

NEWS

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MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH/THE LIVING WORD PROJECT PERFORM WALKER-COMMISSIONED *red, black & GREEN: a blues*



Marc Bamuthi Joseph Photo: Bethanie Hines

Minneapolis, February 21, 2012— Spoken word/hip hop theater artist and educator Marc Bamuthi Joseph, recently appointed Director of Performing Arts at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, questions collective responsibility—his own included—in *red, black & GREEN: a blues*, an exhilarating new work designed to jump-start conversations about environmental justice and social ecology. By way of answering “What sustains life in our community?,” he brings together big ideas and moving personal stories in a hybrid performance of theater, spoken word, contemporary and hip hop dance, music, and visuals that is “as smart and provocative as it is breathtakingly beautiful” (*San Francisco Chronicle*). *red, black & GREEN: a blues* will be performed Thursday–Saturday, March 15–17, at 8 pm in the William and Nadine McGuire Theater. The audience will be invited to move through the stage installation before taking their seats for the performance.

Visual artist/vocalist Theaster Gates, inaugural Director of Arts and Public Life at the University of Chicago, designed the interactive installation and set and also performs, along with dancer/actor Traci Tolmaire. *red, black & GREEN: a blues* also reunites director Michael John Garcés, turntablist Tommy Shepherd, and documentary filmmaker Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi from Joseph’s critically acclaimed *the break/s: a mixtape for the stage*, a 2008 work co-commissioned by the Walker.

While developing *red, black & GREEN: a blues* last April, Bamuthi and his collaborator, artist and educator Brett Cook-Dizney, visited the Twin Cities as Walker artists-in-residence. They met with a range of local artists and community organizers including Bedlam Theatre, the Powderhorn/Phillips Cultural Wellness Center, Intermedia Arts, Imagining America, and the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Walker staff and artist Seitú Jones took them on a winding urban journey, from the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods in the shadow of the St. Paul’s State Capitol to the wetlands surrounding Bassett Creek in North Minneapolis, to learn firsthand about the history and current struggles that communities of color



Marc Bamuthi Joseph Photo: Walker Art Center

face in the Twin Cities. Heading south, they stopped at All My Relations Gallery for a conversation with Justin Heuneman, president of the Native American Community Development Institute; talked shop with Roger Cummings, artistic director of Juxtaposition Arts; and ate with spoken-word artists Tish Jones and Desdamona in Uptown. They returned in August for The Living Classroom, a daylong community gathering. Over ping-pong and dominoes, on the dance floor, and at the Open Field drawing table, artists and community members exchanged ideas about what sustains life in the Twin Cities. Similar community events were organized in Oakland, Chicago and Houston. For Joseph "There are literally 1,000 partners across four cities that we met who fed into *red, black & GREEN: a blues*. Those people form an invisible network that we don't quite see and yet are very present in the performance."

Marc Bamuthi Joseph

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is one of America's vital voices in performance, arts education, and artistic curation. In the fall of 2007, Bamuthi graced the cover of *Smithsonian Magazine* after being named one of America's Top Young Innovators in the Arts and Sciences. He is the artistic director of the 7-part HBO documentary *Russell Simmons presents Brave New Voices* and an inaugural recipient of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship, which annually recognizes 50 of the country's "greatest living artists". In May 2011, Bamuthi was announced as the year's Alpert Award winner in Theater.

After appearing on Broadway as a young actor, Joseph has developed several poetically based works for the stage that have toured across the U.S., Europe, and Africa. These include *Word Becomes Flesh*, *Scourge*, and *the break/s*, which co-premiered at the Humana Festival of New American Plays and the Walker Art Center in the spring of 2008. Bamuthi's *Word Becomes Flesh* was re-mounted in December 2010 as part of the National Endowment for the Arts' "American Masterpieces" series, and will tour throughout North America and Hawaii through 2013. In addition, Joseph wrote the commissioned libretto, *Home in 7* for the Atlanta Ballet in 2011, and is directing Dennis Kim's *Tree City Legends* at Intersection for the Arts this year.

A gifted and nationally acclaimed educator and essayist, he has lectured at more than 200 colleges and universities, been a popular commentator on National Public Radio, and has carried adjunct professorships at Stanford University, LeHigh University, Mills College, and the University of Wisconsin. Joseph's proudest work has been with Youth Speaks where he mentors 13-19 year old writers and curates the Living Word Festival and Left Coast Leaning. He is the co-founder of Life is Living, a national series of one-day festivals designed to activate under-resourced parks and affirm peaceful urban life through hip hop arts and focused environmental action. Joseph was recently appointed the new Director of Performing Arts at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

Theaster Gates

Theaster Gates is a Chicago-based artist whose practice covers performance and installation, urban planning and design, and the traditional fine arts. His work in performance, installation art and public intervention offers a platform that opens up challenging issues by presenting them, not as acute encounters, but as invitations to engage hard information creatively. His exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, *Temple Exercises*, built of wooden boards recycled from a



Marc Bamuthi Joseph Photo: Walker Art Center



Marc Bamuthi Joseph Photo: Bethanie Hines

factory in Chicago's post-industrial heart, encouraged people to see these discarded materials not only in the light of modernist art, but to reflect on cultural traditions that depend on scrap for survival. The installation housed performances by the Black Monks of Mississippi, a music ensemble which Gates founded. Other performances, installations, and exhibits include *Black Monks & the Gospel of Black*, (Van Abbemuseum, Netherlands); *Black Monks of Mississippi-If You See Jesus Tell Him Where I Am* (Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago); *Branded Alongside the Cabinet of Curiosities* (Milwaukee Art Museum); *Tea Shacks, Collard Greens & the Preservation of Soul* (Center for Proliferation of Afro-Asian Artifacts, Chicago); *Plate Convergence* (Yamaguchi Institute, Chicago); *Mississippi Houses* (Inax Ceramic Museum, Japan); and *The American Negro: Too good to be true* (St. George Cathedral, South Africa). Gates received an interdisciplinary Master's in Urban Planning and Public Sculpture from Iowa State University in 2005. He is currently the Director of Arts and Public Life and Artist in Residence at the University of Chicago.

Tommy Shepherd

Tommy Shepherd, aka Emcee Soulati, is an actor, playwright, composer, educator, b-boy, rapper, drummer, and beatboxer. Shepherd is a co-founder of the live hip hop collective, Felonious: onelovehiphop, who play music throughout the world and create original theatrical productions from their base as a resident company at Intersection for the Arts. Felonious' last project was *Angry Black White Boy*, adapted from the Adam Mansbach book by Dan Wolf, for which Shepherd created the original music and performed. Shepherd has also been a long time Hybrid Resident Artist at Intersection, a member of Campo Santo, and a performer with Erika Chong Shuch's ESP project. He acted in and created the score for *Nobody Move*; and *Hamlet: Blood in the Brain*, by Naomi Iizuka; and created the sound design and score with Howard Wiley for *A Place To Stand*. He also acted, beatboxed, and composed a live score with Scheherazade Stone for *Domino* by Campo Santo with Sean San José, which premiered at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. In 2007 he created and performed his first one act solo *The MF in ME*, premiering at Intersection for the Arts' GROUNDED? festival of new works. Other credits include: co-composer/collaborator/performer with the Jazz Mafia Symphony, performing the world premiere of *The Joshua Norton Suite*; creating the score for Donald Lacy's *Color Struck*, which was performed at the National Black Theatre Festival and for the National Black Congress leading up to President Obama's election. Shepherd was a commissioned artist, co-creator and performer of *Raw Dios* for headrush crew, which toured Berkeley, Denver and at the famed El Teatro Campesino in San Juan Bautista. He also recreated the previously unfinished Duke Ellington musical *Queenie Pie*, which premiered at the Oakland Opera in 2008. Shepherd has performed and toured internationally with Marc Bamuthi Joseph, collaborating on *Scourge* and *the break/s*.

Traci Tolmaire

Traci Tolmaire is an actor, dancer, and singer from Chicago. Her training in theatre arts and dance includes a BA in theatre from Spelman College, theatrical studies at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, and dance training at Sammy Dyer School of Theatre in Chicago, Joel Hall Dance Center, and classes with master teachers Katherine Dunham and Savion Glover. Her theatrical credits include *IPH...a translation of Iphigeneia at Aulis* by Euripides (Brava Theater/African-American Shakespeare Company); *Mirrors In Every Corner* (directed by Marc Bamuthi



Marc Bamuthi Joseph Photo: Photo by Bethanie Hines



Photo : by Bethanie Hines (l to r): Tommy Shepherd, Theaster Gates (seated), Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Traci Tolmaire

Joseph for Intersection for the Arts/Campo Santo); Susan Lori Parks' *365 Days/365 Plays* series (Hartford Stage Company); *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Fulton Opera House); *The Darker Face of the Earth* (Take Wing and Soar Productions); *Trouble in Mind* (Actor's Express), and *Breath, Boom* (Synchronicity Theatre Group). She was an understudy for Lisa Kron's play *In the Wake* at Berkeley Repertory Theatre and appeared twice in the New York International Fringe Festival as a leading actress in original productions *Fantasy, Girl* (choreographer) and *Eggs and the Rebound Guy*. Tolmaire also worked as choreographer for Hartford Stage Company's production of *Gee's Bend*, Connecticut Critics Circle award winner for best ensemble. Tolmaire currently resides in the San Francisco Bay Area. www.tracitolmaire.com.

Tickets to Marc Bamuthi Joseph/The Living Word Project's *red, black & GREEN: a blues* are: Thursday, \$18 (\$15 Walker members); Friday–Saturday, \$25 (\$21) and are available at walkerart.org/tickets or by calling 612.375.7600.

Co-commissioned by the Walker Art Center with support provided by the William and Nadine McGuire Commissioning Fund, The McKnight Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, and Producers' Council members Mike and Elizabeth Sweeney.

Related Events

Open Stage

Friday and Saturday, March 16 and 17, 12 noon–5 pm, Free
William and Nadine McGuire Theater

The stage set for *red, black & GREEN: a blues* will be open for public viewing. Designed by Theaster Gates and constructed entirely out of repurposed materials, the set functions as a visual art installation as well as a site for performance. Each of the four shotgun-house-inspired modules represents a city in which Joseph's *Life is Living* festivals were held including Houston, Chicago, New York and Oakland. Inside the houses, videos by documentary filmmaker Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi capture interviews and scenes from those seminal events that inspired the making of the performance.

Member Event: A Think & A Drink

Thursday, March 15, 7 pm

Free for Walker members and a guest; paid ticket required for performance

Members are invited to attend a private screening of a short film made during Marc Bamuthi Joseph's Walker residency last summer and then enjoy the opening-night performance of his Walker-commissioned *red, black & GREEN: a blues*. Specially priced member tickets for the performance are available for purchase. After the show, chat with the artists and curators in the Balcony Bar and enjoy a free drink. In April, take an interactive tour of the exhibition *Frank Gaard: Poison & Candy*, followed by light snacks and a cash bar. Space is limited for both events; please RSVP: 612.375.7655 or membership@walkerart.org.



red, black & GREEN: a blues Set by Theaster Gates



Marc Bamuthi Joseph Photo: Bethanie Hines

Teen Art Lounge

Thursday, March 15, 5–8 pm Free

Star Tribune Foundation Art Lab

Join Living Classroom collaborator and photographer Wing Young Huie at the Teen Art Lounge for artists ages 13 to 18.

Drinks & Discussions in the Balcony Bar

Meet the artists, talk about the show, and enjoy a beer, wine, or a specialty cocktail (featuring Prairie Organic Vodka). Open before and after all performances.

Performing Arts Supporters

The Walker Art Center's performing arts programs are made possible by generous support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation through the Doris Duke Performing Arts Fund, the William and Nadine McGuire Commissioning Fund, The McKnight Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Producers' Council

Performing Arts programs and commissions at the Walker are generously supported by members of the Producers' Council: Russell Cowles; Sage and John Cowles; Robert and Katherine Goodale; Nor Hall and Roger Hale; King's Fountain/Barbara Watson Pillsbury and Henry Pillsbury; Emily Maltz; Dr. William W. and Nadine M. McGuire; Leni and David Moore, Jr.; Josine Peters; Mike and Elizabeth Sweeney; and Frances and Frank Wilkinson.

Premier Partners



The Walker Art Center is located at 1750 Hennepin Avenue—where Hennepin meets Lyndale—one block off Highways I-94 and I-394, in Minneapolis.

For tickets and public information, call 612.375.7600 or visit walkerart.org. Stay connected via your mobile device and follow us on Twitter and Facebook.