A photograph of four performers, two women and two men, dressed in traditional or cultural attire. The image is overlaid with a solid red color. The performers are looking upwards and slightly to the left. The woman in the center has her hands clasped in front of her. The man on the far right is wearing a patterned vest over a dark shirt. The woman on the far left is wearing a patterned top and a headscarf. The man in the center is wearing a patterned top. The overall mood is solemn and respectful.

'Not Just Your Mama's Post-Modern Dance Company'

# REGGIE WILSON /

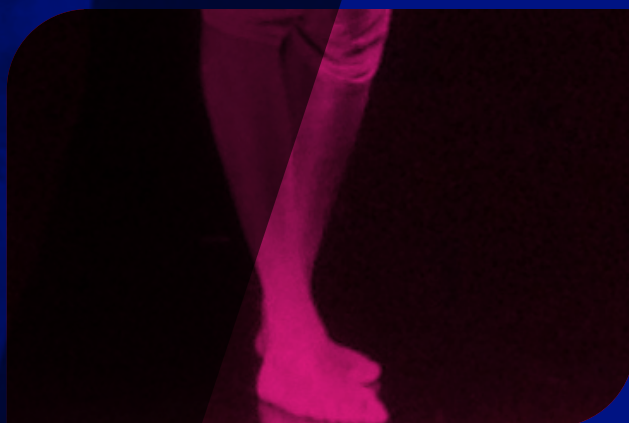
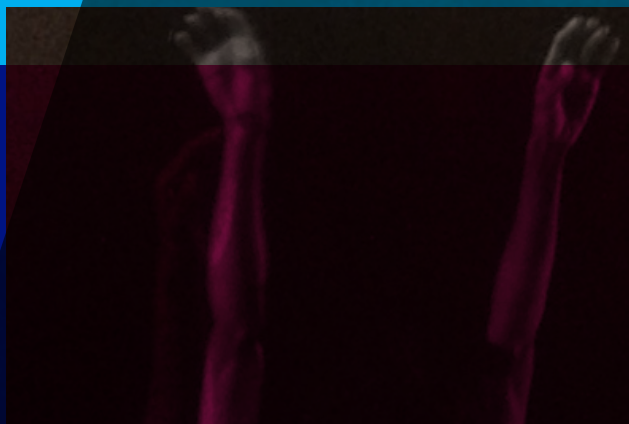
## FIST AND HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP

FOUNDER AND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR : REGGIE WILSON

EST. 1989

# FIST AND HEEL

The Company's name is derived from enslaved Africans in the Americas who reinvented their spiritual traditions as a soulful art form that white and black authorities dismissed as merely 'fist and heel worshipping'.



Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group is a Brooklyn-based dance company whose mission is to create, research, develop, and present new performance work that investigates the intersections of culture and movement practices. The Company's body-of-works draw from the spiritual and mundane traditions of Africa and its Diaspora; Fist and Heel believes in the potential of the body as a valid means for knowing.

The choreography of Reggie Wilson displays rigor, structure and craft in a postmodern dance vernacular. His choreography expands the limitations of textbook definitions of 'black dance' and range from strict dance pieces to full, all-inclusive performance art pieces with arranged vocalizations, text, and inclusion of other media. Fist and Heel's performance works strive for authenticity and respect of Reggie Wilson's creative vision.

The Company has received support from major foundations and corporations and has performed in the United States and abroad at notable venues including Dance Theater Workshop, New York Live Arts, Brooklyn Academy of Music, REDCAT, John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, and Festival Kaay Fecc in Senegal.

# WHAT

## p4. REGGIE WILSON

Reggie Wilson (Executive and Artistic Director, Choreographer, Performer) founded Fist & Heel Performance Group, in 1989. Wilson draws from the cultures of Africans in the Americas and combines them with post-modern elements and his own personal movement style to create...

## p10. MOSES(ES)

*MOSES(ES)* is an evening-length dance performance; it focuses on how we lead and why we follow. Grounded in Wilson's re-reading of Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (the Moses story told as a Southern folk tale in African-American vernacular), and with his exploratory travels to Israel, Egypt...

## p16. CITIZEN

In *CITIZEN*, Wilson drills down into the human desire to belong with exponentially expanding questions: "Do the injustices in today's America engender a feeling of belonging? What supports belonging? Is belonging solely something internal, inside the individual?"

## p22. POWER

*POWER* is the title of Reggie Wilson's new evening-length dance performance work. It reimagines compelling core Shaker values, contributions, practices and histories through a postmodern American lens.

## p26. GROUNDS THAT SHOUT

Curated by award-winning choreographer Reggie Wilson, *Grounds that Shout!* (and others merely shaking) was a series of performances that responded to the layered histories of Philadelphia's religious spaces...



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# REGGIE WILSON



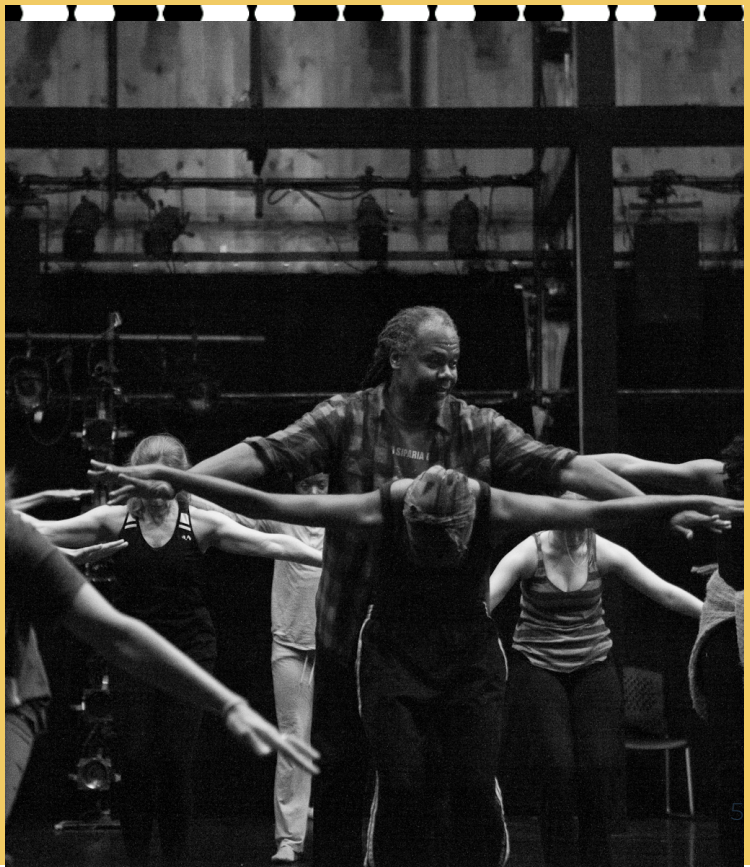
Reggie Wilson (Executive and Artistic Director, Choreographer, Performer) founded Fist & Heel Performance Group, in 1989. Wilson draws from the cultures of Africans in the Americas and combines them with post-modern elements and his own personal movement style to create what he often calls “post-African/Neo-Hoodoo Modern dances.”

His work has been presented nationally and internationally at venues such as Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York Live Arts, and Summerstage (NYC), Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (Lee, MA), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), UCLA Live, and Redcat (Los Angeles), VSA NM (New Mexico), Myrna Loy (Helena, MT), The Flynn (Burlington, VT), Contemporary Arts Center (New Orleans), Dance Umbrella (Austin, TX), Linkfest and Festival e'Nkundleni (Zimbabwe), Dance Factory (South Africa), Danças na Cidade (Portugal), Festival Kaay Fecc (Senegal), The Politics of Ecstasy, and Tanzkongress 2013 (Germany).

Wilson is a graduate of New York University, Tisch School of the Arts (1988, Larry Rhodes, Chair). He has studied composition and been mentored by Phyllis Lamhut; Performed and toured with Ohad Naharin before forming Fist and Heel. He has lectured, taught and conducted workshops and community projects throughout the US, Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. He has traveled extensively: to the Mississippi Delta to research secular and religious aspects of life there; to Trinidad and Tobago to research the Spiritual Baptists and the Shangoists; and also to Southern, Central, West and East Africa to work with dance/performance groups as well as diverse religious communities. He has served as visiting faculty at several universities including Yale, Princeton and Wesleyan.

*A brainy choreographer whose research takes him into the crannies of religious and cultural history. Each choreographic project yields an energy, compounded differently from his sources.*

Mr. Wilson is the recipient of the Minnesota Dance Alliance's McKnight National Fellowship (2000-2001). Wilson is also a 2002 BESSIE-New York Dance and Performance Award recipient for his work *The Tie-tongued Goat and the Lightning Bug Who Tried to Put Her Foot Down* and a 2002 John Simon Guggenheim Fellow. He has been an artist advisor for the National Dance Project and Board Member of Dance Theater Workshop. In recognition of his creative contributions to the field, Mr. Wilson was named a 2009 United States Artists Prudential Fellow and is a 2009 recipient of the Herb Alpert Award in Dance. His evening-length work *The Good Dance-dakar/ brooklyn* had its World premiere at the Walker Art Center and NY premiere on the Brooklyn Academy of Music's 2009 Next Wave Festival. In 2012, New York Live Arts presented a concert of selected Wilson works, *theRevisitation*, to critical acclaim and the same year he was named a Wesleyan University's Creative Campus Fellow, received an inaugural Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, and received the 2012 Joyce Foundation Award for his successful work *Moses(es)* which premiered in 2013. His critically acclaimed work *CITIZEN*, premiered 2016 (FringeArts - World; BAM NextWave 2016 - NYC); both these works continue to tour. Wilson was curator of Danspace Project's Dancing Platform *Praying Grounds: Blackness, Churches, and Downtown Dance* (Platform 2018) and created the commissioned work "...they stood shaking while others began to shout" specifically for the space at St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery. Most recently, he curated *Grounds That Shout! (and others merely shaking)*, a series of performances in several Philadelphia historic sacred spaces. His newest work is titled, *POWER*.





**Wilson creates powerful  
and intricate rhythms**



PRESS

# Wilson's poetic work often has historical resonance.

New York Times

ful  
.

"His performers' own bodies often become musical instruments: voices shouting and singing, feet stomping, hands clapping, body percussion and aspirated breath."

- *Hawaii Island Journal*

Through travel and ethnographic research, Wilson incorporates performance practices of the African diaspora into his choreography, and in so doing updates the research-to-performance methodology of Zora Neale Hurston, Katherine Dunham and Pearl Primus from mid-century.

At the same time he freely borrows movement material and compositional devices from a wide range of sources, blurring the distinction between black dance and modern dance and challenging spectators to recognize the global circulation of American and African cultures. Wilson pushes us to reconsider the transnational circulation of modern dance, for his encounters with Phyllis Lamhut, Ohad Naharin, Noble Douglass and Andrey Quamba call for a global dance history, rather than histories premised on a single nation-state or subculture.

## Residency Activities

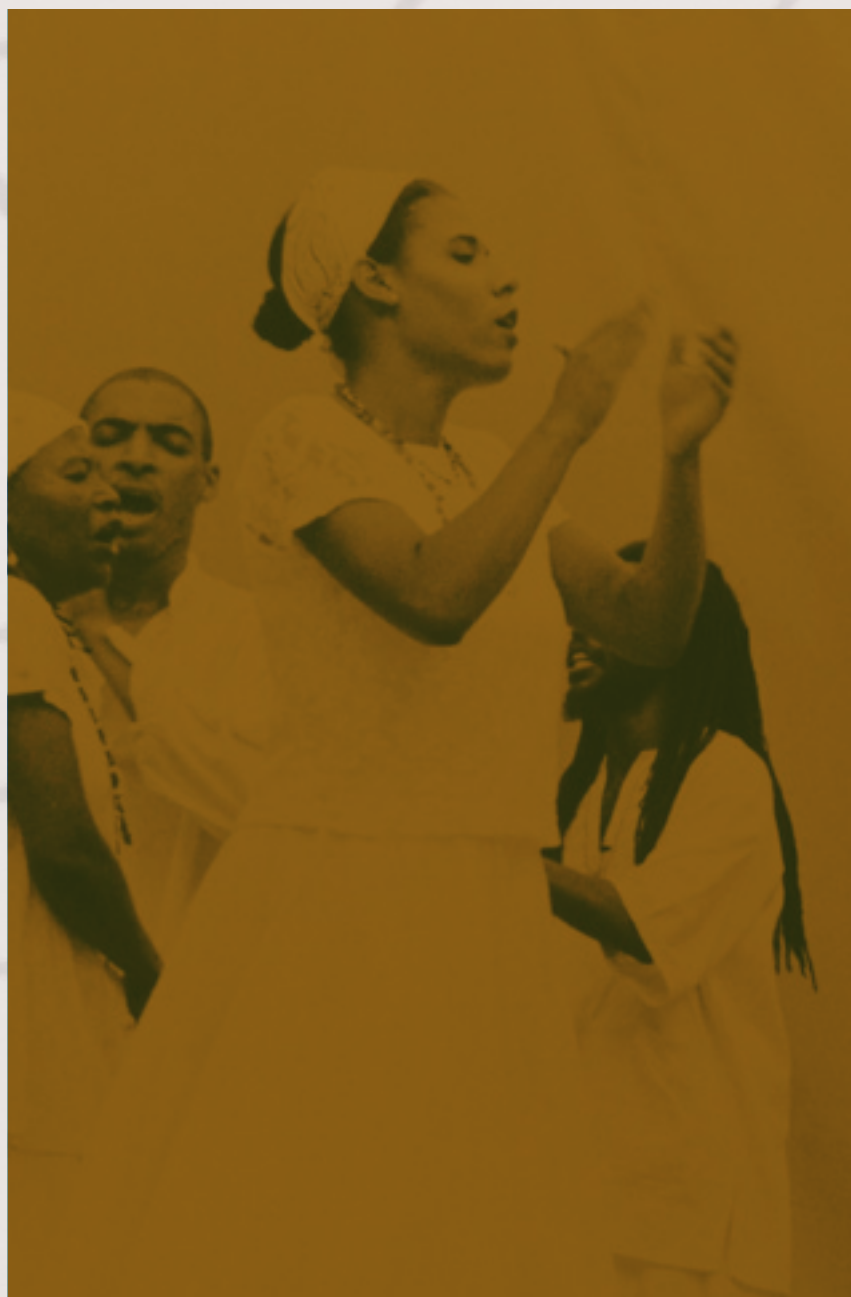
### Community Shouts

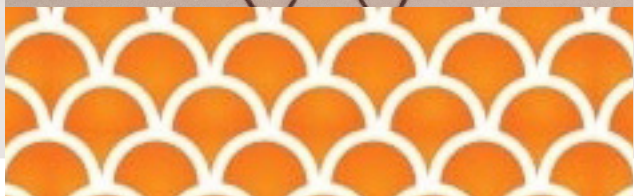
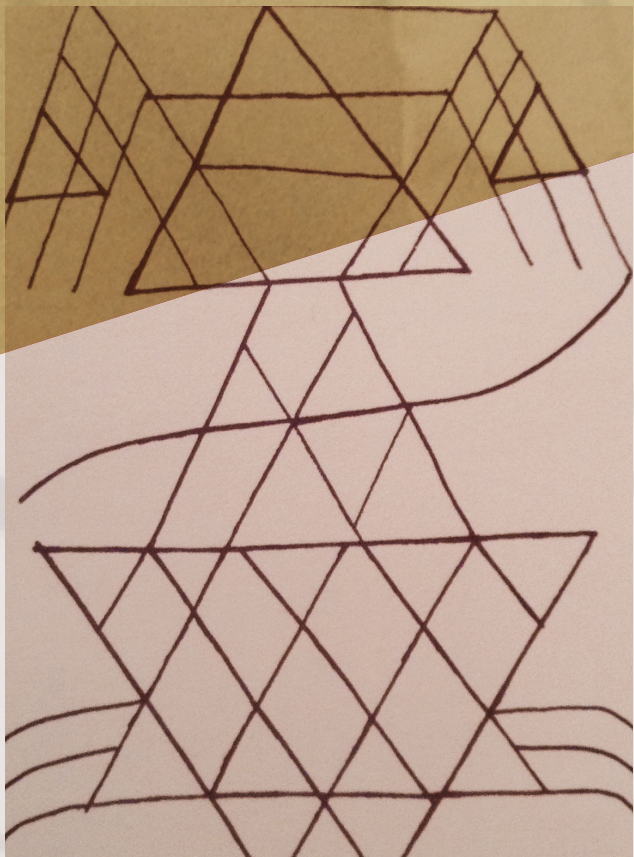
Stimulating, transformative sing-alongs where participants restore and connect to their rhythmic voices and bodies. The Shouts unearth some of the origins, functions and interconnections through tales and songs from Africa and the African Diaspora (the Caribbean and American south).

### Open Rehearsals and Discussions

Audience, performers and choreographer make contact on a more intimate level, either in the studio or post-performance, during which time audience members and performers have an opportunity to exchange perspectives and further understand Wilson's process and presentation.

# EDUCATION & COMMUNITIES





### **Master Classes and Workshops**

Choreographer Reggie Wilson teaches Master Classes in his particular movement idiom, merging contemporary Technique and post-modern structures with rhythmic folk traditions. Wilson also conducts workshop intensives in Dance Composition.

### **Lectures**

Wilson delivers engaging and informative lectures on his career arc, research (kinesthetic and academic), and on various cultures and communities of the African Diaspora.

### **Lecture/Demonstrations**

Consists of various themes related and relevant to the presented performance.

NYTIMES

Ideas lead to other ideas and accumulate in clusters before he translates them into sensual, structurally complex performances.

# MOSES(ES)

How we lead and why w

**Choreography by Reggie Wilson**

**Lighting Design by Jonathan Belcher**

**Costume Design by Naoko Nagata**

**Dramaturgy by Susan Manning**

**Cast:** Rhetta Aleong, Dwayne Brown, Yeman Brown, Paul Hamilton, Lawrence Harding, Raja Feather Kelly, Clement Mensah and Anna Schon and Reggie Wilson

**Choreographic Advisor:** Phyllis Lamhut

**Math/Fractal Symmetry Consultant:** Jesse Wolfson

**Music:** Louis Armstrong; The Klezmatics; Amahloko; Ngqoko Women's Ensemble; Mazaher; Aly Us; The Growling Tiger; Bi Kidude; Southern Sons; The Blind Boys of Alabama. Live vocals-original composed by Reggie Wilson  
Traditional live vocals arranged by Reggie Wilson  
Sound Engineered by Dave Synder  
Assistant to Engineer Matt Hall

© 2013



ve follow

**WORLD PREMIERE**

Philadelphia Fringe Arts  
Suzanna Roberts Theater  
September 19-21 2013

**NY PREMIERE**

2014 Next Wave Festival  
BAM Harvey Theater  
December 4-7 2013

*The movement sustained a muscular power and psychological drive  
that throbbed with a kinesthetic impact on the viewer...  
into a glorying of movement in all its fluidity*  
-ABQ JOURNAL



**MOSES(ES)** is an evening-length dance performance; it focuses on how we lead and why we follow. Grounded in Wilson's re-reading of Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain* (the Moses story told as a Southern folk tale in African-American vernacular), and with his exploratory travels to Israel, Egypt, Turkey and

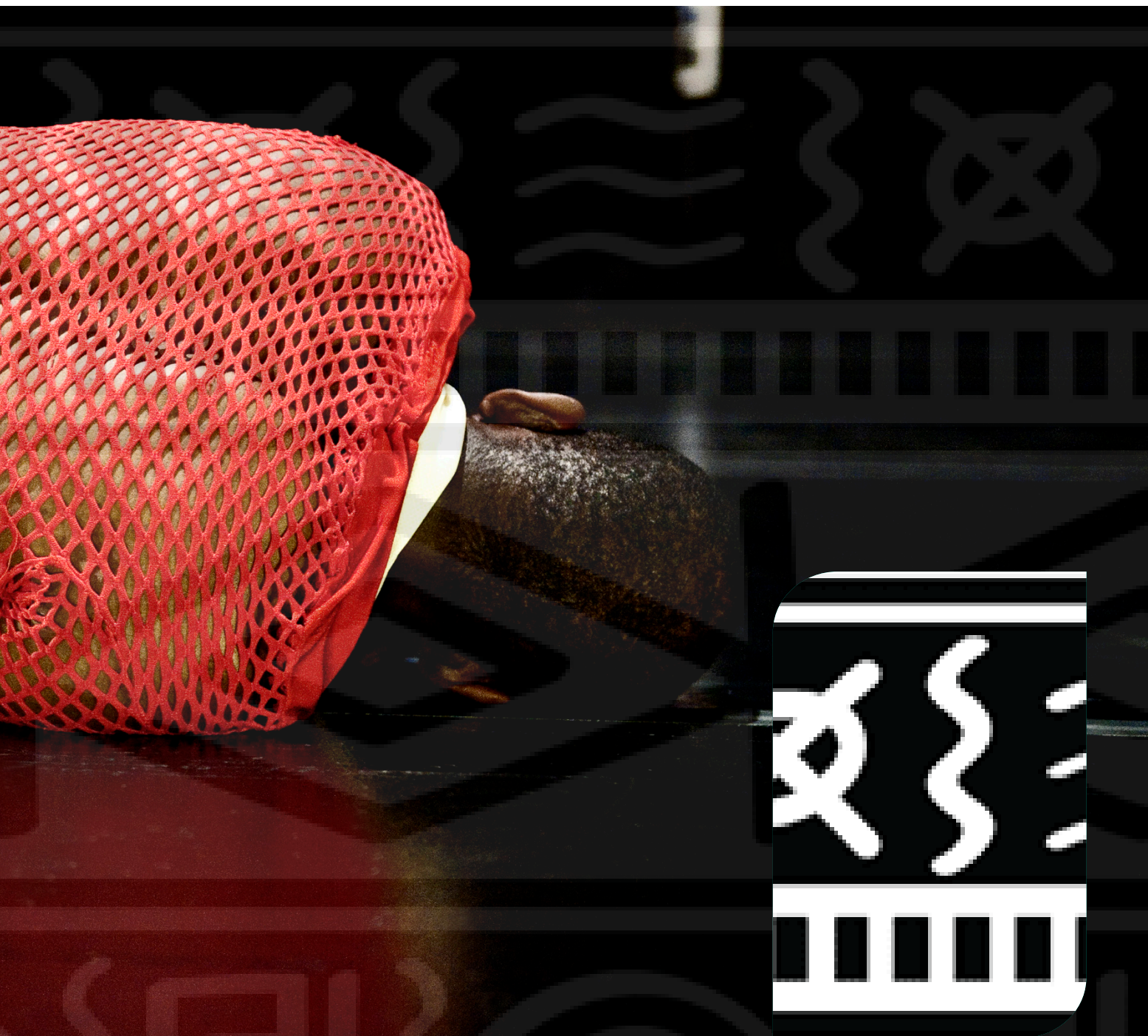
Mali, *Moses(es)* examines the migration of peoples and culture from Africa out into the World, paying attention to the effects migration has on beliefs. Wilson's research for this project has landed on the intersection of the origins of Monotheism and African cultures.



## MORE ON MOSES(ES)

After successful premieres of the original evening-length work, ...*Moses(es)* is an opportunity for the artist and audiences to engage more deeply in the material and Wilson's perspective while experiencing the work in a site-based format. These iterations took place at St. Cornelius Chapel on Governor's Island, The Institute of Contemporary Art/Boston, Lynden Sculpture Garden in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and for the American Dance Platform and the Joyce Theater.

**His work explores multiple strands of African-American dance, organizing them with a wide range of geometrical ideas and rhythmic structures. New York Times**







## Who is your Moses?

*Moses(es)* is funded in part by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and additional funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the MetLife Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts; the MAP Fund, a program of Creative Capital supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; Brooklyn Arts Council (BAC); The Harkness Foundation For Dance.

# CITIZEN

All performances of *CITIZEN* are performed in loving memory of our Carrie Wood and Thomas French.

**WORLD PREMIERE**

Philadelphia Fringe Arts  
September 8-10 2016

**NY PREMIERE**

2016 Next Wave Festival  
BAM Harvey Theater  
December 14-17 2016

In *CITIZEN*, Wilson drills down into the human desire to belong with exponentially expanding questions: "Do the injustices in today's America engender a feeling of belonging? What supports belonging? Is belonging solely something internal, inside the individual? Is a sense of belonging or not belonging, a private or a public matter? How is my experience as a Black, 48 year-old male in America compared to a black 30 year-old male or a 23 year-old black male's experience, reality of America, different? What makes our experiences different, race, class, religion, gender, location, ancestry, language...? Do I change to belong?

## DEEPLY FELT, STINGING SOLOS

What do I change? Is change necessary? Does knowing the past help now, how? Do I become an anonymous individual if I belong? Belong to what...Where? Why? How? Who?" This work takes these ever-expanding questions out of the theoretical and cerebral, and confronts them on kinesthetic, personal, individual, practical, and macro levels, to offer alternatives. *CITIZEN* engages and compels while igniting disruptive, uncomfortable perspectives on our compassion and humanity.



*Wilson and his dancers beautifully articulate humankind's desire to belong. -PHINDIE*

**Choreography by Reggie Wilson**

**Lighting Design by Chris Kuhl**

**Video Collaboration with Aitor Mendilibar**


**Costumes by Enver Chakartash**

**Cast: Yeman Brown, Raja Feather Kelly, Clement Mensah, Anna Schon, and Annie Wang.**

**Music: Rev. Olsie Cowan; Baaba Maal; Aster Aweke; Tchad Blake; The La Drivers Union Por Por Group; Fist & Heel Performance Group; The Singing and Prayer Bands of Maryland and Delaware; "Young Tikar Woman"; Gonga Sarki Birgui and Hamadjam Sarki Siyawa; Local musicians from the Border Area of the Ivory Coast and Burkina Faso**

**Choreographic Advisor: Phyllis Lamhut**

FIST AND HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP



*CITIZEN, Wilson's exploration of group and individual identity, history, and belonging, proceeds with mesmerizingly virtuosic solos and groupings.*

-THINKING DANCE



FIST AND HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP



FIST AND HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP



FIST AND HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP



PC



*"We Find No Harm  
In Dancing": Shaker  
Marches and Dances*  
[The Enfield Shaker  
Singers]

*The Men Who  
Dances: The Story  
of Ted Shawn's Men  
Dancers and the Bir-  
th of Jacob's Pillow*  
1933 - 1940

*Called and Chosen:  
The Story of Mother  
Rebecca Jackson  
and the Philadelphia  
Shakers.*  
By Richard E.  
Williams

*The Gift of Simple:  
songs, Dances  
and Rituals of the  
American Shakers*  
By Richard Deming  
Andrews

*Spiritual Interro-  
gations: Culture,  
Gender and Commu-  
nity in Early African  
American Women's  
Writing* By Katherine  
Clay Bassard

2019

# POWER

**POWER** is the title of Reggie Wilson's new evening-length dance performance work. It reimagines compelling core Shaker values, contributions, practices and histories through a postmodern American lens. This work builds on Wilson's investigations related to the early evolution of African American spiritual worship in the pantheon of American Christian religions and expands on his research into ring shouts and African American worship. Points-of-inspiration for this work include black Shaker Eldress Mother Rebecca Cox Jackson, Shaker foundress Mother Ann Lee, The First Great Awakening and American Utopianism, Binary Opposition, and foundation research from his work *The Littlest Baptist*.

It may be a gift to be simple, but there was deep complexity underlying the simplicity here

*POWER* re-imagines compelling core Shaker values, contributions, practices and histories through a post-modern American lens. This evening-length work is created with 8 dancers, 3 vocalists, lighting designer Jonathan Belcher and 2 costume designers (Naoko Nagata, Enver Chakartash).

Wilson's key motivating questions:  
What would the worship of Black Shakers actually have looked like? How were the general, core Shaker tenets of "heaven on earth" realized (social activism, pacifism, gender equality, celibacy and the confession of sin)? What are our misunderstandings about Shakers? These questions center and obsess around the black leader Eldress Mother Rebecca Cox Jackson as well as Shaker foundress, Mother Ann Lee. Both women, leading followers in 17th Century America



Choreography by Reggie Wilson

Costumes by Naoko Nagata and Enver Chakartash

Lighting Design by Jonathan Belcher

Cast: Hadar Ahuvia, Rhetta Aleong, Paul Hamilton, Lawrence Harding, Michel Kouakou, Clement Mensah, Gabriela Silva, Annie Wang, Michelle Yard, Miles Yeung, with Reggie Wilson

Music: The Staple Singers; John Davis, Bessie Jones & St. Simon's Island Singers; Meredith Monk; Lonnie Young, Ed Young and Lonnie Young Jr.; Craig Loftis; Henry Williams, Henry Thomas, George Roberts, Allan Lovelace; Omar Thiam with Jam Begum & Khady Saar; Edna Wright, Henry Thomas, Henry Williams & Margaret Wright

Live vocals selected and arranged by Reggie Wilson

"Outside Eyes": Susan Manning and Phyllis Lamhut  
Math Advisor: Jesse Wolfson



#### WORLD PREMIERE

Jacob;s Pillow Dance Festival  
July 10-14 2019

#### NY PREMIERE

BAM Harvey Theater  
2022

where one wouldn't assume there were women in such key positions, even less, black Shakers. Very limited documentation exists on specific black Shaker practices (pre-Civil War and Industrial Revolution America) but Wilson's research seems to indicate correlations of Africanist retentions with Shaker beliefs and practices. These might include beliefs in a dual-Godhead, formations/patterns in worship, Shout retentions, fractal movement patterns, progressive thought and hard work, innovations, and advancements in technology as acts of worship.

Also, he ups his ante by revisiting (to learn more from) his 1995 work "The Littlest Baptist"; 1st attempt at incorporating his field research of Black shout traditions into contemporary experimental performance theater. This has impacted the new live vocal compo-

nent which reflects deep research done on Shaker praise songs, Ring Shouts, Traditional African American Church songs, moans, and shouts, Trinidad & Tobago Spiritual Baptist trance and

**Wilson's variation on the theme is fueled by his discovery that there were black shakers once upon a time.**

possession vocal techniques. This is in addition to generous on-going field work in Africa (South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Ghana, Cameroon, Senegal, Congo-Brazzaville, Egypt, and Tanzania).

# GROUNDS THAT SHOUT (And Others Merely Shaking)

In partnership with Partners for Sacred Places and Danspace Project (NYC)

2020

Curated by award-winning choreographer Reggie Wilson, Grounds that Shout! (and others merely shaking) was a series of performances that responded to the layered histories of Philadelphia's religious spaces through contemporary dance, reflecting on the relationships and connections between practices of movement and worship. Over two weeks, eight choreographers and performance groups performed in four historic Philadelphia churches, drawing from site and spirit to present original and re-situated works of dance.

On May 2, 3 and 4 of 2019, Reggie Wilson's own Fist and Heel Performance Group performed at the Church of the Advocate. These evenings also featured performances by Germaine Ingram and David Brick.



*Connecting Dance and Worship With Poetic Imagination*  
-NYTimes

On May 11 of 2019, the series culminated with a series of original performances by Meg Foley, <fidget>, Lela Aisha Jones | FlyGround, Almanac Dance Circus Theatre, and Tania Isaac, with accompaniment from members of the church congregations at three historic Society Hill churches. Attendees moved from one site-specific performance to the next in a procession through St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Old Pine Street Presbyterian Church, and Mother Bethel AME. This cycle of performances was staged three times over the course of the day.

In addition to the performances, three public conversations offered further insight into the process and thinking behind the artistic production of Grounds that Shout!, and featured dialogues with key contributors as well as thinkers affiliated with the project's themes.



Mr. Wilson paints a spellbinding sight: Under unforgiving lights that expose peeling paint, a diverse, multigenerational cast reclaims a space with a dance. It's magnificent.



# How Creating Dance Helps Reggie Wilson “Get Rid” of His Obsessions

By Eva Yaa Asantewaa

With a blend of postmodern and black aesthetics, Reggie Wilson’s work explores connections between secular and spiritual cultures of the African diaspora in the Americas. Audiences are drawn to his unique synergy of formal rigor, playfulness and depth.

The Milwaukee-raised award-winning choreographer formed Reggie Wilson/Fist & Heel Performance Group in Brooklyn in 1989 after dancing for Ohad Naharin. Most recently, he curated the 2018 Danspace Project’s *Dancing Platform Praying Grounds: Blackness, Churches, and Downtown Dance*.

He recently spoke to Dance Magazine about his creative process.

## WHERE HIS IDEAS COME FROM

“An idea hits me and I think, Oh, that’s cool. I usually don’t follow it when it first happens. And then it will recur and recur, over and over again. It gets to the point of obsession. Making



# Reggie Wilson for Dance Magazine

*"I tell young choreographers to make as much work as possible. Stop being precious. Get your chair dance out. Get your emotional dance out. At the same time, be strategic in what you show and to whom. Everybody doesn't have to see everything. And you can't control what people are going to think."*



a dance will help me process it, think about it on multiple levels, engage with numerous people and cultures and thinkers."

"I don't ever go with making a piece that will sell. Like the figure of Moses—the idea behind Moses(es)—didn't fit the litmus test of a popular point of research, but I was reading Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses, Man of the Mountain*, and a dancer's uncle was a Moses scholar. That seems to be the way I operate. The universe or somebody wants me to think about something a little more. Then I have to "get rid of it," which means incorporating it into my everyday existence. Then it stops being disruptive."

# How Creating Dance Helps Reggie Wilson “Get Rid” of His Obsessions CONTINUED...

## WHAT HIS RESEARCH PROCESS IS LIKE

“What nurtures the idea is consuming as much information about it as possible. I’ll look at Wikipedia, definitions, etymology, a thesaurus. From my first year at NYU, every weekend I’d go stare at the images of Africa in Rizzoli’s art books. Or I’d go to a Margaret Mead Film Festival, a dance or music concert. Obsessive. I need to go to this country. Or hang out in this part of the city. Or go to this club. Or this class.”

“There’s a curiosity for finding out where my blind spots are. “What didn’t I know I didn’t know?” I get so excited when that shows up.

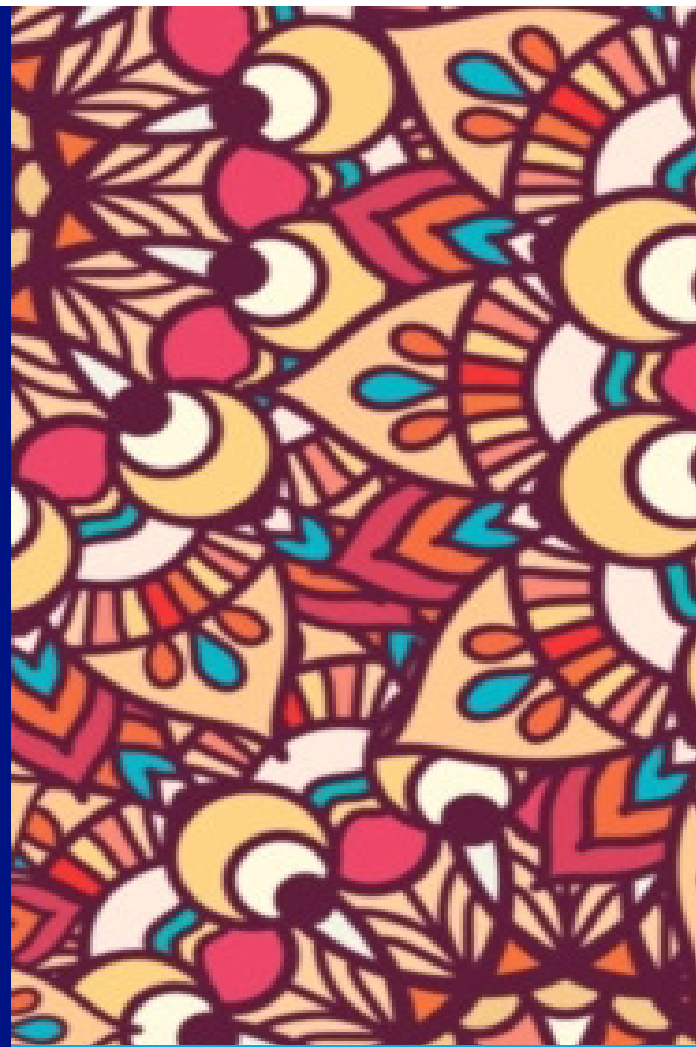




### **MOST SURPRISING PART ABOUT SHAKERS**

"Now I'm doing this Shaker stuff in my work. I thought the Shakers were like the Amish or the Puritans. Totally the opposite. You think about rigidity and stricture, the separation of the sexes, but there are a whole bunch of radical ideas—a religious sect channeling innovation in technology and education, always trying to reinvent and discover in their service of spirit."

"Dancing together was important to the Shakers. Their statement "We find no harm in dancing"—in contrast to the way the Puritans thought—repositioned how I regarded them."



## CONTACT

[www.fistandheelperformancegroup.org](http://www.fistandheelperformancegroup.org)  
 EMAIL: [info@fistandheelperformancegroup.org](mailto:info@fistandheelperformancegroup.org)

for booking information, contact Sophie Myrttil-McCourty at  
 Lotus Arts Management 72-11 Austin Street, Suite 371  
 Forest Hills, Ny 11375  
 TEL: 347. 721.8724  
 EMAIL: [sophie@lotusartsmgmt.com](mailto:sophie@lotusartsmgmt.com)  
[www.lotusartsmgmt.com](http://www.lotusartsmgmt.com)



## CREDITS

*Designed by Raja Feather Kelly*

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*All other photos courtesy of Fist and Heel Performance Group.*

EST. 1989

# RW FCH PG