



**BLACK CHOREOGRAPHERS FESTIVAL HERE & NOW  
CELEBRATES 20 YEARS!**

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

**at**

**SF Public Library - Koret Auditorium**

**Saturday, March 22, 2025**

Doors Open @ 2pm

**Presenting Black Dance Then & Now**, moderated by **Dr. Halifu Osumare**

Focuses on the demands and opportunities of presenting Black dance makers in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and today.

**Panel Part 1: Presenting Black Dance Then**

Panelists: **Dean Beck-Stewart, Joanna Haigood, and Dr. L. Martina Young**

**Performance Segment #1**

Soloists: **natalya shoaf, dominique lesleyann**

**Panel Part 2: Presenting Black Dance Now**

Panelists: **Kendra Kimbrough Barnes, laura elaine ellis, and Joanna Haigood**

**Performance Segment #2**

Soloist: **Byb Chanel Bibene**

**Audience Q & A**

***Directly following the Audience Q & A – stay for our Cake & Chat Event!***

BCF Production Team:

BCF Festival Co-Directors: laura e. ellis, Kendra Kimbrough Barnes  
BCF Tech Crew: Chi Chi Okonmah(Stage Manager), Jazara Metcalf (Asst Stage Manager)  
Michael Dabney, Mark Rogers, Chris Williams (BCF Exhibit Load-in & Load-out)

SF Public Library Staff Support:

Morgan McGuire, Art, Music & Recreation Department  
Stephanie Daddino, Art, Music & Recreation Department  
Mike and Kenny, Media Production & Support Services

**Exhibit Viewing – Lobby:**

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

An exquisite archival display that depicts the narrative of two iconic SF Bay Area Festivals: Black Choreographers Moving Toward the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 of presenting BCF! *Designed & Curated by Visual Artists: Pete Belkin and Tiersa Nureyev*

### **Presenting Black Dance Then & Now 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. She is also a protégé of the late renowned dancer-anthropologist Katherine Dunham and a Certified Instructor of Dunham Dance Technique. Between 1989-1995 she was the Founder and Executive Producer of her national dance initiative Black Choreographers Moving Toward the 21st Century, and help establish California's multicultural arts legacy. She has published two memoirs that examine this long career: *Dancing In Blackness* (2018) and *Dancing the Afrofuture: Hula, Hip-Hop, and the Dunham Legacy* (2024). 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>

**Kendra Kimbrough Barnes** (Panelist) is Producer, Choreographer, Dance Instructor, and is Co-Founder of Black Choreographers Festival: Here & Now. She holds an MAA from Golden Gate University and a BFA from San Francisco State University. She is the director of K\*STAR Productions, founded in 1996, and serves as the umbrella organization for the Kendra Kimbrough Dance Ensemble (KKDE). Her dance company's repertoire addresses urgent, socially-conscious issues such as incarceration and sexual assault. Additionally, she is Dance Instructor at University of California, Berkeley. As an artist she has studied Dunham and Horton Techniques and worked with such notables as Dr. Albirida Rose-Eberhardt, Robert Moses' Kin, Donald Byrd, Bill T. Jones, and bay area legends Chitresh Das, Malonga Casquelourd, and Carlos Aceituno.

**Dean Beck-Stewart** (Panelist) is a graduate of the University of Southern California with degrees in chemistry and dance history and choreography. When Dr. Halifu Osumare invited Theater Artaud to co-produce the state-wide Black Choreographers Moving Toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (BCM) in the San Francisco Bay Area, Executive Director Kim Fowler led the organization for the inaugural festival in 1989 with Dean Beck-Stewart as the Company Manager. He was appointed General Director the following year leading the organization as it co-produced the next four festivals in the SF Bay Area with the blessing of Dr. Osumare. He has an extensive background as a performing arts producer, commissioner, presenter, and performer. He was the General Director of Theater Artaud, an internationally acclaimed premiere large-scale multi-discipline and multi-cultural contemporary performing arts venue in San Francisco. He successfully facilitated nationally recognized collaborative community-based programs to provide opportunities for Bay Area artists and organizations to build the quality of their work, audiences, and resources. Dean Beck-Stewart is currently board advisor and performance coach for Sing Napa Valley, an intergenerational community choir in Napa, CA.

**Byb Chanel Bibene** (Soloist) 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.

**laura elaine ellis** (Panelist) is Co-Founder/Co-Director of Black Choreographers Festival: Here & Now, recognized in 2019 and 2025 by the State of California for preserving Black dance, art and culture. laura is also the Co-founder and the Executive Director of The African & African American Performing Arts Coalition (AAPAC), a San Francisco-based non-profit, founded in 1995. AAPAC is dedicated to the development and support of work by and for African American dance artists. Ellis has maintained a non-stop career of performing and choreographing for many Bay Area projects. She is a long-time member of Dimensions Dance Theater, she has earned an Isadora Duncan award for individual performance, and most recently she performed in Jo Kreiter/Flyaway Production's *Ode to Jane* and co/choreographed, with Joanna Haigood, SF BATCO's original musical, *Sign My Name To Freedom*. Both projects named as best productions in 2024 by KQED Arts. laura has earned critical praise for her choreography for theater projects produced by Theater Rhinoceros and Shotgun Players. laura is also a dance educator with 31 years of teaching and designing programs for CSU Eastbay and the Athenian School. This summer laura will be choreographing pre-professional productions with A.C.T. and SFartsED/SFBATCO. She is thrilled to be celebrating and bringing to community the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary season of BCF: Here & Now!

**Joanna Haigood** (Panelist) 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 also been honored with the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, the United States Artist Fellowship, and a New York Bessie Award. Haigood is also a recipient of the esteemed Doris Duke Artist Award and she is a Dance Magazine Awardee '24. <https://zaccho.org/?collaborators>

**dominique lesleyann** (Soloist) is a powerhouse. A divine vibrant being. She is a storyteller; revisiting and reimagining all aspects of herself, and allowing her experiences to shape her reality. Diving into realms of love and collaboration, she is exploring empathetic and compassionate ways of listening and learning from her ancestors, family, and friends on how to cultivate and sustain a thriving community. As a teacher, she invites her students in the process of self reflection. Co-creating a space where her students feel called to swim in the pools of their inner truth and create/perform movement from the space of authenticity. dominique has had the pleasure of training with Deeply rooted dance theater, Hubbard street, Homer hans Bryant, LINES Ballet BFA program, Guy Shoromi and Sidra Bell. She has had the opportunity of choreographing and performing internationally in Portugal and Vancouver and domestically throughout the Bay Area. dominique is currently an arts education teaching artist in the SF and Oakland area and dancing with Dance Brigade. She is excited to be returning to her origins as a dancer and choreographer; diving into the ritual form that is movement medicine. asé. amen. and so it is.

**natalya janay shoaf** (Soloist) is 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](http://www.natalyashoaf.com) | [@natalyashoaf](https://www.instagram.com/natalyashoaf) — Instagram

**L. Martina Young, Ph.D.** (Panelist) is a dance artist, writer, somatics educator, and humanities lecturer, Dr. Young is a multi-year Fellow of the National Endowment for the Arts. She began her career as a member of the Inner City Repertory Dance Company under artistic director and choreographer Donald McKayle. As a soloist, she has collaborated with The Watts Prophets, as well as Los Angeles's Inglewood Symphony Orchestra and the Reno Philharmonic Orchestra. As a dance educator Dr. Young has served on the faculties of The College of William and Mary, California State University of Dominguez Hills, and California Institute of the Arts, and was Director of Dance at the University of Nevada, Reno from 1987-1994. As an essayist, Ms. Young's literary work is published in both professional and scholarly journals.

**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.



The Black Choreographers Festival: Here & Now (BCF) @ SFPL event made possible through community partnership and co-sponsored by the SF Public Library. Special acknowledgement to the SFPL family - Art, Music & Recreation department at the Main library, and also Media Production & Support Services and Friends of the SF Public Library funding the program.

BCF's 20<sup>th</sup> 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, MoAD, SF Public Library, SFArtsEd | Minnesota Street Project, and Dance Film SF.

**BCF @ MSP EVENT**

1275 Minnesota St, SF

**Saturday, May 3**

**BCF Community Dance Day @ 12:30 – 3:30p**

Bay Area Celebrates National Dance Week - *FREE to the Public*  
and

**Saturday, May 10 @ 6p**

**Panel Discussion w/ Moderator, Dr Halifu Osumare**

*Honoring the legacy of Kathrine Dunham and Ms. Ruth Beckford*

Featuring: **Dr. Yvonne Daniels, Dr. Colette Eloi, Elya Moore, Deborah B. Vaughan**  
*and a dynamic*

**Performance Event featuring BCF Artists**

Tickets: \$20

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

**May 3 – June 21**

For More Info: [bcfhereandnow.com](http://bcfhereandnow.com)

## **SPIRIT OF SANKOFA: Bridging the Legacies of BCM & BCF, Co-Sponsors | Presenters**

**SF Public Library** is the Main Library and resource center for the entire San Francisco Public Library system and the libraries of Northern California. Its large collection and extensive programs and exhibits support the Library's mission of connecting our diverse communities to learning, opportunities and each other. <https://sfpl.org/locations/main-library>

**The 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.