



BLACK CHOREOGRAPHERS FESTIVAL HERE & NOW
CELEBRATES 20 YEARS!

SPIRIT OF SANKOFA: Bridging the Legacies of BCM & BCF

Featuring: Archival Exhibit | Panel Discussion | Site-Specific Performance

at

Minnesota Street Project

Saturday, May 10, 2025

Doors Open @ 5:30p

5:30 – 6p Exhibit Viewing – 2nd Floor, SFArtsEd Gallery

Spirit of Sankofa: Bridging the Legacies of BCM & BCF, Archival Exhibit

An artful installation honoring Katherine Dunham, Ruth Beckford and two Iconic SF Bay Area Dance Festivals: Black Choreographers Moving Toward the 21st Century (BCM), founded by Dr. Halifu Osumare and presented from 1989 – 1995, and Black Choreographers Festival: Here & Now (BCF) co-founded by Laura Elaine Ellis and Kendra Kimbrough Barnes, premiered in 2005, celebrating 20 years! *Designed & Curated by Visual Artists: Pete Belkin and Tiersa Nureyev*

6p Panel Discussion – 2nd Floor, SFArtsEd Gallery

The Dunham-Beckford Bay Area African-Haitian Dance Legacy, 2nd Floor,

Moderated by **Dr. Halifu Osumare**, in conversation w/ Panelists:

Dr. Yvonne Daniel, Deborah B. Vaughan, Dr. Colette Eloi, and Elya Moore

Representing several generations of the Dunham-Beckford legacy, panelists share memories and discuss the impact of the iconic Dancer-Anthropologist Katherine Dunham and Ruth Beckford, *known as the Mother of Black Dance*, and the invaluable influence of the Dunham-Beckford legacy on Bay Area African diasporic dance.

7:30 - Intermission | Exhibit Viewing

8:00p Performance Event – 1st Floor, MSP Atrium

TAPESTRY, a journey of movement, sound, and text

Featuring Choreographers: Byb Chanel Bibene, tara george, Patricia West+ Aja Randall, natalya shoaf, and Dazaun Soleyn w/musician | poet - Jordon E. Dabney

Curated by: Laura E. Ellis

Shaped in collaboration with the artists, the structure of this unique project weaves together the choreographic works of five choreographers. These artists gathered for one evening on May 9th and creatively played together to craft a site-specific iteration of their separate works – a connected performance piece, activating the atrium of Minnesota Street Project.

Directly following the performance – stay for our Cake & Chat Event!



TAPESTRY, a journey of movement, text, and sound

may we heal? (work-in-progress)

Choreographer: dazaun soleyn

Performers: Jordon Ellis Dabney, dazaun soleyn

Composer | Musician: Jordon Ellis Dabney

StartOver (2025)

Choreographers/Performers: Aja Randall + Patricia West

Music: Sampled "Mr. Fingers" and "Mystery of Love," composed and edited by Ben Juodvalkis.

Vocals by Aja Randall and Patricia West

Costume Design: Aja Randall + Patricia West

StartOver is a new piece that explores the constant reset that is present in our day-to-day life. Aja and Patricia would like to thank their outside collaborators and thought partners, Damara Vita Ganley and Oscar Trujillo

Text/Spoken Word by Jordon E. Dabney

ORIGIN: from sand to sea

Choreographer/Performer: natalya janay shoaf

Sound Score: natalya janay shoaf using the work of the amazing Lia de Itamaraca

Costume Design: natalya janay shoaf

Thank you M.C.B, L.E.E, D.S, D.V.S, J.E.N, for your continuous support, your love brings me through.

Marronage//Undrowned

Choreographer: tara george

Performers: tara george, Faith E Johnson, Eden Magana, ameia camielle smith,

Music: Djembe Kan - Universal African Drum and Dance Ensemble

Saxophone Interlude by Jordon E. Dabney

350 & Million Moving Targets (2018)

Choreographer/Performer: Byb Chanel Bibene

Music: Jikele Maweni (Miriam Makeba) and MOUNGONGO (Bwiti Tribe of Gabon)

Costume Design: Byb Chanel Bibene

BCF Production Team:

BCF Festival Co-Directors: laura e. ellis, Kendra Kimbrough Barnes

BCF Tech Team: Claudio Silva (Lighting), Terrance Holliday (Sound), Chi Chi Okonmah (Stage Manager)
Jazara Metcalf (Assistant Stage Manager), Pete Belkin (Technical Support)

SFArtsEd Staff:

Emily Keeler -Artistic Director, Chad Jones - Executive Director, Tiersa Nureyev – Admin Coordinator
Mia Waller – Program Director, Pete Belkin – Curator | Digital Media Produce
Laura Bloch – Business | Accounting Manager, Kathryn Aarons - Summer Registrar
Susan Tramontana – Glen Park After-School Site Coordinator & Program Manager

The Dunham-Beckford Bay Area African-Haitian Dance Legacy, Panel Bios

Dr. Halifu Osumare (Moderator) is Professor Emerita in the Department of African American and African Studies (AAS) at University of California, Davis, and was the Director of AAS 2011-2014. She has been a dancer, choreographer, arts administrator, and scholar of black popular culture for over fifty years. With a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Hawai'i at Manoa, and an MA in Dance Ethnology from S.F. State University, she is also a protégé of the late renowned dancer-anthropologist Katherine Dunham and a Certified Instructor of Dunham Dance Technique. Dr. Osumare founded Everybody's Creative Arts Center in Oakland in 1977 and helped to establish California's multicultural arts movement. Between 1989-1995 she was the Founder and Executive Producer of her national dance initiative Black Choreographers Moving Toward the 21st Century. As an artist-scholar, Dr. Osumare has performed, taught, and conducted research not only in the U.S., but also in the African countries of Ghana, Nigeria, Malawi, and Kenya, and recently in Brazil. Her dancing, teaching and writing spans the traditional African to the contemporary African American. Like her mentor Katherine Dunham, Dr. Osumare has dedicated her life to the intersections of the arts and humanities for a better world.

<https://www.hosumare.com/about>

Yvonne Daniel, Ph.D. (Panelist), Professor Emerita of Dance and Afro-American Studies from Smith College, has worked as a choreographer/performer and as an anthropologist specializing in Caribbean societies and African Diaspora cultures. Her publications include *Rumba* (1995), *Dancing Wisdom: Embodied Knowledge in Haitian Vodou, Cuba Yoruba, and Bahian Candomblé* (2005), and *Caribbean and Atlantic Diaspora Dance* (2011). She has co-edited three collections: *Dancing the Earth* (2017), *Dancing Bahia* (2018), and *Hot Feet and Social Change: African Dance Diaspora Communities* (2019). She has won the SDHS de la Torre Bueno prize, a Choice Award, a Special Citation from Dance Studies Association, and several Life Achievement Awards, all for her research on Black dance and the African Diaspora. Dr. Daniel is a Ford and a Rockefeller Fellow and has been a Visiting Scholar at Mills College and the Smithsonian Institution. In 2013, Dr. Daniel received the Katherine Dunham Legacy Award from the Dunham Institute for continuing Ms. Dunham's reliance on Dance Anthropology, and is a proud dance protégé of Ruth Beckford.

Colette Marie Eloi, Ph.D. (Panelist), is an accomplished dancer, scholar, and cultural practitioner, deeply rooted in the Oakland/San Francisco Bay Area dance community. She is a master Haitian folklorist and award-winning choreographer, presenting work locally, nationally, and internationally. Dr. Eloi had the honor of choreographing alongside the legendary Ruth Beckford in *A Living Birthday Card* (2006), a powerful 97-dancer tribute to the iconic Katherine Dunham for her 97th birthday memorial. In 1997 she co-organized *Project Reconnect*, an African Diaspora artist collective, and in 2005, she founded ELWAH Dance & Research, inspired by Bay Area pioneers such as Nontzizi Cayou, Deborah Vaughn, and Blanche Brown. ELWAH produces culturally rich performance, scholarship, and community engagement. She earned her Ph.D. in Critical Dance Studies from UC Riverside in 2024, where she introduced concepts like the "sovereign body" and "corporeal footnoting," reimagining African-rooted dance scholarship. Dr. Eloi is an internationally recognized consultant, instructor, ceremonialist, and co-author of a forthcoming chapter in *The History of the African Diaspora* (Cambridge University Press, 2026), with Dr. Yvonne Daniel. For ELWAH dance is medicine and her intention is to use it to uplift and empower the human spirit.

Eyla Moore (Panelist), grew up in the Bay Area playing music & dancing as the daughter of famous Jazz drummer, Eddie Moore. She holds a B.A. in Performance & Choreography from SFSU where she studied with and assisted the late, great Alicia Pierce. Since 2006 Eyla has studied with many certified and master Dunham Instructors and got certified in Katherine Dunham Technique in 2012. She won the title of Queen of SF Carnaval in 2011, and performed for many years as a proud member of Deep Waters Dance Theater and Cunamacue Afro-Peruvian Dance Company. Eyla has been teaching with the SF based Rhythm & Motion Dance Program since 2005, and is also a Certified Pilates Instructor, and devoted mother and wife. Eyla believes in the healing power of dance for all people.

Deborah Vaughan (Panelist), is the Artistic Director and co-founder of Dimensions Dance Theater, a groundbreaking contemporary dance company founded in 1972 in Oakland, California. The company's mission is to promote public awareness of the critical role African Americans have played in shaping American art, culture, and social change. She is a dance protégé of Ruth Beckford, and after being involved with the Black Arts movement in the late 60s and early 70s, she brought that power to Dimension in her native Oakland. She has traveled, studied and explored traditional dance in West Africa, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Brazil, Congo and throughout the Caribbean, and has created diverse choreography with dance masters from those diverse parts of the African diaspora. Beyond performance, Deborah's impact extends to community outreach through Dimensions Dance Theater's educational programming, especially the company's signature Rites of Passage program. Students aged 8 to 18 get free instruction in Oakland public schools or low-cost after-school classes at the nonprofit's dance studio at the Malonga Casquelourd Center for the Arts. Ms. Vaughan carries on the tradition of Ruth Beckford in Oakland by using dance as a socialization tool to uplift her community.

Spirit of Sankofa: Bridging the Legacy of BCM & BCF Archival Exhibit, Bios:

Pete Belkin (co-designer and co-curator) is a visual artist, digital media engineer and exhibitions producer. He holds an MFA from San Francisco Art Institute and a BFA from California College of the Arts. His studio practice is rooted in investigations of natural phenomena, typically taking form in painting, sculpture and video installation. Pete has worked with numerous museums and nonprofit arts institutions in the San Francisco Bay Area and internationally and can often be found interviewing artists, producing public programs, or curating exhibitions. Previously, Pete worked with KADIST Art Foundation, Oakland Museum of California, and Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive. Pete is currently on staff at the San Francisco Arts Education Project and serves as Curator.

Tiersa Nureyev (co-designer and co-curator) is a multidisciplinary artist and designer that foregrounds fiber-based mediums and practices that require methodical handwork. Techniques such as weaving, braiding, and hand sewing, as well as painting and illustration that reference textile structures and surface design are common themes in her work. Nureyev is interested in revealing the psychological underpinnings, emotional pathology, and spiritual disconnection that accompanies being a descendant of the African American diaspora as well as simply a human and women in this world now. Nureyev has been a teaching artist with the San Francisco Arts Education Project (SFArtsED) since 2006. She is a recipient of a National Endowment of the Arts funded residency “The Lineal Project” via SFArtsED at the Minnesota Street Project. This project used the formal analysis of line as inspiration for an iterative body of work that included drawings, garments, fiber art, and in collaboration with choreographer laura e. ellis, and Dimensions Dance Theater, that explored the conceptual nature of line as it pertained to ancestral lineage. Nureyev was a selected artist included in the 2023 DeYoung Open and is currently producing Soft Spaces For Hard Times: A Community Quilting Project that engages San Francisco youth in the creation of a monumental textile collage funded by the SF Arts Commission and the Wattis Institute.

Choreographers | Collaborators’ Bios (in order of appearance):

dazaun soleyn (he/she/they), with an intention to create art that aims to illuminate the human soul, has presented work in the Bay Area since 2013. He received a BFA in Modern Dance Performance and Choreography from the University of South Florida and continued his dance education at the Alonzo King LINES Ballet Training Program. Recently, Dazaun graduated from California College of the Arts with a Masters in Architecture (MArch). Dazaun is an adjunct professor at the University of San Francisco, a Gyrotonic Instructor, Reiki Master and Apprentice Herbalists. His mediums include dance, architecture, sculpture and interactive installations.

Jordon Ellis Dabney is a musician, writer, and mover born and raised in Oakland, CA. They grew up in arts families like ODC, Shawl Anderson, Dimensions Dance Theater and Oaktown Jazz making collaborative art in learning spaces and on the stage. Co-creating music and movement has become their favorite way to share their thoughts and feelings with others, something that shines through their work in the Black Choreographer’s Festival with dazaun.dance, Axis Dance Company, and the Black Excellence Band.

Aja Randall + Patricia West of DAP: DAP was created in 2017 out of necessity as the collaborators found themselves grappling with what it means to be a dancer/dancemaker while also taking on roles as provider and caretaker. The group uses movement as a language of solidarity, resistance and self-expression while also considering the dynamics of listening, being heard and yielding. Spoken word, organic movement and song are tools they lean on in their dancemaking.

Patricia West (she/her) was born and raised in the Bay Area. As an educator and choreographer, she aims to create and support spaces that foster self-expression, collaboration and connection to oneself. She has had the honor of performing nationally and internationally with various dance companies. Patricia has been a Collaborating Artist of Joe Goode Performance Group (JGPG) since 2006. She has served as JGPG’s Assistant Director and Creative Engagement Lead. Currently, Patricia works for Cal Performances’ Education and Community Programs and is the director of their transformational program, Berkeley/Oakland AileyCamp. Patricia is grateful for every rising opportunity to teach, create and perform.

Aja Randall (she/her) is from St. Louis, Mo and graduated from Stephen College in Columbia, Mo with a BFA in Dance and Minor in Education. Aja moved to the Bay Area in 2004, and has danced for several local artists with the longest stretch for Afro-Cuban based Alayo Dance Company. Yoga Alliance Certified since 2017, she strongly believes in its philosophy and practice to help in maintaining longevity in art making and the care taking of the aging body. Being the Venue & Ops Manager with Joe Goode Performance Group is a manifestation come true. Witnessing, supporting, and uplifting our artistic community is just lovely, just right.

natalya janay shoaf, based in the Bay Area, is a renowned dance educator, choreographer, and performer with a dynamic career spanning both education and performance. She is currently dance educator at Oakland School for the Arts, a company member with the foundry — directed by Alex Ketley, and in residency at The Athenian School, Cal Sate University East Bay, and ODC. She is currently working towards an evening length solo entitled “from seed to bloom” set to premiere August 3rd, 5PM, at ODC. For more information : www.natalyashoaf.com | @natalyashoaf — Instagram

tara george is a Bay Area-based choreographer, writer, and dancer originally from Jupiter, Florida. After graduating with her BFA in Dance from UF in 2020 she completed the two-year Alonzo King Lines Ballet Training Program and then went on to be named as one of ODC’s Pilot Artists in its 73rd iteration of the program. Recently she performed in Grace Cathedral with Oysterknife and Brava Theater with SFBATCO. She is currently part of Dancing Earth’s Bay Area Company Cohort and was seen on their Mexican tour

Byb Chanel Bibene is a dance educator, choreographer and performer working in theater, ethnic, Afro urban, and contemporary dance forms. His own technical and aesthetic sensibility is rooted in the culture and dances of his country of origin, the Republic of Congo. He has toured the world and performed internationally with companies and choreographers originating from Africa, Europe, and the USA. Artistic Director of Kiandanda Dance Theater, Bibene founded Mbongui Square festival, a multidisciplinary arts festival that gathers dance, music, spoken word and visual artists from the Bay Area and across the world. Outside of his professional careers of Theater and Dance, Bibene has a passion for writing. He is author of numerous poetry and shorts. Bibene owns a Bachelor in Science, Economics/Finances from Marien Ngouabi University/Brazzaville, an MFA in Dance Creative Practice from Saint Mary's College of California.



BCF @ MSP Events presented in
community partnership with and co-sponsored by SFArtsEd

BCF’s 20th Anniversary Season of Events and Performances are made possible in part by the support of the SF Arts Commission, Zellerbach Family Foundation, AAAPAC, K*STAR*Productions and community partnerships with Dance Mission Theater, Dimensions Dance Theater, SF Public Library, SFArtsEd | Minnesota Street Project, and Dance Film SF.

NEXT EVENT : BCF @ AAMLO
Saturday, July 12 @ 2p

SPIRIT OF SANKOFA: Bridging the Legacies of BCM & BCF
Featuring: Archival Exhibit | Panel Discussion | Performances

*BCF crosses the bridge to the East Bay -continuing the 20th Anniversary celebration
at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland.*

Check the BCF website in June for more Info: bcfhereandnow.com

SPIRIT OF SANKOFA: Bridging the Legacies of BCM & BCF @ MSP Co-Sponsors | Presenters

San Francisco Arts Education Project (SFArtsED) provides children with participatory experiences in the visual and performing arts under the mentorship of practicing artists. Such collaborations empower students with creative skills that will serve them in all aspects of their lives, while offering artists new outlets for expression and opportunities to engage with the wider community.

African & African American Performing Arts Coalition (AAPAC) is San Francisco-based nonprofit founded in 1995 by a collective of artists looking to create better performance opportunities for African and African American performing artists, as well as produce shows that reflect the aesthetic and cultural representation of the African and African American experience. As AAPAC's executive director, Laura Elaine Ellis has co-produced successful events such as the *Labor of Love Dance Series*, *The Quilt Project: Pieces of Me*, and the Black Choreographers Festival: Here & Now.

K★STAR★PRODUCTIONS, founded in 1996 by Director Kendra Kimbrough Barnes, is a performing arts organization that presents the Kendra Kimbrough Dance Ensemble (KKDE) and co-presents the Black Choreographers Festival: Here & Now. Our mission is to cultivate a diverse and dynamic arts environment that inspires and supports the growth of the arts through relationship-building, mentoring, and community partnerships. We aim to make cultural exchange accessible, with a focus on BIPOC communities, by offering professional development for emerging dance artists/companies, youth programming, and impactful workshops and performances.



The Black Choreographers Festival: Here & Now (BCF), with scheduled events throughout the year, is directed by Bay Area nonprofits AAPAC and K★Star★Productions. Since 2005, BCF has served local, national and international artists acknowledging the diverse artistic expression within the context of African and African American dance and culture. BCF incorporates live performance, mentoring, master classes, workshops and special events. BCF has been awarded commendations from the Alameda County Arts Commission and Board of Supervisors, the California State Senate for preserving African American Art & Culture.