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Award-Winning Destiny Arts Center Announces The Premier of The Black (W)hole

Marc Bamuthi Joseph Returns for First Oakland Commission April 17- May 3,2020

OAKLAND, CA (February 2020) -- Destiny Arts Center, the youth development non-profit organization that inspires and ignites social change through the arts, today announced the premiere of a new Spring performance called The Black (W)hole.

In partnership with celebrated artist Marc Bamuthi Joseph, this new multidisciplinary performance combines hip hop and vertical dance, poetic elegies, video installations, mixed-media public artworks that honor six young people who died before age 32 in and around Oakland.

The Black (W)hole performances premiere on April 17 and end on May 3, 2020 at the Odell Johnson Performing Arts Center at Laney College and features the award winning Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company, directed by Sarah Crowell and Rashidi Omari, and Destiny’s Elders Project, directed by Risa Jaroslow with Rose Huey. Other collaborating artists include visual artist and muralist Brett Cook, Yoram Savion of YakFILMS, Amelia Rudolph, Suzanne Gallo and Rose Huey of BANDALOOP vertical dance company, lighting designer JennyB of shady lady lighting, and costume designer Angie Wilson.

“Last year, every member of our teen company knew someone who had been killed by violence,” said Sarah Crowell, Artistic Director of Destiny Arts Center. “We commissioned Bamuthi to come home to Oakland and help us create a new, embodied language to memorialize youth in our city who have died too-soon. The Black (W)hole is a vehicle for resistance and spiritual renewal that will show how public rituals can affirm cultural memory and help us mourn and heal.”

“The Black (W)hole is ambitious and complex, seeking to answer the question of how young people mourn the passing of their own, as well as the passing of their own town said Joseph, an Oakland resident for 20 years until 2018, when he was named Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact at the Kennedy Center for the Arts in Washington, DC. “We are using different art forms to name and memorialize what is being lost in an ever-changing, ever gentrifying Oakland, and addressing the swift, dramatic changes in urban gentrified cities around the country.”

(more)
The Black (W)hole: Part Installation, Part Community Ritual, Part Performance

Part One of the Black (W)hole will be a series of performance rituals for each of the six young ancestors being honored. The rituals in various locations around Oakland and will include movement, poetry and visual symbols that act as portals to the spiritual realm and create a public ritual for mourning and healing. The visual symbols built for the events will be viewable at the public performances.

Part Two is a more traditional yet intimate performance that evokes the verse-driven “choreo-poems” that are Joseph’s trademark work--personal, highly political creations. The text will be anchored by hip-hop movement, and backdrop video visuals that not only elevate the aesthetic value of the performance, but also make visible the community healing process leading up to the public performance.

Part Three is a “cleanse and celebratory micro-parade,” in the style of a Second Line procession, a New Orleans tradition that is marked by jubilant dancing in the streets, to honor the young ancestors. This will happen directly after each performance at the Laney Theater, moving the audience outside to witness vertical dance on a building wall, paying homage to the young ancestors as spirits that still live among us.

Tickets for The Black (W)hole will be available via Evenbrite and on Destiny's website at https://destinyarts.org/events/the-black-whole/.

About Destiny Arts

Destiny Arts Center’s mission is to inspire and ignite social change through the arts. Destiny has been working with Oakland children, families, and communities for the last 30+ years, bringing high-quality arts programming (dance, theater, martial arts) to Oakland youth for free or at a reduced cost. Rooted in violence prevention philosophies and the “Warrior’s Code” (Love, Care, Respect, Honor, Responsibility, Peace), Destiny uses the arts to foster safe, peaceful, and healthy environments for youth that promote wellness and resilience, provide social and emotional support and build community and school environments that increase youth protective factors against the effects of poverty, gentrification, and neighborhood fragmentation. Destiny serves approximately 2600 youth, aged 3-18, per year through their North Oakland center and at over 25 school and community partners. Learn more at www.destinyarts.org.

Created with funding from a Hewlett Foundation 50 Arts Commission, The Black (W)hole will be shared with the public through performances in April and May of 2020. Major funding also comes from Dance/USA Fellowships to Artists, made possible with generous funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; The MAP Fund, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Phyllis C. Wattis Foundation; Kenneth Rainin Foundation; the National
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