




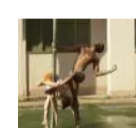

Amara Tabor-Smith is one of the performers in *Flying to Freedom* | Credit: Jean Melesaine

*Flying to Freedom*, a performance co-presented by [Zaccho Dance Theatre](#) and [Bayview Opera House](#), has liberation as its theme and is scheduled to spread its wings **June 16–17**, just a few days prior to the national holiday of Juneteenth on June 19. Curated by site choreographer and Zaccho Artistic Director Joanna Haigood, the new work features a cast of multidisciplinary artists: actor Steven Anthony Jones, performer Tossie Long, dancers Amara Tabor-Smith and Erik Raymond K. Lee, and circus and aerial artists Veronica Blair, Toni Cannon, and Jason Span, along with the Zaccho Youth Company.

Commemorating the emancipation of the last slaves in Texas on June 19, 1865, *Flying to Freedom* is both a project reflective of American history and an exploration of how our understanding of that history continues to evolve. The artists in this highly collaborative work — which will have two free performances at the opera house’s Ruth Williams Memorial Theatre — responded to prompts given by Haigood. The performers thus laid the foundation for the final integrated work, departing in individual directions and then arriving in rehearsals upon a central theme, with Haigood drawing together the connective tissue of it all, forming the work into one body composed of many unique and distinguishable parts.

Collectively, the artists tell an internally linked story, one that winds its way through subthemes such as trauma, healing, mythologizing, truth-telling, race and racism, oppression, accountability, reconciliation, flight, joy, and freedom. Importantly, the project also involved a community event on April 20. Attendees were invited to join a collective conversation with the artists and creators about what it means to achieve liberation through an interactive experience of art, music, and public dialogue.

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Toni Cannon is one of the aerial artists in *Flying to Freedom* | Credit: Austin Forbord

Haigood has been creating work in architectural and cultural environments since 1980. Her explorative projects have sprung from the inspiration she and fellow artists have found in grain terminals, a clock tower, abandoned military forts, urban neighborhood streets in the South Bronx, and more. She has received numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, a United States Artists Fellowship, a Bessie Award, and a Doris Duke Artist Award. Zaccho Dance Theatre is San Francisco's oldest Black-run dance company and the only professional dance company based in the Bayview and Hunters Point neighborhoods.

Bayview Opera House was founded in 1989. The space is a designated cultural center with a particular mission to serve the Bayview–Hunters Point community, whose people have experienced a long history of disinvestment. In this historic 1888 building, opportunities for education and employment are available to community youth and artists. The opera house primarily provides Black artists, other artists of color, and current and former residents of Bayview–Hunters Point with artistic, cultural, and educational resources through programs that include art exhibits, performances, artist residencies, film screenings, classes, community festivals, and other conversations and events.

*Flying to Freedom* was created with support from the City of San Francisco's Dream Keeper Initiative, Office of Economic and Workforce Development, and Grants for the Arts, as well as the Kimball Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Zellerbach Family Foundation, and the Fleishhacker Foundation.

**Lou Fancher** is a San Francisco Bay Area writer. Her work has been published by [WIRED.com](http://WIRED.com), *Diablo Magazine*, *Oakland Tribune*, *Contra Costa Times*, *InDance*, *East Bay Express*, *Oakland Magazine*, *SF Weekly*, and others. She is a children's book author, designer and illustrator, with over 50 books in print. Also a choreographer, ballet master and teacher, she coaches professional ballet and contemporary dance companies in the U. S. and Canada. Visit her website online at [www.johnsonandfancher.com](http://www.johnsonandfancher.com).

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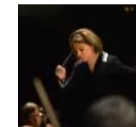
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