

BAYVIEW OPERA HOUSE INC. PRESENTS IN COLLABORATION WITH ZACCHO DANCE THEATRE

# FLYING TO FREEDOM

CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH THROUGH AERIAL DANCE, THEATER, AND MUSIC

**FRIDAY AND SATURDAY**

**JUNE 16 & 17, 2023**

**8:00 PM**



A new work curated  
and directed by  
Joanna Haigood

Featuring performing artists  
Steven Anthony Jones  
Tossie Long  
Alice Sheppard  
Amara Tabor Smith  
Erik K. Raymond Lee  
Veronica Blair  
Toni Cannon  
Jason Span  
Zaccho Youth Company

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# FLYING TO FREEDOM



**Directed and curated by**

Joanna Haigood

**Featuring the work of performing artists:**

Veronica Blair

Toni Cannon

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Erik Raymond K. Lee

Tossie Long with Jamil Nasim, Jamey Williams, and The N.T.B. Trio

Alice Sheppard

Jason Span

amara tabor-smith

Zaccho Youth Company

**Project Manager & Community Engagement:** Afiya Shani Williams

**Production Manager:** Franco Martinez

**Rigging Design:** David Freitag

**Lighting Design:** Allen Wilner

**Stage Manager:** Dottie Luxenberg

**Audio Engineer:** Michael Chikhale

**House Manager:** Ashley Smiley

**Show Riggers:** David Freitag, Scott Cameron

**Rigging Crew:** David Freitag, Scott Cameron, Jennings McKown,  
Michael Melner, Benaiah Seilen

**Sound Crew:** Zarahia Perdomo, Cory Williams

**Publicist:** Mary Carbonara

**Audio Description:** Gabriel Christian of Gravity Access Services

# THANK YOU

Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to the Bayview Opera House, WildFiya, Aliyah Dunn Salahuddin, Randy Seriguchi, Jr., Feline Finesse, Batuki Drummers, Zouhair Mussa, Vegan Hood Chefs, DJ Young Ellabaker, Jess Curtis and Gravity Access Services, Gabriel Christian, Antoine Hunter, Zahna Simon, Cresco Equipment Rentals, Freeman Audio Visual, Island Creative, the Zaccho Board of Directors, and our funders, without whom none of this would be possible. A very special thank you to the extraordinary artists for their beautiful and meaningful work. THANK YOU!

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



Juneteenth band. Credit: Grace Murray Stephenson of celebrations in Eastwoods Park, Austin, 1900.

## FLYING TO FREEDOM: CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH THROUGH AERIAL DANCE, MUSIC, AND THEATER

For more than two centuries, slavery defined what would become the United States — from its past as the 13 British colonies to its growth as an independent country. Slavery fueled its cotton industry and made it a leading economic power. 10 of the first 12 presidents enslaved people.

And when US chattel slavery finally ended, it was a long and uneven process.

Approximately 4 million people were enslaved in the US when Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860. Lincoln opposed slavery, and

though he had no plans to outlaw it, his election caused panic in Southern states. They vowed to uphold slavery and formed the Confederacy, triggering the start of the American Civil War.

A year into the conflict, Lincoln abolished slavery in Washington, D.C., legally freeing more than 3,000 people. Five months later, he announced the Emancipation Proclamation. It promised freedom to the 3.5 million people enslaved in Confederate states. The exceptions were the border states, Maryland, Missouri, Kentucky, and Delaware, where all forms of forced labor continued to be legal.

Although slavery was technically illegal in all Southern states, it was impossible to enforce because many southern areas were still under Confederate rule. This was the case when Union General Gordon Granger marched into Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, and announced that all enslaved people there were officially free — and had been for more than two years. It wasn't until December 6th, 1865 that the 13th Amendment was finally ratified, formally ending chattel slavery in the US.

Those in Galveston, Texas, began celebrating “Juneteenth” one year later. The day holds profound significance as a celebration of the demise of slavery, the righteous pursuit of true freedom for all, and a continued pledge to remember the past and dream the future.\* Juneteenth became a national holiday in 2021.

\* *Edited from Original Speech; Written by Karlos K Hill and Soraya Field Fiorio for TED-Ed.*

***Flying to Freedom: Celebrating Juneteenth through Aerial Dance, Music, and Theater*** showcases the work and performances of local music, theater, dance, and aerial artists reflecting on their own understanding of liberation.

We are sharing these works with hopes to inspire others to explore and expand their own liberation. We invite you to re-imagine our individual lives, communities, and world as a place where Black people and all people can truly live freely.

### COMMUNITY POEM\*\*

Wind, bright, sunshine is  
Like breeze on Black faces smiling  
Watching new generations live in joy and ...  
Blossoming into strong women and men  
from little girls and boys  
Empowerment and inclusivity  
From local to global; from arm's reach  
to every street  
Clothed with God's armor;  
keep it noble and walk  
With peace in your feet  
Jump, skip, fly to the beat  
Free! Free! Free!

\*\* *This poem was collectively written by members of the Bayview Hunters Point community who attended Zaccho Dance Theatre's April 20th community event at the Bayview Opera House where we explored liberation through art, music, and conversation.*

# PROGRAM OFFERINGS

## **Freedom Practices**

**Collaboration** between amara tabor-smith and Joanna Haigood  
**Performed by** amara tabor-smith

*This work situates itself in the question of where is freedom in the body? How do we unlock it? How do we nurture it? How is the physical ritual practice of liberation a key to our collective freedom? How do we liberate our imagination beyond the individual into the collective experience of Liberation?*

## **Red Clay Sound Haus presents Haus Sounds: a sonic odyssey**

**Conceived by** Tossie Long  
**Performed by** Tossie Long, Jamil Nasim, Jamey Williams, and The N.T.B. Trio: Jelani Noble, Gerald Williams, Brandon Farmer

*An ode to Black sound; Land Love Labor Legacy. A collection of prayers, synchronicities, memories, and predictions primed for sonic rupture. A creation interpreted through music, voice, noise and sound.*

## **The People Could Fly**

**Performed by** Steven Anthony Jones  
Excerpts from Robert Hayden's *O Daedalus Fly Away Home* and Virginia Hamilton's *The People Could Fly* - *American Black Folktales*

*The People Could Fly is a detailed fantasy tale of suffering and magic power. It is a powerful testament to the millions of slaves who never had the opportunity to "fly" away. They remained slaves, as did their children. The People Could Fly was first told and retold by those who only had their imaginations to set them free.*

## **Reflections**

**Choreographed and Performed by** Toni Cannon  
**MUSIC:** *Me and Your Mama* by Donald Glover

*Living as our authentic selves, in our identities and in our skin, is the way to find happiness and liberation.*

## **Forgiveness, Thank You!**

**Conceived and Performed by** Veronica Blair  
**Choreographed by** Veronica Blair, Yayoi Kambara, Yuko Hata  
**MUSIC:** #3, Aphex Twin from *Selected Ambient Works Volume 2*

*Contemporary aerial performance about unpacking trauma and true forgiveness through experience and acceptance. This work was first commissioned by Zaccho Dance Theatre for the 2018 San Francisco Aerial Arts Festival at the Fort Mason Center for Arts & Culture.*

*"You forgive yourself for every failure because you are trying to do the right thing. God knows that and you know it. Nobody else may know it."*  
- Maya Angelou

*"Everybody sooner or later has to drop the luggage and the baggage of illusions."* - Carlos Santana

## **Grounded To Fly**

**Conceived and Choreographed by** Erik Raymond K. Lee  
**MUSIC:** *The Corinthian Song* by Duranice Pace

## **Tranquil Shelter**

**Choreographed and Performed by** Alice Sheppard  
**Composer:** JJJJJerome Ellis

Created in part for JJJJJerome Ellis' Life of Life project, *Tranquil Shelter* is a calm meditation, a quiet searching for inner peace and liberation in seemingly confining circumstances. This work honors Henry Box Brown who packaged himself up in a very small crate and mailed himself to freedom.

**Ascend**

**Choreographed and Performed by** Jason Span

**Music:** *Motion* composed by Rone

*A beacon of hope is forever calling out to you. The Earth keeps you grounded, however, there's still so-*

*mething missing. Something that you yearn for. The ring of hope is your escape of feeling grounded and trapped. Now it's your time to ascend into your flight of greatness.*

**Spinners**

**Directed by** Joanna Haigood

**Choreography by**

Zaccho Youth Company

**Performed by** Zaccho Youth Company: Mai Celestine, Manai Celestine, Jaycee Franklin, Harlem Kelly, Hunter Kelly Molly Seybert-Kuczek, Draya Smith

**Music mixed by**

GrandWizzard Theodore



**ABOUT  
BAYVIEW OPERA HOUSE INC.**

The Bayview Opera House Ruth Williams Memorial Theatre exists to appreciate Black arts and culture through the acknowledgment of our rich legacy and stewardship of our unique history while providing accessibility for artists and audiences to be activated through our transformative work that educates, inspires, and progresses excellence. For more information, go to <https://bvoh.org/>

**ABOUT  
ZACCHO DANCE THEATRE**

Founded in 1980, Zaccho Dance Theatre is an innovative force in both the world of dance and our home community of Bayview Hunters Point. We create and present performance work that investigates dance as it relates to place. Artistic Director Joanna Haigood and collaborators pursue unique and challenging visions of dance, including spectacular aerial choreography, evocative site-specific performances, and culturally significant subject matter.

Zaccho Dance Theatre is San Francisco's oldest Black-run dance company and the only professional dance company based in Bayview Hunters Point. Our work draws inspiration from social histories and racial justice themes, and returns it to the community through youth arts education, adult classes, artists in residency programs, and the biennial San Francisco Aerial Arts Festival. Our Youth Performing Arts Program is a collaborative youth arts education program with SFUSD developed to enhance classroom learning, educating both the mind and the physical body of our young Bayview Hunters Point neighbors. As a longstanding nonprofit program, we pride ourselves on maintaining our artistic integrity, social consciousness, and community involvement. For more information, go to [zaccho.org](http://zaccho.org)

# BIOGRAPHIES



Since 1980 **Joanna Haigood** (she/her) has been creating work that uses natural, architectural, and cultural environments as points of departure

for movement exploration and narrative. Her stages have included grain terminals, a clock tower, the pope's palace, military forts, and a mile of urban neighborhood streets in the South Bronx. Her work has been commissioned by many arts institutions, including Dancing in the Streets, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Walker Arts Center, the Exploratorium Museum, the National Black Arts Festival, and Festival d'Avignon. She has been honored with the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, the United States Artist and Rainin Fellowships, and a New York Bessie Award.

Haigood is a recipient of the esteemed Doris Duke Artist Award and she has had the privilege to mentor many extraordinary young artists internationally at the National École des Arts du Cirque in France, the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance in England, Spelman College, Institute for Diversity in the Arts at Stanford University, San Francisco Circus Center, and at Zaccho Studio in San Francisco.



**Veronica Blair** (she/her) was Universoul's Resident Aerialist for over five years. She has performed in Afrika! Afrika!, Germany's largest

circus event, and worked for Uni-

versal Studios Japan. The 2022 San Francisco Aerial Arts Festival premiered Blair's The RAINBOW is Enuf, a reimagining of playwright Ntozake Shange's For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow is Enuf, expressed through the lens of modern circus. She is filming a documentary that spotlights those who work in the industry. Blair's The Uncle Junior Project came about after the death of little-known Black circus animal trainer of the same name.

## **Toni Cannon**

(he/him) is consistently working on finding new ways to express himself through acrobatics. He finds the challenge thrilling, and very relatable to life. Toni started his circus career later in life; however, that didn't stop him from diving deep into his new found love and passion.



## **Brandon Farmer**

(he/him) is a world class drummer, producer, singer/songwriter and multi-instrumentalist. Raised in North Carolina, he grew his R&B, jazz, and funk sound in New York, and continued his career in the Bay Area. He possesses unmatched rhythmic versatility. Performing with artists like Goapele, Mike Aaberg, Javier Santiago, and The Futurelics, he's cemented his standing in the local scene as a reliable and extremely skilled drummer.



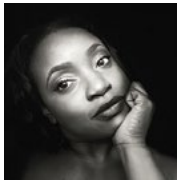


**Steven Anthony Jones** (he/him) has enjoyed 50 years as a professional in the American Theater. He was a company member with the Negro Ensemble

Company and American Conservatory Theater. He served as Artistic Director of the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre. He most recently performed in August Wilson's autobiographical, one-man show, *How I Learned What I Learned*, at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival.



Born and raised in Oakland, California, **Erik K. Raymond Lee** (he/him) received formal dance training from UC Berkeley, BA in Dance & Performance Studies (2010) and MFA in dance from Mills College (2017). Erik is a dance professor, choreographer, and business owner.



**Tossie Long** (she/her), nicknamed "Bone Rattler," is a mother, multidisciplinary performing artist, sound sculptress, facilitator, producer, and

director that speaks to the intersections of culture, personal identity and sociopolitical issues. A multi-hyphenate and Grammy Nominated artist, Tossie is a practitioner of ceremonial music from around the world with a focus on African cosmology. Tossie has voyaged to Haiti, Cuba and Benin tracing the migration of Vodou. She is currently working on a multi-part project, *Red Clay: A Romance Primer: The Preservation of Landmarks: Body, Architecture and Desire*, interpreted through sound, film, stage and movement.

**jamil nasim** (he/him) investigates Blackness as a meeting point of synchronous, imbricating systems – a nexus of social,



technological, and quasi-scientific forces. Through installation, moving image, sound, and new media, the artist seeks to employ audiovisual ecologies as a space to meditate on how cultural memories, systemic apparitions, and other partial gestures resonate throughout the Black Atlantic diaspora.

**Jelani Noble** (he/him) is a pianist/keyboardist with over 17 years of experience. Classically trained, he has developed a technique and repertoire that aids him in every musical



experience, bringing a unique jazz influence and lyrical touch to every artistic endeavor. From working with hip hop artists like Dizz and Rob Woods, to subbing for The Futurelics, he has shown genre versatility.

Living into a dare, dancer and choreographer **Alice Shepard** (she/her) resigned her tenured professorship to train with Kitty Lunn and Infinity Dance



Theater. After an apprenticeship, Alice joined AXIS Dance Company where she became a core company member, toured nationally, and taught in the company's education and outreach programs. A USA Artist, Creative Capital grantee and Bessie Award winner, Alice is the founder and artistic lead for Kinetic Light, a disability arts organization, working at the intersections of disability, dance, design, identity, and



technology to create transformative art and affirm the intersectional disability arts movement.



**Jason Span** (he/him) developed his artistry with aerial silks in June 2015 in Hawaii. He later joined Bittersweet Studios in Florida.

Always seeking to improve his skills, Jason began to cross-train on multiple apparatuses such as aerial hoop, aerial straps, and pole (dance). Span began teaching and performing aerial arts at Bittersweet Studios and is currently touring with AIDA Cruises based out of Germany.

### **amara tabor-smith**

(she/they) is a dancer, choreographer, and artistic director of Deep Waters Dance Theater. Her dance making practice utilizes Yo-



ruba spiritual ritual to address issues of social and environmental justice, race, gender identity, and belonging. House/Full of Blackwomen, her current project, is a multidisciplinary, site-specific dance theater work that addresses the displacement, well-being, and sex-trafficking of black women and girls in Oakland. tabor-smith's work has been performed in Brazil, the Republic of the Congo, New York, and throughout the San Francisco Bay Area.



### **Gerald Williams**

(he/him) is a bassist with over 20 years of experience playing locally and touring around the world. Gerald has notable performances with

Grammy award nominated and winning artist such as Isaac Hayes, Brian

McKnight, and Marcus Johnson. He has a unique sound and energy that is communicated through melodic and rhythmic expression.

### **Jamey Williams**

(he/him) is a jack of all trades with experience in poetry, acting, teaching, and fiction; his first creative love has always been music.



Jamey has been writing songs for almost his entire life and, even though he stopped recording his music, he is always creating new verses and songs to impress his students. In addition to writing songs for fun, Jamey has also won several battle rap and freestyle competitions.

### **Zaccho Youth Company**

(ZYC) is a pre-professional aerial dance company founded by Artistic Director Joanna Haigood for youth ages 9 to 19.



Since its inception in 2002, ZYC has performed throughout the Bay Area. Venues and festivals have included the San Francisco Aerial Arts Festival, Circus for the Arts in the School Benefit, The Luggage Store Gallery's In the Streets Festival, Black Choreographers Festival, Global Youth Media and Arts Festival, ODC Youth Festival, the Discovery Museum, ODC Theater, Dance Mission, SOMArts, Zeum Theater, Montalvo Arts Center, Canopy Aerial Studios in Atlanta, GA, and CounterPULSE. Zaccho Youth Company is part of Zaccho Dance Theatre's award winning Youth Performing Arts Program, held at Zaccho Studio in Bayview Hunters Point, where it has been based for over 20 years.



*Emancipation Day celebration, June 19, 1900 held in «East Woods» on East 24th Street in Austin. Credit: Austin History Center.*

## COMING SOON

### ***The People's Palace***

**October 2023**

#### **San Francisco City Hall**

Commissioned by Dancers' Group with funding generously provided by Hewlett 50, The People's Palace is a new site-specific installation performance choreographed by Joanna Haigood. The work will investigate movement and visual storytelling in relation to the history, architecture, and social and political metaphors inherent in San Francisco City Hall. Set in various locations throughout the Beaux-Arts architectural masterpiece, this site-specific piece will premiere on October 26, 27, and 29, 2023.

### ***Call for Applications: Black Futures Artist-in-Residence Program***

**July 2023**

Zaccho Dance Theatre's Black Futures Artist-in-Residence Program is open to diverse voices, emerging and established, called to express the Black experience through an arts practice that inspires dialogue and builds community. Black Futures seeks to support artists at all points of their process and to give them an opportunity to conduct in depth research without the pressure of presenting a completed work by the end of the residency. Each Resident Artist is supported with a monetary stipend, free studio space, production and marketing support, mentorship, and community engagement opportunities.

The application for 2024-25 Resident Artists will be available online at [zaccho.org](http://zaccho.org) beginning in July 2023!

## ZACCHO STAFF



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Financial Director  
YPAP Associate Artistic Director  
YPAP Program Manager and  
ZYC Production Manager  
Artist-in-Residence Manager  
Assistant to the Artistic Director  
Studio Manager  
Graphic Designer  
Grant Writer  
Social Media Manager

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Lisa Burger  
Ann Berman  
Erik K. Raymond Lee & Veronica Blair

Lizzy Spicuzza  
Flo Dabokemp & Jessica Pearl Bailey  
Afiya "Fi" Williams  
Maia Walker  
Charlie Formenty  
Brechtin Flournoy  
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Zarahia Perdomo  
Cory Williams

*Martha Yates Jones (left) and Pinkie Yates (right), daughters of Rev. Jack Yates, in a decorated carriage in front of a house, 1908. Credit: Schlueters Advertising & Souvenir Photographs, Houston, Texas.*





**Thank you for joining us in this celebration of liberation!  
We hope you enjoyed *Flying to Freedom***

**As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Zaccho Dance Theatre  
greatly appreciates the support of our community.  
Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today!**



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