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

Office of Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University

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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 Sallé, Adilou Danyaly, Hans Peter Diep Bagnha, Claude Marius Genis, Mohamed Abdoulaye Kane, Alvin N'Diaye, Tchébé Bertrand Saty, Khalifa Alhacar Top

Assistant Choreographer: Shush Ténin
Lighting: Luis Foote
Video: Aidoo Lee
Costumes: Birgit Nöpel
Scenicography: Robyn Orlin in collaboration with Maciej Fiszer
Subtitle Translation: Maurice Salem
Technical Director: Thabo Pule
Lighting Manager: Thomas Cottaneau
Administration and Booking: Damien Valette, jgdv.net
Coordination: John Lucas

Montclair State’s Office of Arts & Cultural Programming (OACP) presents and produces leading artists of the world in dance, music, theater, and opera. Under its signature series Peak Performances, OACP has produced works such as Wayne McGregor, Laurie Anderson, Romeo Castellucci, Richard Alston, Susan Marshall, Fred Hersch, and David Gordon.

The 2014/15 season is made possible in part by funds from:

The New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Discover Jersey Arts, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, and New Jersey’s Partner for Arts and Cultural Programming at Montclair State University.

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To view our complete season and for more information, visit peakperfs.org

Janury 24–February 1, 2015

Alexander Kasser Theater

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...
Some thoughts on At the same time…

An invitation came my way from Germaine Acogny a few years ago, but we just never seemed to be able to find a date that suited my old man, the main company of Compagnie Jant-Bi. Finally, in 2014 we 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 experiences as a South African were completely different from those of the Senegalese dancers and there was a lot to learn about Senegalese culture. I felt I could not criticize our culture in the 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 audience 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 multilayered 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 back-up singer, which allowed me to move with the group around the illustration of homophobia—which 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, evidently 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 the time to rediscover and participate in a very new experience of the celebrations.

Some thoughts on the “lions”

I was born in 1955 in Johannesburg, South Africa, Robyn Orlin

Daddy…

about the body…

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 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 art) and challenging the 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 curtails (1990). The Poika Rockers also found time for the Soweto Dance Theatre; Naked on a goat (1996); Orpheus. . .I mean Eudice. . .I mean the natural history of a chonous 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). [U]hubum. . .We must eat our suckers with the wrapper on and The future may be bright, but it’s not necessarily orange (2001); Ski-Fî-Jenn…, and the track 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 Verao Manter in Aix-en-Provence, Hey Dude, I have talent, I am just waiting for God… (2004). In 2007, commissioned by IHA and Arte, Orlin directed a short movie, Hidden beautiful/dirty histories. She was in residence at Centre National de la Danse in Paris/París from September 2009 through 2010. 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 Orlando, Peri en essentia, and their music, at the National Paris Opera in April 2007. During the 2007–2008 season, she created a piece for South Africa’s Vita Kaflehong Dance as part of Festival d’Aubonne in Crétier. In February 2008, she created Dressed to kill, killed to dress… with the sweaskins 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 Phiphuoma Love Minus singers, was presented as part of Bodies Blues Festival, with 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-music Bam BIO (Brigitte Soksiko) with live graphic illustration by Maxime Rebière. In February 2010 she again presented Daddy… at Festival les Hivermales in Avignon.

In 1999 Orlin won the third prize at the African Rencontres Choreographiques and in 2000 was awarded the Jan Fabre Prize for the most subversive work at the International Contemporary Dance Meetings in Vienna. 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 dancer the French ambassador Denis Plisson, on February 28, 2009.

In 2011 Have you hugged, kissed and respected your brown Venus today was presented at Festival des Arts de la rue in Sigmaringen, France, 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 as part of the International Choreographic Workshop opening of the South African season in France in 2013. In 2013 she created A world in full of butterflies, it takes balls to be a catapiller… in Reunion Island as part of Batiste Theater, part of Festival d’Aubonne à Paris. In 2014 she created At the same time we were pointing a finger at you, we were pointing three at ourselves…, a new piece for Festival d’Avignon. Orlin also has continued to develop the development of her works, notably with William Kentridge on Ubu and the Truth Commission (1997) and with Sophie Louachovsky and Jonas Gongwa (1998).