born. It was developed from the dance form of the Deva Dasis. In order to make it acceptable to the colonised sensibilities of the new Indian elite, as well as the international stage upon which India was appearing as a new nation, and in keeping with the then-dominant colonial discourse, however, the traditional Deva Dasi form was carefully filtered to remove all elements of sensuality and eroticism which it had contained in the pre-colonial period. It ceased to be an exposition of love and became highly stylized and codified. An extensive Sanskrit-based pedagogy was gradually developed around it. It was also claimed as the first "classical" dance form of India.

The dance of the Maharis, however, was consolidated at a later stage, under the tutelage of three male gurus, who then trained younger dancers in the form. It was first called Odissi in 1951, when it was performed at a Kolkata theatre. The French reporter for the Statesman Charles Fabre was in the audience, and he was enraptured by what he saw to the extent that he sought the name for this form of dance. He was told it originated in Orissa. After this the early proponents of the form went to Kalakshetra, the setting in which Bharatnatyam had first emerged, and the dance was codified much along the lines in which Bharatnatyam had been. Odissi, however, was able to maintain much of its sensuousness, in part because many of the gurus involved in the reconstruction did not have as heavily defined a colonial mentality as the early creators of Bharatnatyam had been. Still, it was through the agency of these three male gurus, and later through the efforts of the more middle-class and educated dancers that Orissi eventually became recognised as a "classical" dance form of India. It was only then that dancers were once again able to access patronage, this time from the Indian Government, to support and develop this dance form, which had once been born in the courtyards of the temples of the Udayagiri Hatheegumpa caves.

The discussion after the presentation was lively. Many questions were raised, many answers were proposed. Some of the most pertinent questions, however, included the following: what determines the "authenticity" of a cultural form? Can a form be "authentic" without "organic" continuity? How can the culture be used as a tool for both oppression and resistance? How can culture be a form of nationalism? What stood out to me, however, was this: the story of Odissi is not known, even amongst the many Odissi dancers locally. Like much of the history of the post-colonials, further, this story must be deconstructed to arrive at the true questions to be answered. Thus the importance of the other questions which also arose in the discussion: is the concept of authenticity itself dependent upon a unitary/linear/modernist perspective of tradition and culture? Is this even consistent with the tradition from which these classical forms were constructed? Can the fact that these forms have been elaborated upon over the last 50 years be considered choreography and creativity rather than inauthenticity? To what extent is the question of authenticity even of relevance? And most interestingly, To whom does this dance belong?

The deconstruction of our understanding of culture is a task with which I hope to engage. It is a task with which every Trinidadian of Indian descent who is a cultural proponent and participant must engage. As Trinidadians of Indian descent we have to weave a tricky path between the pitfalls of the British colonial discourse within India and the easy transference of such a discourse to the Indians of Trinidad, despite the changed historical circumstances to which our fore-parents were subject herein. We must be mindful of the necessity of a keen historical understanding and an even keener sense of our own reconstituted cultural forms, our "Indian culture". And we must create the opportunities for inviting and engaging such scholars and artistes as Dr. Ananya Chatterjea to educate us, to challenge us, and to engage us the process of thinking about ourselves and our self-presentation and self-representation within the performance spaces of this beautiful country of ours.



Makeda Thomas speaks with New Waves! Participants at Trinidad Theatre Workshop. Photo by Arnaldo James

## Summer + Institute

The **New Waves! Institute** brings 50 international dance artists to Trinidad & Tobago, offering intensive master classes and workshops in contemporary dance, Caribbean dance, hip-hop, composition and repertory with an outstanding faculty of international dance artists. Through informal dialogues and Institute programs, participants create community, build connections with other dance professionals, and experience the unique cultural landscape of Trinidad & Tobago. Classes and workshops are held, primarily, at the University of Trinidad & Tobago, Academy for the Performing Arts, held within the National Academy of the Performing Arts in the heart of the nation's capital, Port of Spain.

Why gather under the banner of *New Waves*? In 2011, we gathered an outstanding faculty: Dyane Harvey-Salaam, co-founder of Forces of Nature Dance Company, who returned to Trinidad after 40 years when she worked with Astor Johnson Repertory Dance Theatre; Ananya Chatterjea, Scholar-in-Residence, who'd just won a Guggenheim for her visionary work that she describes as a "call to action"; Philadelphia's hip-hop ambassador, Rennie Harris; Jamaica's Chris Walker; visionary performance artist, Akuzuru; associate artistic director of Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE, Arcell Cabuag; Founder of Canada's Ballet Creole, Patrick Parson; the prolific, Sonja Dumas, myself and Dave Williams. Dancers, performance artists, poets, MFA candidates, college students and cultural workers made for a rich diversity of participants. We all gathered, connected in a delicious composition of professional, cultural, personal and psychogeographic relationships, visions, and alliances. This movement, is the new wave.

The root system of a tree is five times more extensive than the tree itself, and reaches far underground to form a solid base for growth and nourishment. I look to those rhizomatic qualities of connection, heterogeneity, multiplicity and asignifying rupture to grow the Institute. The primary source of energy for the Institute, is *the body* of participants, faculty, and staff – people from around the world with multiple cultural contexts. The most significant source of strength is our Autonomy. Autonomy is vital in the creation of horizontal, rather than hierarchical structures and to the resistance of hegemony. Autonomy gives the Institute the freedom to exist; in any way for it to succeed, as per its own terms. More importantly, it can speak from a place of its own authority, in recognition of the value of the ideas and experiences the Institute engages. Systems of connectivity are reflected by *Cloud computing* and Open Source concepts embedded into the programming (as in the case of the Meeting Space). Time is consciously left for contemplative and deliberative spaces; spaces in which new space and creation can be made - reading, choreographing, writing, designing; so that we can explore new ways of thinking and doing dance and performance, of questioning the limits of space and context, of sharing and making meaning that could permanently re-create and re-emerge. Like the rhizomatic root, if separated into pieces, each separate piece may give rise to a new plant.

There is a dance of the tongue when some speak of the Institute - Is it a school? A dance festival? What? It is, both: Practice and Body. All of us being here, now. Each Institute lives within the artists and projects that make up that particular Institute. As a living working process the Institute is an extremophile of sorts - resisting, adapting, and growing independently, fluidly, organically. Trinidad has offered the most vital information for this Institute: *Find a space and Make a Stage*. We've taken cue from the richness and tensions of Trinidad's cultural diversity for models of future community building and interdisciplinary experimentation – with photography, theatre, writing, film, and even food. I look forward to the explosion of dance and performance art possible *here, now*.







The National Academy for the Performing Arts, home of the Academy for the Performing Arts.

*New Waves! 2011 gathered 60 participants – 40 international participants from India, the United States, Canada, St. Croix, Jamaica, and 20 participants from Trinidad & Tobago. Over the course of two weeks, 108 classes workshops, programs and events took place at NAPA, the historic Trinidad Theatre Workshop, Caribbean School of Dancing, the Royal Botanic Gardens, and Alice Yard.*

**2011 COURSE OFFERINGS:** Pearl Primus Workshop, Eleo Pomare Workshop, Forces of Nature Workshop, Building Movement: Fundamentals of Choreographic Process, Contemporary Dance, House Dance, Traditional West African Dance, Dunham Technique, Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE Repertory Workshop, Caribbean Dance, From Scratch on a Dirt Road, Movement, Meditation, Mindpower: Site-Specific Dance Exploration, Ananya Dance Theater Workshop, Pilates, Living Poetry Outloud: Spoken Word, Poetry, Writing & Performance

**Alongside:** Roundtable series: "Complexity of Indigeneity in Cultural Production" and "Imagining Contemporary Cultural Production in Trinidad"; "Theorizing Strategies of Reinvigorating the Cultural Context"; Astor Johnson's "SHE" with Dyane Harvey-Salaam; NCIC-Youth Workshop; Jouvay Process with Tony Hall; Kali Puja; Shango Festival - Ade Odun Sango; Orisha Palais; Emancipation Day Celebrations.



Performance is a state of reality.



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DIRECTOR, Makeda Thomas (Trinidad/New York) has presented work at HARLEM Stage/Aaron Davis Hall, Dance Theater Workshop, and Symphony Space in New York City, Brooklyn Academy of Music, BRIC Arts|Media|Brooklyn, the Chicago Women's Performance Arts Festival, Maputo's Teatro Africa, Port of Spain's Caribbean Contemporary Arts, Queen's Hall, Zimbabwe's 7 Arts Centre, Seattle's Broadway Performance Hall, Southern Theater in Minneapolis, Teatro de la Ciudad in Mexico, and as a Cultural Envoy for the U.S. Department of State. Her choreography has been commissioned by the Central District Forum for Arts & Ideas, 651 ARTS Black Dance: Tradition & Transformation and received awards from Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, the United States Embassy, Puffin Foundation, NYS Council on the Arts, Bossak-Heilbron Charitable Foundation, Arts International, Yellowfox, and the National AIDS Council of Mozambique. In 2004, during its 25th Anniversary season, she was named Resident Choreographer of Companhia Nacional De Canto e Dança. Graça Machel (Former First Lady of South Africa and Mozambique) served as the Honorary Patron of her internationally acclaimed work, "A Sense of Place" (2005), on which she presented at the 1st Conference on New Perspectives in African Performing & Visual Arts. In 2007, Thomas was a featured choreographer in 'This Woman's Work: Choreographic Development Project Representing Women of Color' - joining Camille A. Brown, Bridget Moore, Shani Collins, Princess Mhoon Cooper, Francine Ott, & Ursula Payne. In 2008, in her role as Artistic Advisor, Ms. Thomas remounted "FIN" by contemporary African dance choreographer Augusto Cuvilas. The work went on to performances at The Baltoopen in Copenhagen, Teatro Africa and Centre Culturel Franco Mozambicain in Maputo, and Zimbabwe's Tetrad Reps Theatre. Makeda has collaborated on films with Finnish cinematographer, Panu Kari, Trinidadian multi-media artist, Elspeth Duncan and German photographer, Stefan Falke. Her film work has been shown at the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, T&T Moves Film Festival, MadLab's First International Film Festival, the 41st Congress on Research in Dance "Dance Studies & Global Feminisms", and BRIC as part of Choreographic Sketches II. Thomas has been a Visiting Artist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (where her work "FreshWater" was embedded into "Black Matters: Introduction to Black Studies"), Yale University, University of Minnesota (as a Cowles Visiting Guest Artist and part of Continuously Rich: Black Women in Cultural Production), Long Island University, Hofstra University, Hollins University, Florida Memorial University, University of the West Indies, and University of Hawaii. Thomas has conducted independent projects and research in South Africa, Argentina, The Netherlands and taught at American Dance Festival, The Dalton School, Arts in Education Institute of Western NY, and NYC Dept. of Education. In 2010, she developed The Dance & Performance Institute - an international community of dance and performance artists, a forum for exchange, and a series of programs on contemporary dance and performance. As a dancer, Makeda Thomas performed internationally in the companies of Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE, URBAN BUSH WOMEN, and Rennie Harris/Puremovement in Facing Mekka, said by the Los Angeles Times to be "arguably the greatest tribute to black womanhood since Alvin Ailey's 'Cry.'" Thomas has also performed as a guest artist with Shani Collins/ETERNAL WORKS, Robin Becker Dance, Lula Washington Dance Theater, and Stephen Koplowitz. She began her study in Brooklyn, New York with Michael Goring and Eleo Pomare, continuing on scholarship at the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance, The Paul Taylor School and Hofstra University where she earned a B.A. in Dance and English. She also holds an MFA in Dance from Hollins University.



New Waves! 2011 Faculty: Makeda Thomas, Dyane Harvey-Salaam, Chris Walker, Dave Williams and Ursula Payne

Dyane Harvey (New York) is a founding member and assistant to the director of Forces of Nature Dance Theatre Company, a Harlem based company whose mission is the preservation of this planet and the empowerment of people of color. She has performed as principal soloist with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company for over over 20 years, having toured the United States, Italy, Australia and Lagos, Nigeria as U.S. representative in F.E.S.T.A.C. (the Second Black and African Festival of Art and Culture). Her relationship with Mr. Pomare is timeless as he is responsible for shaping her approach to movement and the necessary theatricality in creating relevant art. In 2009 she reconstructed two of his solos and offered a presentation on his life as part of "The Black Dance Project" at the Centre National de la Danse in Paris. She has performed with other companies including Tony Award Winning George Faison's Universal Dance Experience, Dunham dancer Walter Nicks' Dance Theatre, Otis Salid's New Art Ensemble, internationally recognized Dance Brazil and the Trinidad Repertory Dance Theatre, just to name a few. She has choreographed for the theatre community "Love's Fire" for The Acting Company, "Yerma" and "The African Company Presents Richard the Third" (director Reggie Montgomery) for NYU's Graduate Acting Program and Ramapo College, "Lavender Lizards, Lilac Landmines, Layla's Dream" for the University of Florida at Gainesville and at the Black Theatre Festival in Winston-Salem, North Carolina (writer Ntozake Shange- director Dr. Mikell Pinkney), "Harriet Returns" for The Acting Company (director Shona Tucker) and the list goes on. Her theatre, film and television credits include: "Free to Dance" (PBS Special), "The Wiz", "Timbuktu!", "Spell #7", "Ailey Celebrates Ellington" (CBS Special). She also appeared in the Paris company of "Your Arms Too Short To Box With God" at the Mogador Theatre. She was Director of the Dance Department at Stephen's College during the mandatory Summer Dance Institute, offering eclectic programming and unusual dance exposure. As a professor at both Princeton and Hofstra Universities she also choreographs and has introduced two courses, Pilates Lab and "The American Experience and Africanist Dance Practices". In 2000 she earned her teaching certificate from Romana Krysanowska, of the Pilates Institute. Harvey earned the Dance for Life Award (from Better Family Life, a cultural arts and social empowerment organization based in St. Louis, Missouri), the AUDELCO Award for best actress in a musical (Dunbar) and choreography (The Great Men of Gospel), the Monarch Merit Award, The Black Theatre Award for contributions to the theatre community, and the Goddesses and Gurus Award.

Chris Walker (Jamaica) is a dancer and choreographer with the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica (NDTC). He is also the founder and artistic director of "VOICES" a dance company exploring the fusion of Caribbean dance and contemporary styles using the traditional stage, alternate spaces, and multimedia as a medium. With VOICES, he performed on university campuses in Western New York, and with the NDTC, Mr. Walker toured the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and the Caribbean, performing in several cities in those countries and region. His choreographies have been performed in Jamaica, New York and England, where he has presented solo work for the HIP Dance Festival. In addition, he taught Caribbean Dance Workshops in Jamaica, England, and the United States and conducted several successful artistic residencies at universities including Hobart and Williams Smith Colleges and Temple University, among others. Mr. Walker is a graduate of the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts (EMCVPA) in Kingston, Jamaica, where he received awards for excellence in choreography and dance theatre production. He also holds Master of Fine Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts Degrees from the State University of New York, College at Brockport where he taught for more than two years. In 2004 Walker received the highest award in the Thayer Fellowship in the Arts Competition in New York, and a Certificate for Merit from the American Theatre Festival Association for his choreography of "Once on this Island" for Brockport's Department of Theatre. He has since returned to Jamaica to work with the NDTC and his alma mater, the EMCVPA, where he serves as a consultant in the department of Folk and Traditional Studies. Most recently he received a nomination for "best choreography in a musical" for Jamaica's Annual National Pantomime and continues to tour and conduct artistic residencies at schools and colleges throughout the United States.

Dave Williams is a Trinidad-based performance artist and choreographer who uses elements of dance to re-present archetypes and stereotypes of our circumstance. In an attempt to manipulate the way we perceive, reference, and interpret our responses and actions, he is now exploring media beyond the stage

Ursula Payne, Professor at Slippery Rock University of PA, received her M.F.A. in Dance from The Ohio State University and is a Certified Movement Analyst. Her teaching and creative scholarship integrates the application of LMA, Dance notation, African-American history, women's issues, and performance techniques within the creative process. Payne choreographed five commissioned works from 2009-2011 that were presented by Project Motion Dance Company in Memphis, TN; Labco Dance Co. in Pittsburgh, PA; Mary Willford Shade a professor at Texas Women's University; and Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, CA. Her most recent commission by Dance Alloy in Pittsburgh premiered in April 2011. In 2009 she performed the solo "In Her Solitude: Lest We Forget" at the American Dance Guild Performance Series in New York, NY. Since 2002, Ursula has also been on faculty at the American Dance Festival teaching Motif writing, a short hand form of Labanotation, and the Primus Archive Project, which utilizes the archives of Dr. Pearl Primus as inspiration for generating original choreography. In 2011 she became the Co-Director of the Young Dancer's School with Pam Pietro. Ms. Payne has presented several academic papers: In the Spirit of Pearl: the Dr. Pearl Primus Collection at the Society of Dance History Scholars conference in June of 2008. Story of the Bones (2009) was presented at the Congress on Research in Dance and The Centre for Excellence in Performance Arts Special Topics Conference: Global Perspective on Dance Pedagogy Research and Practice at De Montfort University in Leicester, United Kingdom. Principles for Achieving Success in the Academy was published in the anthology Women of Color in The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education: Reclaiming Our Voices and Our Professional Space edited by Vivian Yenika-Agbaw and Amarilis Hidalgo-De Jesus and published by the University Press of America. Ms. Payne's choreography has been awarded four prestigious Pennsylvania Council of the Arts Choreographic Fellowships from 2000-2006. Her creative research has resulted in over 150 performances produced in recognized professional public as well as academic theaters and festivals internationally.

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At the turn of the century, alongside Princess Grace Kelly and Dr. Julius Erving, Rennie Harris was voted one of the most influential people in the last one hundred years of Philadelphia history, and compared to twentieth-century dance legends Alvin Ailey and Bob Fosse. He was Awarded 3 Bessie Awards, 4 Alvin Ailey Black Choreographers Awards for Rome & Jewels, an Ethnic Dance Award, the Herb Alpert Award for choreography, nominated for the UK's coveted Lawrence Olivier Award, the "Philadelphia Rocky" award, The Governors Artist of the year Award, Key to the City of Miami, The Key to the City of Philadelphia, The United States Artist award for choreography. Harris holds an honorary doctorate in the Arts and Humanities in regard to Hip-hop dance and culture and most recently voted one of four artist to serve as an Ambassador of cultural exchange (Dance Motion) for President Barack Obama's arts initiative. He, his group of dancers and their infectious brand of movement and knowledge, have toured around the globe pioneering Hip-hop dance as a viable concert dance form. Lorenzo "Rennie" Harris is atop the hip-hop heap - its leading ambassador worldwide.

Ananya Chatterjea is dancer, choreographer, dance scholar, and dance educator, who envisions her work in the field of dance as a "call to action" with a particular focus on women artists of color. She is the Artistic Director of Ananya Dance Theatre, a company of women artists of color committed to the intersection of artistic excellence and social justice ([www.ananyadance theatre.org](http://www.ananyadance theatre.org)). She is also Director of Dance and Associate Professor in the Department of Theater Arts and Dance in the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. Ananya was named "Best Choreographer" by City Pages in 2007 and is also the proud recipient of awards from the BIHA (Black Indian Hispanic Asian) Women In Action organization, the MN Women's Political Caucus, and the 21 leaders for the 21st Century Award from Women's E-News for her work weaving together artistic excellence, social justice, and community-building. She was recently honored by the Josie Johnson Social Justice and Human Rights Award at the University of Minnesota (2008). Recent engagements include a keynote address and performance at the 2009 International Conference of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed; teaching and performance at Bates Dance Festival (2008), performances and panel presentations at Erasing Borders Festival (NY, 2008), teaching at the American Dance Festival (2008), performances, workshops, and master classes at the O'Shaughnessy's Women of Substance Performance Series (2008). Her most recently completed choreographic project is Ashesh Barsha, unending monsoon, which marked the culmination of a trilogy on environmental justice, and premiered in Minneapolis' Southern Theater, in September 2009. Her book, Butting out! Reading cultural politics in the work of Chandralekha and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, was published by Wesleyan University Press in 2004.



New Waves! 2011 Faculty: Sonja Dumas, Arcell Cabuag, Rennie Harris, Ananya Chatterjea, and Akuzuru

Sonja Dumas' choreographic investigations are mostly in Caribbean movement as it pertains to contemporary issues of the region. A post-modern deconstruction of traditional movement styles, as well as minimalist movement inform her work, and she often incorporates theatre and video into her performances. In 2007, she made a cameo appearance at Madison Square Garden with Machel Montano, and became the first female laureate of Caraïbes en Création. In 2008, she was a finalist in Danses Caraïbe, the first Caribbean-wide choreography competition to be sponsored by Culturesfrance. She has performed with and/or choreographed for The Astor Johnson Repertory Dance Theatre, The Trinidad Theatre Workshop, The Metamorphosis Dance Company, the La Chapelle Dance Company, Standing Room Only, Noble Douglas Dance Company Inc. and Reggie Wilson's Fist and Heel Performance Group. Sonja also produced of her own spoken-word CD Once Upon a Caribbean Time. Her stories have been also been adapted for tv. In 2005, she created Chilli Bibbi Theatre where she presented works by and for young people in the Holistic Music School. For Trinidad and Tobago Carnival 2006, she was the choreographer for The Sacred Heart by Peter Minshall. Sonja's company, Continuum Dance Project, won critical attention for its 2007 presentation, New Shoes and A Thin Line. In 2008, her choreography won the Prime Minister's Best Village Trophy competition. In 2009, she presented studies of new work at NYC's DTW. Sonja wrote, directed and produced the documentary film Julia and Joyce: Two Stories of Two Dance Pioneers. The film was awarded the "Best Trinidad and Tobago Film" in the 2010 TT Film Festival. Sonja was born in Port of Spain but spent her childhood in the U.S. and East Africa. She is a Trinidad and Tobago Island Scholar, and holds a BA in Public and International Affairs as well as certificates in Theatre & Dance and Afro-American Studies from Princeton University. She trained at the Caribbean School of Dancing in Port of Spain where she achieved intermediate ballet certification from the Royal Academy of Dance. She also trained in dance and/or choreography under Astor Johnson, Bessie Schönberg, Phyllis Lamhut, Katherine Dunham and Walter Nicks. She holds an MBA from Columbia University, and spent several years in the corporate marketing world in Trinidad. She is the recipient of several international grants for her choreography, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts Fellowship in Modern Choreography and project grants from the Inter-American Development Bank and the Prince Claus Fund, and a residency grant from Art Omi.

Arcell Cabuag (New York) is the Associate Artistic Director/Dancer of Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, which he joined in 1997. He is originally from the Bay Area of California, where he received his training at the Abraham Lincoln Performing Arts Magnet School under the direction of Debbie Norris, and Studio 10 with Keith Banks. In 1996, Arcell moved to New York City and attended the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center where he was first introduced to Ronald K. Brown. His professional experience includes: Rock the House for Paramount Pictures in California, The Shoji Tabuchi Show and Christmas Spectacular in Branson, Missouri, and numerous musicals including playing the role of Tommy Dijilas in The Music Man at San Jose Musical Theater, Oklahoma at Theater Under The Stars, and the Richard Rodgers Centennial Production of The King and I starring Carole Carmello at the Papermill Playhouse. Arcell can be seen in the episode "Choreographed" for Law and Order SVU, and a "Codorinu" commercial with Pilobolus. Arcell has served the dance community as an Adjunct Professor at Long Island University, as a resident teacher at the District 4 Dancer Training Program in Harlem, and as a master class instructor for Evidence, A Dance Company to all ages and levels. Arcell is a recipient of the 2004 New York Dance and Performance award "Bessie" for his performance at the Joyce.

Akuzuru has produced, presented and become known, for her many multi-layered performances and large sculptural-installation works which have been shown internationally including the Caribbean, Europe, Africa, Asia and the US. Interdisciplinary in approach, the artist creates intense experiences, working primarily in the natural environment in site-specific situations of which its infinite possibilities are integral to her process. In her interdisciplinary environmental concepts, her oeuvres all come under her personalized and established Experiential Art Productions, which are conceptually and physically intense experiences, interactive in their presentations. In these presentations, her Maguayapa performance -sculptures have appeared as a series of intrinsic iconic forms. Born in Trinidad, her broad artistic education ranged from formative studies in classical music, the dynamic musical art-form of the steel pan in various genres, classical and contemporary dance to the indelible experiences of the famous performance traditions of the multi-genre Trinidad Carnival. She also lived and studied in the UK and Nigeria. From the 80's til date, she has undertaken several residencies and have presented solo and participated in group shows including the Nottinghill Carnival in London; LIFT-London International Festival of Theatre; the 2nd. Biennale de Martinique; Rockstone & Bootheel Exhibition in the USA. Solo exhibitions include the National Museum of Trinidad & Tobago, the Caribbean Contemporary Arts (CCA) Trinidad, Gallery Sumukha, Bangalore-India. Awards include the Westminster Arts Council-(London UK); Commonwealth Fellowship Scholarship (Nigeria); Commonwealth International Artist Residency (India); Prince Claus Fund and several others. Her latest epic work Earthology is a series of projects being taken world-wide in its varying environmental landscapes. Earthology India was the first in the series of the Earthology projects which was successfully undertaken in India in 2008. Prestigiously funded by the Commonwealth Foundation, this major work took place in several locations in India, the results of which are presented in the form of an Artist Book produced by the artist entitled: Earthology India-a spatial work in 3 Acts.



Dyane Harvey-Salaam, co-founder of the internationally acclaimed dance company, Forces of Nature, danced the lead role of Astor Johnson's "She" in the 1970s. "She" is an eponymous dance about Black female strength and power, especially in the face of adversity. Harvey-Salaam's performance remains the gold standard for all who performed the role in the years after and it is remembered in the Trinidad & Tobago dance world as "legendary". Sonja Dumas, who danced the piece in the 80's and met Dyane in the late 90's to learn about her work with Astor led a conversation with Dyane in a historic evening of dance and memories at the Trinidad Theatre Workshop.

Astor Johnson





Dyane Harvey-Salaam performing Astor Johnson's "She" in Trinidad & Tobago. Photographer UNKNOWN.



Turn your face to the sun and the shadows fall behind you.

Maori Proverb

dance+performance  
**NEW WAVES!**  
summer institute

*There is so much light here, I wrote to Mama Dy.  
You must remain constant and consistent. This is your vision and carefully you must nurture and groom, she wrote back.*

The above was written towards the end of the inaugural **Dance & Performance SUMMER Institute – New Waves!** Around the same, Octavia Butler's "Wild Seed" re-entered my life – with its main character, Anyanwu. Anyanwu, who represents the strength of women. Anyanwu, of the Nigerian Igbo - a representation of our ideal image and moral workings. She functions as a messenger, visionary and worker of the Supreme. She spreads light around the world, but also purifies and burns away destructive forces. *Fire Burn!*

**You've got to inculcate your vision, Ananya wrote. The vision is Movement. To render Trinidad & Tobago an important site for thought and experimentation in contemporary dance and performance. To create an autonomous institution where vital conversations on the body, movement, cultural production, hybridity and diaspora could be had; where dominant discourses on art and culture could be challenged and where new progressive languages could be spoken; a space where dancers could dance and be healed from the laborious hierarchies of imperialism and colonization; a space where we could "each re-strategize our own personal vision".**

Each morning greeted us with Dyane Harvey-Salaam offering **Pilates** by the Halyconia Pool. Chris Walker's **Caribbean Dance** class usually began in song, with participants learning "good mawnin'" and "Gee oh mi Madda Mac". Participants learned folk dances like Cumina, Dinki Mini and Ibo, contextualizing it with contemporary movement coming out of Jamaica and its diasporas. They heard stories of resistance as it existed in the music and dances of Jamaica. During the showing of Walker's repertory work, **'Palm Oil Rosary'** people were brought to tears. A series of solos, built on personal stories of guilt, scored by African Caribbean rhythms and Catholic hymns, resonated with many in the audience. Choreographed during the Institute, its development led to the **New Waves! Commission Project**, which will present new choreography coming out of the Dance & Performance Institute.

Ursula Payne's **Pearl Primus Workshop** was conducted at the historic **Trinidad Theatre Workshop**. Payne has long researched the work of Primus and presented several academic papers for the *In the Spirit of Pearl: the Dr. Pearl Primus Collection*. She met Dr. Primus and served as her personal assistant at the American Dance Festival the summer of 1991. Ursula also lived and studied composition, technique and repertory with Dr. Primus. Payne engaged her **Primus Archive Project** during her weeklong workshop series, utilizing the archives of Dr. Pearl Primus as inspiration for generating original choreography. Institute participants read handwritten notes and letters by Dr. Primus and were inspired by creative writing and choreographic prompts. This workshop, in conversation with **Sonja Dumas'** Choreographic Process Workshop, offered participants in-depth looks at the process of Trinidad dance artist in diaspora, at home, then and now.

Images from 'Astor Johnson's "She" with Dyane Harvey-Salaam in conversation with Sonja Dumas' at Trinidad Theatre Workshop. All by Maria Nunes



- In Dyane Harvey-Salaam's **Eleo Pomare Workshop**, we explored movement motifs and vocabulary from Pomare's early choreographies such as "Las Desenamoras". We were then treated to working on "Southern Gothic" – the last piece Pomare choreographed for Harvey-Salaam. The **Forces of Nature Workshop** was divided into two distinct formats: one addressed the Traditional African aspect of Harvey-Salaam's choreography in a Lamban workshop. The other was a workshop consisting of vocabulary of two contemporary modern choreographies, "See We" and "Rhythm Tree". Collectively, this offered an understanding of Forces of Nature's clear and unique fusion of these two movement languages.

Rennie Harris' **House** class offered footwork, lofting, and basic house dance technique – Harris' primary teaching technique for the last decade.

**Cheyenne Baptiste** was a guest dj for Rennie Harris' final class - which led into a full dance celebration at the end. **Arcell Cabuag**, Associate Artistic Director of Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE taught choreography from "To Harm the Dangerous". Choreographed in 1996, it is a section of an evening length work called "Lessons". That work, along with "Palm Oil Rosary", "Lamban Study", excerpts from "See We" and "Rhythm Tree" were all on the program for the **Repertory Showings**.

Also on the program, was, "**Fire Burn**" a new duet featuring Ananya Chatterjea and Mette Towley. We'll be seeing more of Ananya's choreography, through the **International Choreographer's Commission Program** which will premiere "Moreechika" in 2012. Chatterjea's workshop was based on the deconstructed Odissi classical style of Indian dance, the martial movement form Chhau, and Iyengar style yoga. Through an Institute partnership with the **National Council on Indian Culture**, Dr. Chatterjea conducted a special 4- hour Youth workshop. In another youth initiative, the **National Dance Association** of Trinidad & Tobago sponsored full scholarships for two talented young dancers to attend the SUMMER Institute.

Collectively, we slept on the **Meeting Space** - an open space designed for general announcements and meetings, quick performances, mini-lessons, brief talks, public conversations, etc. Outside of 1 class and a general Institute meeting, the Meeting Space was not used. Some expressed regret at not recognizing the importance of Meeting Space. But this is how Open Source ideas work – the collective determines the life and value of the space. These ideas and others were the focus of **Theorizing Strategies of Reinvigorating the Cultural Context** at Alice Yard. Joined by others like **Louris Lee-Martin Sing** of Brown Cotton Tent Theater, Dave Williams of **Bohemia** (who also taught a contemporary dance class during the Institute), Rubadiri Victor of the **Artist Coalition of Trinidad & Tobago**, we led ourselves to many great questions, including: *How can the Institute continue to be a space of imagination in both its functions - as Mechanism and Art? How do we create tangible structure(s) within open structure(s)? And how can it avoid encrusted notions of power while establishing guidelines and pathways of accountability needed to protect a dream?* A commitment to finding the answers to these and many other questions will continue to grow the Institute.

The outside events were an integral part of our process. Those who attended the **Shango Festival, Ade Odun Sango** in La Fillette were part of a moving ceremony – they carried wood, floated down the river, "ketch power" and were filled with the spirit. Yemaya and Ochun kept us in a dance, from sea to rain, during our **Maracas Beach Lime**. Institute participants worshipped at a Kali Puja in Chase Village. The following weekend, at another **Kali Puja**, Ananya Chatterjea was moved to dance in the temple. **MORE POWER!** Noted fashion designer, **Robert Young** organized a group to an **Orisha Palais** in San Juan. He also later took another group to Matura, where they attended an all-night Palais and then an early morning **Carib ceremony** in Arima. Burton Sankeralli arranged for Institute Scholar-in-Residence, Ananya Chatterjea to lead a discussion "**Dance & Social Justice**" as part of **The Philosophical Society** series at **Studio 66** in Barataria. On **Emancipation Day**, we all congregated on IndepenDANCE Square to join renowned Orisha singer **Ella Andall** up Picadilly to Duke Street (the birthplace of Trinidad Carnival) through the streets of downtown Port of Spain to the Emancipation Village in Queens Park Savannah. It was these experiences - along with the informal discussions and personal, shared realizations - that *made* the Institute; that brought Mama Dy to write, "People are finding answers here. This is healing."

Asé.







Photograph of Queens Park Savannah by 2011 New Waves! Participants Shawnee Amara Williams.



# *a space that opens all of us up to the fullness of ourselves*

*I hope to continue to be part of the dream that is making history...rather, Ourstory. It's extremely overwhelming and this experience will take months to process."*

*This Institute was a two-way learning country road – filled with surprise and I feel I will be unpacking the experience for weeks to come.*

*How great and wonderful the vision, the sacrifice, the grace that brought this to fruition. I am so very blessed to have been one of the first to experience this."*

*New Waves is just what the medicine woman ordered. So THANK YOU for being grounded, brave, passionate, wise, generous, and focused enough to LIVE YOUR DANCE. It truly is transforming many worlds with each step...more than you know.*

*you are CHANGING THE GAME.*

*I will be back for next year's institute. I have become a better dance teacher & I will be choreographing a piece, Dyane challenged me to do :-)*

*I feel obliged to start discussions in St. Croix's dance community about related topics and more. Being involved in the roundtables made me realize that there are so many things we are not talking about here in the Virgin Islands. So I have some ideas. I am still processing my experience in Trinidad. It will take awhile.*

*As I sit in another airport waiting to take another flight...I have time to reflect on the incredible journey I shared with you. What a blessed time I had building friendships and learning so much about myself. Makeda, your vision has touched us in so many ways. I walk in gratitude for this opportunity and gift.*

*u were doing works of goddesses.*

*The New Waves Summer Institute has left massive marks in my dancing, thinking abilities and my heart as well. Your faculty was so giving and so sincere and passionate about dance which set the tone from the beginning. Waking up every morning to rush to Chris' class to sing and dance was so surreal for me. I felt so surrounded connected with my peers, Chris, the space, and the spiritual realm; it was a magical moment that I will never forget.*

*I feel deconstructed. I feel deepening blessed humility and peace inside my body, to hear the beat, the rhythm of the songs. A lessening of internalized bondage. Thank you to Ananya for your fierce love of beauty and freedom! Chris! Thank you for your powerful harmony and lithe elegance within the dance of the song...within the song of the dance!*

*Ananya Chatterjea, three words: bold, vigilant, activist. I just want to thank you for being who you are, and speaking out and standing firm for what you believe in. You have given me hope to keep fighting and doing for my community. Sometimes we do need a little reminder of our why we do what we do and just seeing you talk and observing your mannerisms has given me the power to move forward on the journey for social justice.*

*Thank you so much for all your beauty, wisdom, and grace!! I am so grateful to have been able to come be with you and all our beautiful dance family- in amazing Trinidad!! Thank you for welcoming me in! I love you forever!*

*Thank you making the space for us. Every time I speak of you I get the chills because you are justly an awesome friend, mentor, sister, dancer, choreographer, etc. I am still in awe with the magic that took place in the institute. I am very grateful, and humbled to have you as a mentor.*

*Time to fly...or shall u say MAKE SPACE! THANKS AGAIN MAKEDA! I REALLY APPRECIATE THE OPPORTUNITY OF BEING IN THE 1ST ANNUAL MAKEDA THOMAS PERFORMANCE INSTITUTE. I wanna come back next year.*

*Knowing you are doing the work you do and that such an institute exists is affirming and so valuable to me. i hope to discover and revisit what is Guyanese in me...*



# KELLY ZEN-YIE TSAI

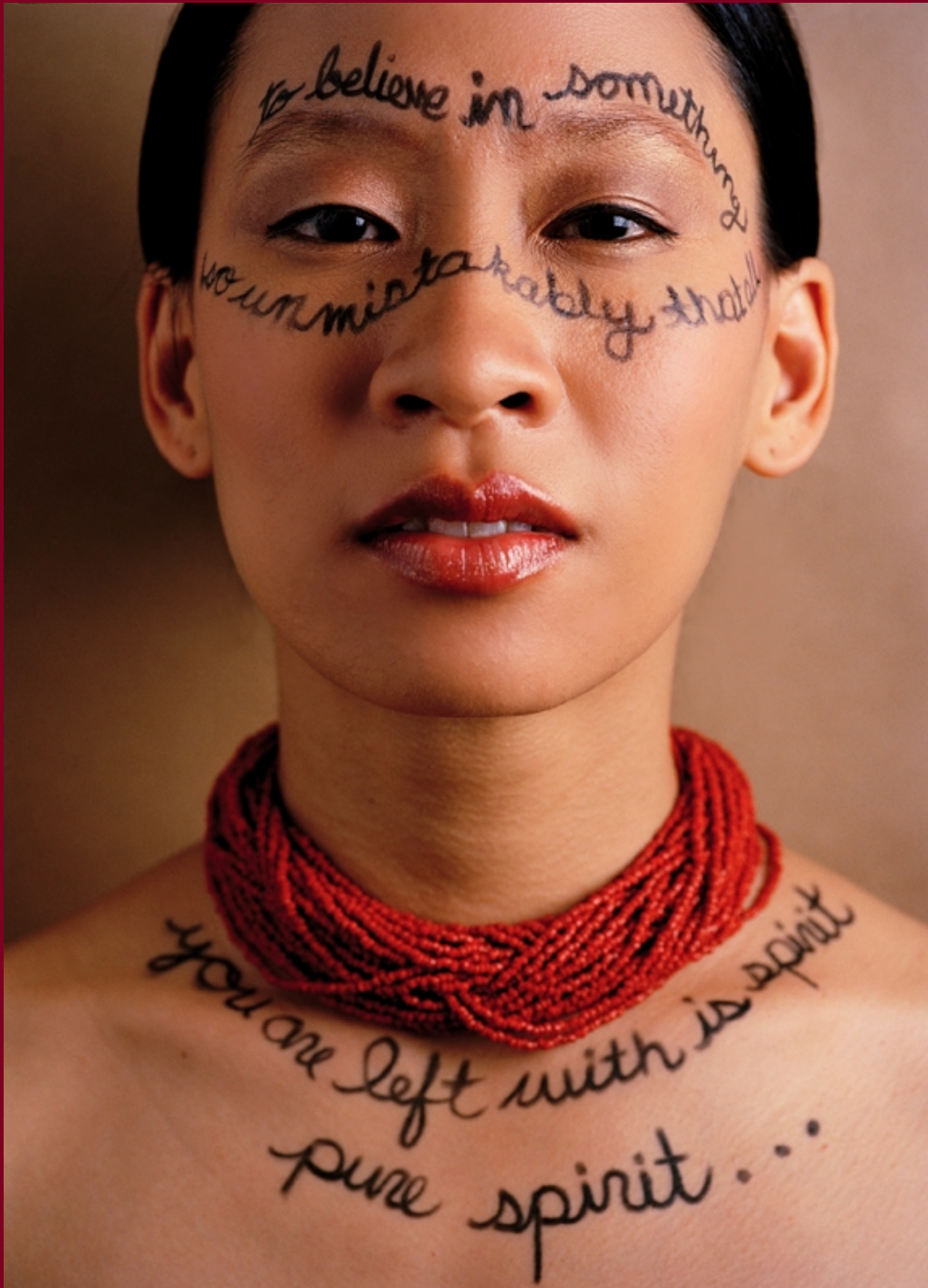


Photo by Katie Piper. Make-up & Hair by Myrian Touma. Styling by Jill Aguado & Allie Maxwell.

KELLY ZEN-YIE TSAI is a Chicago-born, Brooklyn-based, Chinese Taiwanese American spoken word artist who has performed at over 450 venues worldwide including three seasons on "Russell Simmons Presents HBO Def Poetry." Winner of an Asian American Arts Alliance/NYFA Urban Artist Initiative Award, she was profiled on Idealist in NYC's Top 40 New Yorkers Who Make Positive Social Change, AngryAsianMan.com's "30 Most Influential Asian Americans Under 30," and HBO's "East of Main Street: Asians Aloud." She has shared stages with Mos Def, KRS-One, Sonia Sanchez, Talib Kweli, Erykah Badu, Amiri Baraka, Harry Belafonte, and many more. ([www.yellowgurl.com](http://www.yellowgurl.com), FB: Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai, Twitter: @yellowgurlpoet, Bandcamp: [kellytsai.bandcamp.com](http://kellytsai.bandcamp.com))

*"Raw, evocative, insightful...Kelly is a contemporary visionary who is helping to change the world, one poem at a time."*

— Celeste Hamilton, Action Without Borders/Idealist.org

## Trinidad, eh?

What's up world? Just finished up week 1 here in Port of Spain, Trinidad, and I've got one more week to go, so it's been about three lifetimes in the last 7-8 days. Packed up in Brooklyn last week and headed out to DC to do a spoken word poetry arts and activism workshop with the good folks over at Bloombars (an AWESOME collective-run political performance and gallery space in Columbia Heights, check 'em out here) which was co-sponsored by Organization for Chinese Americans – One of my favorite kind of spaces: intimate, cozy, and full of energy. (THANK YOU DIANA & GOWRI!)

Then hustled to sound check for Sulu DC Presents Miss Fortune: A Celebration of AAPI women in hip hop at U Street Music Hall. Did all my kisses hello while chomping on sushi and trying to get everybody's bios to prep for hosting – and then bam! the show, which was seriously on fire. Everybody brought their best (Kick Rocks Crew, Misnomer(s), Rocky Rivera, DJ The Pinstriped Rebel) and left it all on the stage. What I loved about that night too was the range of expressions of hip hop from new school commercial hip hop to experimental moody political hip hop to cali-hyphy-infused hip hop to spinning throwbacks like Queen Latifah and Monie Love. It was an eclectic and passionate evening, and thankfully, nobody was in a bikini, lol. (THANK YOU SIMONE, JENNY, ALEX, REGIE & THE WHOLE SULU STAR SYSTEM :)

After the party was the afterparty. After the afterparty was....a veggie arugula sandwich at Busboys & Poets, one of my fave poetry spots in DC :) Next morning, was crazy enough to finish and record a new poem (with the help of Ill-Literacy's Adriel Luis :) for a forthcoming literary magazine issue, try to find a friend for brunch (unsuccessfully), and then hustle to the airport for my two weeks in Trinidad!

Lightning storms all around Miami, so I didn't get in until 4 AM, but since then it's been a non-stop succession of amazing dance classes (Contemporary Caribbean Dance, Dunham Technique, Choreography, Repertory – I'm here for Makeda Thomas' 2011 New Waves Dance & Performance Institute), connecting with new friends, and experiencing the culture here in Trinidad. Ah, so much to say, where to start?

Tuesday, I was lucky enough to go spit for a packed house at One Mic-Culture Eh Dead out in San Fernando, which is on the south side of the island. The organizer, Skeeto, told me that this poetry set has been going on for the last 5 years, and that he used to rush home walking 35 minutes every Friday night after he finished his shift at TGI Friday's (there are a lot of TGI Friday's here, plus KFC, Subway, & Papa John's) at midnight, just to catch Def Poetry on TV. It blows my mind how global spoken word poetry culture is, and I feel so blessed to see it and feel what these words – and the simple act of folks getting together with mic – can do. (THANK YOU SKEETO!)

Also got to watch, Skeeto and his crew The Undaground perform in Port of Spain on Thursday, and they were SUPER-DOPE. Their band played everything from hip hop to R & B to Soca, and Richard "Pan" Bereaux threw down on the steelpan, doing covers of everything from Alicia Key's Unthinkable to Jay-Z's Death of Autotune but putting the bands own spin on it with the musical arrangement and the verses. It was really refreshing to see these kinds of remix/mash-up/chopped versions with heartfelt lyricism and overall skill. Something that's all too rare across the board and expressing the heart of local culture with culture from abroad.

Okay, so much to say, but here are some random thoughts upon my first week in Trinidad. Being here made me realize how much my life is \*already\* infused with Caribbean culture, lol. My neighborhood in Brooklyn is packed with Trini, Jamaican, and Senegalese culture: food, music, clothing, speech. So when I first got here, I was like, "Damn, this is a lot like Brooklyn," but then what I realized that's not b/c Port of Spain is like Brooklyn. It's because Brooklyn is like Port of Spain.

Next, of course, I've been peepin' where the Chinese folks are, and we definitely are here. For people not familiar with Trinidad, there is a looooooong history of South Asian folks here – which is why my South Asian friends in Brooklyn constantly have to argue with people that they're NOT from Trinidad. What's pretty wild is this big beautiful building (National Academy for Performing Arts) that we're taking a lot of our classes at has Chinese characters on a lot of the emergency signs, etc. I was curious about that, and I guess that's because Chinese workers were brought over here to build those buildings, under not very good living conditions. Some of those workers have ended up settling in Port of Spain so there is a big influx of recent immigrants from China that are opening more restaurants and grocery stores.

Third, a couple of folks keep referring to the rise of crime here in Trinidad. When I asked the taxi driver last night what kind of crime, he mentioned that Trinidad is a major hub for drug traffickers smuggling drugs from Venezuela to the U.S. and Europe. He said last year there was a bust of cocaine worth over \$800 million, which I was like, "Um, yup, that would cause a lot of problems."

Oh so much to say and not enough room and words to say it! Everything is alive here, green mountains, coconut and mango trees, dogs in every yard, roosters in the morning, insects buzzing. A fusion of cultures: West African, South Asian, East Asian, Amerindian, Latino/a, European. Lots of jokes and limin' (which means hanging out, b/c back in the day the British sailors that were here when Trinidad was colonized by the British would sit around and do nothing all day, so since they were called, "Limey's" it transformed to limin'), rotis, doubles, fruit punch. Orisha culture is alive. Hindu culture is alive. Catholic culture is alive. All in this one island.

From a dance perspective, I've been learning/getting back in touch with the fact that technique is one thing, but passion and life experience shows in your face, it shows in how you move and the gravity with which you approach the earth, your rhythm, your lightness – strong muscles and perfect lines are one thing, but to truly dance for yourself and for others has to come from your deep feelings of love and willingness to relinquish self-consciousness and fear and stagnation, you have to be willing to let go and become a greater thing with the drums, with your body, with this whole congregation of beings seen and unseen, you have to understand, you have to give over to the world, or else you are perfectly executing exercises that have only their own motion as their purpose.

Also learned a lot about the limbo this week (and Geoffrey Holder, the 7 Up guy from the 70's and 80's who I last saw on "Celebrity Apprentice," but who actually is a major dancer and choreographer from Trinidad)...anyways, the limbo once was a ceremonial dance in West Africa brought to the Caribbean and transformed into a social dance for entertainment and generally bastardized in American pop culture until it became completely disconnected from its original ritualistic, ceremonial, and spiritual forms.

It's something that many of us have been lucky enough to experience. That when you step to the mic, when you come to the stage – it is for something so much larger and greater than yourself.

I'm feeling thankful for having this space to recognize and learn about these kinds of cultural roots that motivate so much of not just Caribbean, but global culture.

Blessings and more from Trinidad!

Kelly

*During the 2011 New Waves! SUMMER Institute, Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai taught **Living Poetry Outloud: Spoken Word Poetry Writing & Performance**. How do I write a poem that's true to my experiences, emotions, and inner rhythms? How can I further integrate spoken word poetry into my practice for solo and ensemble works? We'll explore these questions and more through highly interactive writing and performance exercises designed to get your ideas from within to the page to the stage with passion and confidence. Special emphasis will also be given on how vocal delivery, movement, and word can work together to create a greater whole*





*Maria Nunes Photography*

New Waves! Roundtable series at Alice Yard.





*Maria Nunes Photography*



Maria Nunes Photography

Brittany Williams and Kelly Zen-Yie Tsai perform "Palm Oil Rosary" at New Waves! SUMMER Institute Showing at NAPA.

# CHRIS WALKER'S "PALM OIL ROSARY"

## LOCAL DANCE COMMISSION PROJECT

The Dance & Performance Institute is pleased to announce "Palm Oil Rosary", a new work choreographed by Chris Walker as the 2011-2012 New Waves! Commission.

The New Waves! Commission supports the local dance community by nurturing the creation of new dance work and premieres that new work to a wide audience via partnership with COCO Dance Festival. The commission is given to local (Caribbean-based) dance choreographers to create new work during the SUMMER Institute and includes:

Rehearsal space during the SUMMER Institute;  
Institute-hosted showing for choreographer to share work and input;  
Technical support to develop lighting, sound, and/or set concepts;  
Premiere performance of the new work during 2012 November COCO Dance Festival

Recipients are selected by a panel consisting of Institute faculty and staff. Awards are announced in October. Award recipients will then have time for creative development through August. Commissioned works should be no more than 20 minutes in length.

NEW WAVES!  
Commission  
PROJECT

## COCO DANCE FESTIVAL

COCO, the Contemporary Choreographer's Collective is in its third year, having presented performances at Queens Hall (2009), Alice Yard and Bohemia (2010), and the historic Little Carib Theatre (2011). The collective is led by four independent artists – Dave Williams, Sonja Dumas, Nicole Wesley and Nancy Herrera. COCO has featured Anika Marcelle, Dave Williams, Nicole Wesley, Rachel Lee, Makeda Thomas, Sonja Dumas, up-and-coming choreographer Bridgette Wilson, and visual and performance artist Akuzuru. In 2010, the Dance & Performance Institute partnered with COCO Dance Festival to present Artist-in-Residence, Binahkaye Joy's "Adelaide's Ocean Lullaby" at Alice Yard and Bohemia. The 2012 COCO Festival will be held in November at VENUE TBD.



# Moreechika, Season of Mirage

## ANANYA DANCE THEATRE

*Moreechika* will explore the affect oil drilling projects have on global communities of color and portray how women from these communities resist and survive systemic and hierarchical violences associated with these projects. We plan to contrast the abundance of oil and financial gain with the scarcity and poverty of the communities nearby and around oil drilling projects. *Moreechika* is the third performance in a four-year anti-violence artistic initiative that has been researching efforts among women from global communities of color to resist the violent and capitalist misuse of four physical elements in particular: land, gold, oil, and water. The initiative foregrounds embodied knowledge and incorporates scholarly research.

On Friday 27 July and Saturday, 28 July 2012, as part of the INTERNATIONAL CHOREOGRAPHER'S COMMISSION PROGRAM, of the *New Waves!* Commission Project, the Dance & Performance Institute will present ANANYA DANCE THEATRE in (2) performances of *Moreechika*, a new evening length dance work.

The International Choreographers Commissioning Program supports the creation of new dance work by international choreographers and premieres that new work to a wide audience via partnership with COCO Dance Festival. This positions Trinidad & Tobago as a major site in the production of new choreographic works by international choreographers. The Commission Award includes:

Rehearsal space during the SUMMER Institute;  
Technical support to develop lighting, sound, and/or set concepts;  
Premiere performance of new work during *New Waves!* SUMMER Institute

Recipients are selected by a panel consisting of Institute faculty and staff. Awards are announced in October. Award recipients will then have time for creative development through July. The choreographer's company premieres the new work during the *New Waves!* SUMMER Institute.

NEW WAVES!  
Commission  
PROJECT



**esusu**



# Transnational Body Histories & a Mapping of the Future

With Scholar-in-Residence, Ananya Chatterjea

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