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At the same time we were pointing a finger at you...

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Dr. Susan A. Cole, President
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Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts & Cultural Programming

American Premiere!

Robyn Orlin & Compagnie Jant-Bi | Germaine Acogny

*At the same time we were pointing a finger at you,
we realized we were pointing three at ourselves...*

A piece by Robyn Orlin

With the Dancers of Compagnie Jant-Bi
Artistic Director, Compagnie Jant-Bi Germaine Acogny
Dancers Mamadou Baldé, Adelinou Dasylya, Hans Peter Diop Ibaghino, Claude Marius Gomis,
Mohamed Abdoulaye Kane, Aliou Ndoeye, Tchérébé Bertrand Saky, Khalifa Ababacar Top

Assistant Choreographer Shush Ténin
Lighting Laïs Foulc
Video Aldo Lee
Costumes Birgit Neppi
Scenography Robyn Orlin in collaboration with Maciej Fiszer
Subtitle Translation Maurice Salem
Technical Director Thabo Pule
Lighting Manager Thomas Cottereau
Administration and Booking Damien Valette, jgdv.net
Coordination Julie Lucas

Arts and Cultural Programming at Montclair State University is honored to have been awarded a 2015 Citation of Excellence from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts for achieving the highest standard of excellence as recognized by our peers.

Produced by City Theater & Dance Group and Damien Valette Productions. Co-produced by La Halle aux Grains, Scène nationale de Blois, Festival Rayons Frais, Tours, L’Opéra de Lille, Le Théâtre de la Ville, Paris, Les Treize Arches, Scène conventionnée de Brive, and Les Théâtres de la ville de Luxembourg. This production was supported by Région Centre and the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.
Robyn Orlin & Compagnie Jant-Bi | Germaine Acogny thank Catherine Bizouarn and the team of La Halle aux Grains; Elisabeth Bakambamba Tambwe; Olivier Hespel; and Alban Corbier Labasse, as well as l’École des Sables for providing residency support in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal.

Duration: 70 minutes, no intermission.
In consideration of both audience and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in the theater.

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Montclair State’s Office of Arts & Cultural Programming (ACP) presents and produces leading artists of the world in dance, music, theater, and opera. Under its signature series Peak Performances, ACP has produced works such as *Zinnias: The Life of Clementine Hunter* by Robert Wilson, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Toshi Reagon, and Jacqueline Woodson; *Dog Days* by David T. Little and Royce Vavrek; Harry Partch’s *Oedipus*; and Ridge Theater’s *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* by David Lang. In addition, ACP has commissioned works by Bill T. Jones, Kronos Quartet, Jan Fabre, Liz Lerman, Wayne McGregor, Laurie Anderson, Romeo Castellucci, Richard Alston, Susan Marshall, Fred Hersch, and David Gordon.

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Peak Performances

THE 2014-15 SEASON

American Premiere!

Robyn Orlin & Compagnie Jant-Bi | Germaine Acogny

*At the same time we were pointing a finger at you,
we realized we were pointing three at ourselves...*



Photo by Christophe Raynaud de Lage



January 24—February 1, 2015
Alexander Kasser Theater



MONTCLAIR STATE
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Program Notes

Some thoughts on *At the same time*...

An invitation came my way from Germaine Acogny several years ago, but we just never seemed to be able to pin the date down to work with the male company of Compagnie Jant-Bi. Finally, in 2014 it all came to fruition, and a piece was born. The point at which we started was the “body” and how we as Africans “talk” with and about the body—but do we necessarily acknowledge and understand our bodies? I had all kinds of ideas, coming from South Africa, about what kind of elements I wanted to work with but very quickly realized that my experiences as a South African were completely different from those of the Senegalese dancers and there was a lot more that I had to learn and understand about Senegalese culture. I felt I could not critique their culture in the same way I do mine, so through my usual problem-solving and storytelling process we began to make a piece that evolved into our version of the “faux-lion” ceremony. It became a celebration with an added twist: instead of asking the audience if they had paid for their tickets (which is the usual climax of the ceremony), we decided to push the whole ceremony in another direction—and this I leave up to you to experience during the piece.

Some thoughts on the “faux-lion” ceremony...

For me, this is a very multifaceted ceremony. It is not religious; therefore, the whole community can access it, including and especially the children. It is a ceremony with a long history, and although it has evolved a lot, the basic structure has stayed the same. It is performed only by men—the group I was working with was only men; it involves two female characters, the lion’s wife and the lead back-up singer, which allowed me to move with the group around the discourse of homophobia—very prevalent on the whole continent. It also creates a platform on which children’s basic fears are brought to the surface and supported by the lion and his entourage and, in so doing, eventually by the audience. By playing a huge celebratory function for the community, it encourages a humble sense of identity and acknowledgment of history. For me, it gave me the time to rediscover and participate in a very new experience of the continent on which I was born.

—*Robyn Orlin*

About the Artists

Robyn Orlin

Born in 1955 in Johannesburg, South Africa, Robyn Orlin studied at the London School of Contemporary Dance, 1975–1980. With the help of a Fulbright Scholarship, she completed her master’s degree in Fine Art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1990 to 1993. Since then, she has been working consistently on her own pieces in South Africa.

Nicknamed in South Africa “a permanent irritation,” Orlin is well known for reflecting the difficult and complex realities in her country. Integrating different media (text, video, plastic arts), she investigates a certain theatrical reality that has enabled her to find her unique choreographic vocabulary. Her uniqueness is reflected in her entertaining titles: *If you can’t change the world, change your curtains* (1990); *The Polka Dot Lives On!* (1995) for the Soweto Dance Theatre; *Naked on a goat* (1996); *Orpheus...I mean Euridice...I mean the natural history of a chorus girl* (1998), which

obtained the FNB Vita Dance Umbrella award for choreography; *Daddy, I’ve seen this piece six times before and I still don’t know why they’re hurting each other* (1999); *F...(Untitled)* (2000); *We must eat our suckers with the wrapper on* and *The future may be bright, but it’s not necessarily orange* (2001); *Ski-Fi-Jenni... and the frock of the new*, a piece loosely based on the myth of Iphigenia, at Montpellier Dance Festival in July 2002; *Although I live inside...my hair will always reach towards the sun...* in 2004, a solo for Sophiatou Kossoko; and *When I take off my skin and touch the sky with my nose, only then can I see little voices amuse themselves* in 2005 at MC2 in Grenoble. In 2005 she created a solo piece for Vera Mantero in Aix-en-Provence, *Hey Dude, I have talent, I am just waiting for God...*

In 2004, commissioned by INA and Arte, Orlin directed a short movie, *Hidden beauties/dirty histories*. She was in residency at Centre National de la Danse in Pantin/Paris from September 2005 through 2007. While there, she restaged *Daddy...* and *We must eat...*; she also created a

piece in the neighborhood cafés and gave many workshops and lectures. Orlin directed Handel’s *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* at the National Paris Opéra in April 2007. During the 2007–08 season, she created a piece for South Africa’s Via Kattlehong Dance as part of Festival d’Automne in Créteil. In February 2008, she created *Dressed to kill...Killed to dress...* with the swenkas in Liège, Belgium. She was invited by Opéra Comique in Paris to direct *Porgy and Bess* in May 2008.

Walking next to our shoes...intoxicated by strawberries and cream, we enter continents without knocking..., created with the Phuphuma Love Minus singers, was presented as part of Banlieues Bleues Festival in 2009 and had its American premiere at Peak Performances in 2011. In January 2010, Orlin presented *Call it...kissed by the sun...better still the revenge of geography...*, a solo for the French hip-hop dancer Ibrahim Sissoko with live graphic illustration by Maxime Rebière. In February 2010 she again presented *Daddy...* at Festival les Hivernales in Avignon.

In 1999 Orlin won the third prize at the African Rencontres Chorégraphiques and in 2000 was awarded the Jan Fabre Prize for the most subversive work at the International Choreographic Meetings in Seine-Saint-Denis. She won the 2002 Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance for the creative originality of her show *Daddy...* Orlin was made a knight in the French National Order of Merit by the French ambassador Denis Pietton, on February 28, 2009.

In 2011 *Have you hugged, kissed and respected your brown Venus today* was presented at Festival d’Automne à Paris and on tour in Luxembourg, Monaco, and many other festivals. Orlin created *Beauty remained for just a moment then returned gently to her starting position...* at Biennale de Lyon in September 2012. It was performed at Théâtre national de Chaillot for the official opening of the South African season in France. In 2013 she created *In a world full of butterflies, it takes balls to be a caterpillar...* in Reunion Island and at Bastille Theater, part of Festival d’Automne à Paris. In 2014 she created *At the same time we were pointing a finger at you, we realized we were pointing three at ourselves...*, a new piece for Festival d’Avignon. Orlin also has collaborated in the development of other works, notably with William Kentridge on *Ubu and the Truth Commission* (1997) and with Sophie Loucachevsky and Jonas Gongwa (1998).

Compagnie Jant-Bi

Compagnie Jant-Bi was created in 1998 with dancers who had participated in the first professional workshop of the International Centre for Traditional and Contemporary African Dances, l’École des Sables in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal, under the artistic direction of the Senegalese dancer and choreographer Germaine Acogny. In its 17-year history, the company has performed worldwide, including in major festivals in Europe and North America and in prominent theaters such as Théâtre de la Ville in Paris, FIND in Montreal, and Jacob’s Pillow, the Kennedy Center, and Arizona State University in the United States.

Compagnie Jant-Bi works closely with the International Centre for Traditional and Contemporary African Dances, l’École des Sables on the coast in the south of Dakar. The principal aim of the Centre is to provide African dancers with professional training in traditional and contemporary African dance and to develop and promote contemporary African dance. The Centre is also a meeting point and a place of exchange for dancers and choreographers belonging to the African diaspora and different cultures from all over the world. The company continues this international cultural exchange by creating works that reflect the spirit of the Centre. By forming contacts with choreographers from other cultures and incorporating different dance styles, a fusion between those cultures and the essence of African dance is obtained.

Mamadou Baldé, dancer, choreographer, and teacher, grew up in St. Louis, Senegal, where he was trained in traditional dances, including in Cire Beye’s company Jalloré. Specializing in Sabar and other traditional dances, he also focuses on the theatrical stage. Trained at l’École des Sables, in 2008 he joined Compagnie Jant-Bi, with whom he regularly tours the world. He also choreographs, dances, and teaches courses in traditional dances for the company Dambala in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal.

Adelinou DasyIva, a dancer and drummer known professionally as Khadim, was first trained in the traditional dances of Dakar. Originally from Guinea Bissau, he mastered the dances and percussion of both Senegal and Guinea Bissau. A member of Compagnie Jant-Bi since 2008, he has toured internationally and has been invited by companies to participate in creative projects, including in 2010 with Compagnie Toula Limnaos Berlin and choreographer Robyn Orlin. Khadim is also a professor; a graduate of l’École des Sables, he regularly teaches traditional dances, including

to children and adolescents at l’École des Sables in Toubab Dialaw, Senegal.

Hans Peter Diop Ibaghino first discovered hip-hop culture in his hometown of Libreville, Gabon, where he played in a dance troupe called No Fear. He then moved to Dakar, Senegal, where he first joined Company No Limit as a performer, then became choreographer of dance troupe X-trail. Trained at l’École des Sables, he has had the opportunity to develop his technique, discover new styles of traditional African dance and contemporary dance, and refine his versatility in hip-hop culture (new style, popping, break dance, house). He has worked with choreographers including Arnaud Ndoumba, Nita Liem, Patrick Acogny, and Robyn Orlin. He is artistic director of Company Art’corps and dances in Compagnie Jant-Bi.

Claude Marius Gomis, born in Dakar, discovered hip-hop dance on television as an adolescent. Self-taught, as were most of his partners, he began street dancing (krump, popping, etc.). He formed the B-boy company Punisher Crew and performed onstage (Kaay Fecc, La Nuit de la Danse Dakar) and in competitions (Red Bull BC One Cypher Senegal, Battle National SN) and can be seen in various videos clips. In 2010, he danced for George Momboye during the Black Arts Festival and then decided to open up to other dance styles. He was selected at l’École des Sables by Germaine and Patrick Acogny to participate in various workshops before joining Compagnie Jant-Bi. Still in search of mixed movements, he continues to participate in hip-hop, traditional, and contemporary dance workshops and to transmit his knowledge to other young people.

Mohamed Abdoulaye Kane was born in Dakar, Senegal, where he began his dance studies with the Kaay Fecc Association. He continued his training at l’École des Sables, where he gained knowledge of the forms of traditional and contemporary dances of Africa and the West. From 2002 to 2004, Kane was a member of the Compagnie 1er Temps in Senegal. In 2004, he joined Compagnie Jant-Bi for the creation of *Fagaala* and today is one of the most experienced members of the company. He assists the artistic directors of l’École des Sables, Germaine and Patrick Acogny, and rehearses Jant-Bi’s two companies (men and women) while participating in various designs and tours of the men’s company. He holds a diploma in the Acogny technique and is a full professor at l’École des Sables.

Aliou Ndoye has been a dancer, percussionist, and singer since 1997, when he joined the company Cape Naz Popenguiné. Very active in community and cultural life, his artistic activities are divided between shows with many companies, including as artistic director, and teaching traditional dances. He has attended several training courses at l’École des Sables and joined Compagnie Jant-Bi in 2009, with whom he tours regularly as a dancer. He recently joined the cast of choreographer Robyn Orlin’s latest creation, touring internationally in 2014–15.

Tchébé Bertrand Saky, a dancer, choreographer, and percussionist, was born in Yopougon, Côte d’Ivoire. He began dancing with the National Ballet of Côte d’Ivoire in 1993; in 1996 he joined Company Afrika Bikonda, managed by Cameroonian director Jean-Jacques Yem aka Nlomkop Dikoa, and toured western Africa. He was choreographer for Company Sparks beginning in 1997 and from 2003 to 2004 was a member of Compagnie 1er Temps of Andréya Ouamba (prize winner of the Choreographic Meetings of Paris). He has deepened his knowledge in traditional and contemporary dances of Africa and Europe at l’École des Sables. He has been a member of Compagnie Jant-Bi since 2004 and has toured worldwide with its pieces *Waxtaan* and *Fagaala*. In 2011, he joined the Centre National de la Danse de Paris (CND) to train for the state diploma of professor of dance, in an arrangement between l’École des Sables and the CND. He lives and works in Dakar and teaches regularly at l’École des Sables. He dances his solo in international festivals.

Khalifa Ababacar Top began dancing in traditional ceremonies, games of Simb (the faux-lion ceremony), and on the television show *Oscar Vacances*. Deemed a very good Sabar dancer, he decided to devote himself fully to dance. He has staged several ballets of Senegal, including the famous “sacred forest,” perfecting his mastery of traditional dances. Since 2013, he has turned to contemporary dance with professional training at l’École des Sables. He has since joined Compagnie Jant-Bi. In 2014, he was chosen as an interpreter of choreographer Robyn Orlin’s latest creation.