



PRESENTS

**REGGIE WILSON/FIST AND  
HEEL PERFORMANCE GROUP**

**Doris Duke Theatre**

**July 10-14, 2019**

CHOREOGRAPHER Reggie Wilson

PERFORMERS Hadar Ahuvia  
Rhetta Aleong  
Yeman Brown  
Paul Hamilton  
Lawrence Harding  
Michel Kouakou  
Clement Mensah  
Gabriela Silva  
Annie Wang  
Reggie Wilson  
Michelle Yard

"OUTSIDE EYE" Phyllis Lamhut  
Susan Manning

MATH ADVISOR Jesse Wolfson

*POWER* is dedicated to The Dead.

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## PROGRAM

### ***POWER* (World Premiere)**

CHOREOGRAPHY Reggie Wilson

COSTUME DESIGN Naoko Nagata  
Enver Charkatash  
Indigo Batik by Arianne King Comer with Adjua Nsoroma, and Fist and Heel.

TECHNICAL DIRECTION/  
LIGHTING DESIGN Jonathan Belcher

PERFORMERS Hadar Ahuvia  
Rhetta Aleong  
Yeman Brown  
Paul Hamilton  
Lawrence Harding  
Michel Kouakou  
Clement Mensah  
Gabriela Silva  
Annie Wang  
Michelle Yard  
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

#### **FUNDING**

*POWER* was co-commissioned by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

*POWER* was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. It was created in part during multiple residencies in the Pillow Lab and premiered at Jacob's Pillow July 10, 2019. This project is also supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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Booking information: Sophie Myrtil-McCourtly. Lotus Arts Management, 72-11 Austin Street, Suite 371 Forest Hills, NY 11375 Tel: 347.721.8724; sophie@lotusartsmgmt.com; lotusartsmgmt.com

Special thanks to Joan B. Hunter for her support for the development of *POWER* at Hancock Shaker Village.

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Thank you for observing these House Rules so that everyone can have an enjoyable experience.

We are so glad you are here. Enjoy the show!

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## COMPANY

**REGGIE WILSON** (Executive and Artistic Director, Choreographer, Performer) founded Fist and 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, Summerstage (NYC), Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival (Becket, MA), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (San Francisco), UCLA Live, 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, 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. He performed and toured with Ohad Naharin before forming Fist and Heel. He has lectured, taught, and conducted workshops and community projects throughout the U.S., 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. Wilson is the recipient of the Minnesota Dance Alliance’s McKnight National Fellowship (2000-2001). Wilson is

also a 2002 Bessie Award winner 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, 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* premiered at the Walker Art Center and 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)*. His critically acclaimed work *CITIZEN* premiered in 2016 at FringeArts and BAM’s Next Wave Festival.

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 Philadelphia’s historic sacred spaces.

**NAOKO NAGATA** (Costume Designer) started her career as a biochemist in Japan. Her evolution into costume making is a long story. With literally no formal training, she has been creating for a diverse group of choreographers and dancers non-stop since 1998. She has collaborated with David Thomson, Ralph Lemon, Reggie Wilson, Vicky Shick, Kyle Abraham for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Bebe Miller, David

Dorfman, David Neumann, Doug Elkins, Gina Gibney, Jimena Paz, Liz Lerman, Nora Chipaumire, Urban Bush Women, Zvi Gotheiner, and many others. Working closely with collaborators, Nagata helps bring to life what she herself calls, “the creation of a shared dream.” She enjoys studying Alexander Technique with June Ekman. Working with Chakartash on this project has truly been “Heaven on earth”.

**ENVER CHAKARTASH** (Costume Designer) is a New York based costume designer and wardrobe stylist. He has designed costumes for Tony Oursler, The Wooster Group, Young Jean Lee, and Half Straddle. Chakartash began collaborating with Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group in 2016. Since then, he has designed costumes for *CITIZEN* and consulted on costumes for “...they stood shaking while others began to shout”. Working with Nagata on this project has been one of the most rewarding experiences of his life.

**JONATHAN BELCHER** (Lighting Designer, Technical Director) was born in Rochester, NY, and now lives in Brooklyn. He is Lighting Director, Set Designer, and Studio Manager for City University of New York Television. Previously, he was resident Lighting Designer at the Kitchen, The Harkness Dance Festival 2001, The University of Michigan Musical Society, SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance, Dance Theater Workshop, and The Yard. Belcher’s career has been distinguished by two Bessie Awards—one for his Visual Design, and the second for his winning performance of *Exhausting Love* by Luciana Achugar. He was also one of three Lighting Designers featured in the 2009 *New York Times* article by Roslyn Sulcas entitled “Lighting Designers Illuminate Ballet”. Belcher designed a number of projects with Amanda Loulaki, Bill Young, Luciana Achugar, Blk Market Membership, Dean Moss, Maria Hassabi, Jill Sigman, Jeremy Wade, Sara Michelson, and Reggie

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## COMPANY

Wilson. Belcher's guiding principal in lighting design is, "look at things differently, if for no other reason than it's a lot more fun that way."

**HADAR AHUVIA** (Performer) was raised in Israel/Palestine and the U.S. Ahuvia studied at Lines Ballet, the SF Conservatory of Dance, and Sarah Lawrence College. She has worked with Sara Rudner, Jill Sigman, Donna Uchizono, Molly Poerstel, and Kathy Westwater, and has delighted in working with Fist & Heel since 2016. Ahuvia's work, deconstructing her Zionist cultural heritage, has been supported by a Brooklyn Arts Council, DTW/NYLA, Movement Research, the 14th Street Y, CUNY Dance Initiative, EtM Choreographer + Composer Residency, Yaddo, and Baryshnikov Arts Center. She has presented her performative research at the 14th Street Y, Art Stations Foundation, The James Gallery, Whitman College, and Danspace Project. Her work *Everything you have is yours?* earned her a Bessie nomination for Outstanding Breakout Choreographer.

**RHETTA ALEONG** (Company Administrator, Performer) has performance roots grounded in community theater, performance art, and a Catholic all-girls high school in Trinidad and Tobago. She has a B.F.A. in Journalism with an art concentration from The School of Visual Arts, and is a fifth degree black belt. Aleong began working with Wilson in '91 and "wears many hats" within Fist and Heel Performance Group. Creative artists of special significance to Aleong include Pat Akien, Michael Steele, Helen Camps, Noble Douglas (Trinidad), Anita Gonzalez, Ms. Hattie Gossett, Tiyé Giraud, Cynthia Oliver, and Lawrence Goldhuber. Respect to those before, after, above, and below.

**YEMAN BROWN** (Performer) was born and raised in Tallahassee, Florida where he developed a passion for performing at local churches and theater groups.

Brown received his B.F.A. from the Florida State University's School of Dance and danced as a summer scholarship student at The Ailey School and The American Dance Festival. Brown resides in Brooklyn and has been a performer with Fist and Heel Performance Group since 2013, was nominated for a Bessie Award for his work in *CITIZEN*, and named *Dance Magazine's* 2018 "25 Dancers to Watch". Brown was recently featured in Mumford & Sons' music video *Woman*, and makes his Broadway debut in the musical *Jagged Little Pill* in Fall 2019. He would like to thank God and his parents for their unconditional love and guidance.

**PAUL HAMILTON** (Performer) is a Brooklyn-based movement artist. He attended SUNY Purchase, where he trained with Kazuko Hirabayashi, Kevin Wynn, and Neil Greenberg; he also studied at The Ailey School. He has performed with Elizabeth Streb, the Martha Graham Dance Company, The Barnspace Dance, Mauri Cramer Dancers, Ballet Arts Theatre, Ralph Lemon (Bessie nominee *Scaffold Room*), Deborah Hay, David Thomson, Headlong Dance Theater, David Gordon's *The Matter 2019*, and The Museum of Modern Art, recreating Bruce Nauman's Wall/Floor Positions. He is a member of Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group, Keely Garfield Dance, and Jane Comfort and Company, and is currently working with Melinda Ring on a new Danspace project commission.

**LAWRENCE A.W. HARDING** (Performer) was born in Sierra Leone and now practices Physical Therapy in New York. He is the Director of Fitness at The Axis Project, a multidisciplinary center that serves people with physical disabilities and empowers them to pursue a healthy and active lifestyle. He is also the developer and President of Spinal Mobility, a novel manual technique that enables clinicians to improve their rehabilitative interventions for people with Spinal Cord Injury and

other Neurological diseases. He has been a member of Fist and Heel since 1993, and continues to delight in discovering himself in Reggie's work. He gives continued thanks to Remi, D.Z. Martha, Samuel, and all the dead ones. Big love to the 'rents and the family.

**MICHEL KOUAKOU** (Performer) is a choreographer and dancer from the Ivory Coast. He is the founder and director of Daara Dance. Kouakou received his M.F.A. in Dance from Hollins University. He is the recipient of the Vilcek Prize for Creative Promise in Dance (2012), a Jerome Foundation Fellowship for research in dance (2012), winner of a New York Foundation of the Arts Artist Fellowship (2008), and winner of the U.S. Japan Fellowship (2008) to conduct research in Tokyo and Kyoto. He was nominated for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative (2008), and in 2010 was a finalist in The A.W.A.R.D. Show in New York City and Los Angeles. Kouakou maintains an active touring and teaching schedule and continues to pursue his long-term goal of building an "artistic bridge" between the Ivory Coast and the U.S.

**CLEMENT MENSAH** (Performer) is also a choreographer and an educator. He is a third culture kid who was born and raised in Ghana, West Africa. After living and going to school in the Netherlands, the U.S., and the U.K., where he received his postgraduate degree at Trinity Laban Conservatoire, Mensah is humbled to have performed, taught, and traveled with many dance companies to more than 49 countries. Mensah founded *Off the Radar* in 2015 to educate the young generation. Mensah joined Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group in 2012.

**GABRIELA SILVA** (Performer) is a freelance Brazilian-American performer and choreographer based in New York City. She studied dance at the OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center, Boston

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## COMPANY

Art Academy and University of Minnesota Twin Cities. Silva has performed with Selmadanse, Jean Appolon Expressions, Danza Organica, Quicksilver Dance, Peter DiMuro, Emily Beattie, and Marina Magalhães. She has been a teaching artist for the Kroc Center, Community Art Center, Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción, Boston Ballet, Boston Public Libraries, and Boston Public Schools. In 2014, she co-founded Costasis Arts Collective with Terina-Jasmine Alladin to support collaborations between local artists of color, community partners, and presenters in Boston. Their collaborative works, *I've picked and I've picked and I've picked*; *let fall*; and *Oyá and Mari Jiwe*, were presented at RAW Boston, EMW Bookstore, Green Street Studios, Dance Complex, and Aeronaut Brewing Company. Silva participated in a residency at the Institute of Contemporary Art Boston in 2014 and the following year was named an Associate Artist at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, where she began her first independent choreographic project inspired by her studies of Afro-Brazilian culture under the tutelage of Reggie Wilson. Most recently, Silva trained, taught, and presented her work at Sarayyet Ramallah in Palestine.

**ANNIE WANG** (Performer) trained at the Martha Graham School and the Boitsov School of Classical Ballet. She has had the pleasure of dancing for Carrie Ellmore-Tallitsch, Parijat Desai, Nicole Stanton, Pia Vinson, Asako Miyahira, Boitsov Classical Ballet Company, Dance Elixir, and MADart Productions. She has presented choreography at the 92nd Street Y, BRIC, Brooklyn Studios for Dance, Five Myles Art and Performance Space, the WestFest Dance Festival, Triskelion Arts, Hot Wood Arts Gallery, Sky Gallery, and The Chocolate Factory Theater. Wang is a BRIClab 2016 resident artist, a 2015 Associate Artist at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and a 2014 artist-in-residence at the Marble House Project in Vermont. She was a 2017-18 Brooklyn Arts Council grantee to develop *Marigram*, an international collaborative work inspired by mass protests.

**MICHELLE YARD** (Performer) was born in Brooklyn, New York. She began her professional dance training at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts. While in high school, she also studied at The Ailey School as a scholarship student. Yard graduated with a B.F.A. in Dance from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Yard was a longtime member of the Mark Morris Dance Group. Yard is a certified Pilates instructor and teaches in New York City. She is thrilled to be dancing with Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group. Mom, thank you!

### SPECIAL THANKS

GOD; Ancestors; Ira Sutton Ewing; Lois J. Wilson, A'ntie C; A'nt Jean, Uncle Rev., Uncle Von, Uncle George, A'nt Wilma, Aba, Abba, Saba, David Wilson, Jr., Elaine Flowers, Phyllis Lamhut, Germaine Ingram, Tim O'Brien, the cities of Philadelphia, Watervliet, Hancock, Bellagio and Mount Lebanon, Mary Ann Haagen and The Enfield Shaker Singers, The Land of the Blacks, Jesse Wolfson, Doetsch Family Fund, Tara Rodman, Lucia Kellar, Estate of Samuel Miller, Dave Snyder/Sara Coffey, DJ McManus Foundation, Inc., Sarah Kim, Martha Sherman, Magda Gabor-Hotchkiss, Ainsley Boisson, Cathy Edwards, Janel Merritt, Polly Morris, Jean Cook, Madeline Brine, Mike Johnson, Pamela Tatge and the full team at the Pillow, Jennifer, Caitlin, the interpreters and the Hancock Shaker Village crew, Lacy, Jerry, and Sharon at Shaker Museum | Mount Lebanon, Lorraine E. Weiss of the Shaker Heritage Society (Watervliet), and Richard Flanders of the Northeastern Woodworkers Association, Susan Manning, Adrian, Nick, Merrit, and the cohort and Administration team at the Rockefeller Bellagio, Polly at Lynden Sculpture Garden, Arianne King Comer and Adjua Nsoroma, Judy, Lydia, Sophie, and Danspace and St. Mark's Church in-the-Bowery, Sam, Harry, Kerry, Karen, Arielle, Robin at Philadelphia Contemporary and Partners for Sacred Places, Sophie/Lotus Arts Management, Fist and Heel Board of Directors, members of the Advisory Council, the performers past and present for their time on this project, their commitment over the years prioritizing and sacrificing, and their relentless talent.

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## PILLOWNOTES

by Maura Keefe

*The PillowNotes series comprises essays commissioned from our Scholars-in-Residence to provide audiences with a broader context for viewing dance.*

Reggie Wilson is doing something old. And he's doing something new. That pairing of past and present has driven Wilson since he founded his Brooklyn-based company in 1989. Old and new is not the only duality—there's also music and dance, sacred and secular, highbrow and lowbrow, body and mind. And, of course, fist and heel. Not pairings that duel, rather partners who complement and build.

When enslaved Africans were brought to the United States, they were forbidden to use percussion instruments in dance and music, either in sacred or secular contexts. In place of drums, fists and heels created body percussions and voiced breath rhythms. Inspired by the ingenuity of dancers and musicians from the past, Wilson's company beat and stamp out rhythms from various regions in Africa and the Americas. Or as Wilson explains it: "Fist and heel is clapping and stomping, shouting and hollerin'—and the manipulation of energies."

One of Wilson's driving artistic forces is his research, which he described in a PillowTalk as a process in which he asks questions that lead to more questions. Mostly we think of choreographic research occurring in places like the Pillow Lab, working with dancers to create a new work. While Wilson certainly does that, since 1993 Wilson regularly leaves the studio to travel extensively and foster his choreographic explorations. For example, he went to the Mississippi Delta region and to Trinidad and Tobago to do research with the Spiritual Baptists and Shangoists, and to Zimbabwe, Botswana, and South Africa to work with dance and performance groups and Zionist religious communities. For *Moses(es)*, seen at the Pillow in 2014, he traveled to Israel, Egypt, and Turkey. For *POWER*, the Pillow-commissioned work that premieres this summer, some of his research was done a little closer to home, here in the Berkshires. Elements of what Wilson discovers in working with those different communities and their traditions inspire his concert dance works.

This process results in the creation of what he has termed "post-African/Neo-Hoodoo Modern dances." Hoodoo—while the origins of the word itself aren't quite clear—is a kind of magic or folkloric practice that resulted from the intermingling of African beliefs, Native American botanical knowledge, and European folktales. The direct reference to African, the mix of cultures with Hoodoo, and the layering and modifying of words with "post" and "neo" suggest just how much blending Wilson does—and how deliberate he is in doing so.

Throughout Wilson's choreographic career, his works have featured movement idioms from the slave tradition of the ring shout and South African gumboot dancing, to a variety of "hand-dancing" forms like the Hustle and the Black Bottom. While Wilson draws from, as he puts it, "the movement languages of the blues, slave and spiritual cultures of Africans in the Americas," he is not reconstructing dances from the past, nor is he trying to present a replica of a dance from a particular place. Rather, he mixes rhythms from one place with a song from another and movement from a third. This is where the postmodern aspect comes in: Wilson layers different elements to make something completely new. As he explained in that same PillowTalk, while he operates from a position of respect for the traditions he discovers and explores, he is also an artist, and thus he innovates within traditions.

In spring 2018, Wilson curated a platform of events called *Dancing Platform Praying Grounds: Blackness, Churches, and Downtown Dance* that culminated with a series of lectures followed by performances at Danspace. In the church/performance space of St. Mark's Church in New York City, Wilson probed and expanded the connections between the black church and performance. As he stated in a *New York Times* interview, "his dances are guided by two lines of inquiry: 'What is the relationship between postmodern dance and African diasporic culture? And what is the relationship between Protestant Christianity and African diasporic religions? Even if the piece seems like it has nothing to do with either of those, they creep back in there.'" In addition to his curation, Wilson also created a site-specific work titled *...they stood shaking, while others began to shout*, inspired by his research on black Shakers. *New York Times* dance critic Gia Kourlas wrote about the work, "Within the frame of postmodern dance—and with a heady mix of spirituals, contemporary music and field recordings—he produces a remarkable work that flows seamlessly from start to finish." Wilson's research for the Jacob's Pillow commissioned *POWER* builds on those interests and continues his focus on the Shakers. Visits and residencies at the Pillow Lab which encompassed research at Hancock Shaker Village culminate in the new work's world premiere.

Wilson understands moving across time and from place to place. He uncovers paths laid down by Africans and African Americans in the diaspora and in different regions of Africa as they traveled to the New World, and from the South to the North in the Great Migration and, with his newest work, the Berkshires. And what he finds reawakens the dances from those places and peoples onto the concert dance stage.

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*Dance writer Maura Keefe has led audience programs at various venues around the country and is the Associate Director of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, where she was named the Dorothy G. Madden Professor of Dance in 2018.*