

PHOTO BY STEVE GUNTHER

1939
STRAYHORN MOVES INTO
ELLINGTON'S HARLEM
APARTMENT AND BEGINS
WORKING FOR HIM WITHOUT
A JOB DESCRIPTION, A CONTRACT,
OR A VERBAL UNDERSTANDING
OF TERMS OR COMPENSATION.



**DAVID ROUSSÈVE/REALITY:
HALFWAY TO DAWN**

Friday, September 13, 2019, at 7:30pm
Colwell Playhouse

PROGRAM

DAVID ROUSSÈVE/REALITY: HALFWAY TO DAWN

Choreographed, directed, and written* by David Roussève

Score by Billy Strayhorn

Lighting design by Chris Kuhl

Video art and screen concept by Cari Ann Shim Sham*

Sound design by d. Sabela grimes

Costumes by Leah Piehl

Dramaturgy by L. MSP Burns

Technical direction by Chris Kuhl

Assistant technical direction and tour management by Katelan Braymer

Screen design and fabrication by Mary Hale

PERFORMERS

Bernard Brown

Raymond Ejiofor

Dezaré Foster

Jasmine Jawato

Kevin Le

Julio Medina

Samantha Mohr

Leanne Iacovetta Poirier

Kevin Williamson

**Text adapted from Lush Life: A Biography of Billy Strayhorn by David Hajdu with permission of the author.*

ACT I

Le Sacre Supreme *

Grievin' ° ^ π

Johnny Come Lately *

Take the A-Train *

After All *

Your Love Has Faded *

Hues *

20-minute intermission

ACT II

UMMG *

I'm Checkin' Out Goodbye ° π

My Little Brown Book *

Lush Life *

Love Came °

Blood Count †

Lotus Blossom †

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Recorded music performed by The Dutch Jazz Orchestra, Duke Ellington and his Orchestra, The Ray Brown Trio, Darius deHaas, Dizzy Gillespie, Ella Fitzgerald and Oscar Peterson, Stan Getz, and Duke Ellington

This performance was commissioned by ArtPower at the University of California San Diego; Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans; Kelly Strayhorn Theater; Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; NC State LIVE; and REDCAT.

Halfway to Dawn is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation Fund project co-commissioned by REDCAT in partnership with ArtPower at UC San Diego, Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans, the Kelly Strayhorn Theater, and NPN. The Creation Fund is supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the National Endowment for the Arts (a federal agency). For more information, visit www.npnweb.org.

Halfway to Dawn was created with the generous support of the UCLA Office of the Vice Chancellor of Research.

Halfway to Dawn was created in part during a development residency at the Pillow Lab at Jacob's Pillow Dance, technical residencies at NC State LIVE, REDCAT, and Kaufman Hall UCLA, and a video art residency at New York University Tisch Dance.

Fiscal sponsorship provided by Foundation for Independent Artists, Inc., a nonprofit organization administered by Pentacle (DanceWorks, Inc.). Pentacle is a nonprofit management support organization for the performing arts.

*David Roussève/REALITY appears by arrangement with:
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This event is supported by:



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PROGRAM NOTES

Five, six in the morning, we'd still be yapping. That was his favorite time in the world. The phrase he used was halfway to dawn . . . It wasn't day and it wasn't night . . . You're half asleep. You're half awake. Your resistance is gone—it's like a truth serum. Your feelings just pour out.

—Marian Logan
civil rights activist, singer, Billy Strayhorn's close friend

In 1999, a commercial producer approached me about rewriting, choreographing, and directing the musical *Rose Colored Glasses* that Billy Strayhorn and Luther Henderson began but abandoned in 1956. Although that project did not make it to the stage, I was humbled by Strayhorn's life path and vowed to someday return to the genius of his music.

Though partly responsible for one of the greatest bodies of work in American music history, Billy Strayhorn (1915-1967) remains largely unknown beyond the jazz community. With *Halfway to Dawn*, I am seeking to excavate the deeper truths of the life of this famously private, out and gay, artist, thinker, and activist. The piece conveys the facts of Strayhorn's life through a video-projected timeline while simultaneously exploring the emotional undercurrents of his journey through abstract video art, dance, and his own brilliant music. There is no relationship between the timeline and dances beyond their tones, textures, and throughlines of emotion.

—David Roussève

COLLABORATORS

DAVID ROUSSÈVE (writer/choreographer/director) is a magna cum laude graduate of Princeton University and a Guggenheim Fellow. His dance/theatre company REALITY has performed throughout the United Kingdom, Europe, South America, and the United States, including three commissions for the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next Wave Festival. Other commissions include Houston Ballet, Ballet Hispánico, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance, Dancing Wheels Company, Atlanta Ballet, and Ilkhom Theatre of Tashkent, Uzbekistan, where Roussève spent six weeks creating an evening-length work surrounding the homoerotic art of Russian painter Usto Mumin. In 2017, Roussève choreographed Kurt Weill's *Lost in the Stars* for director Anne Bogart, SITI Company, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, as well as the piece *Enough?* for the San Francisco duet company RAWdance, a work that asks whether dance can address social movements like Black Lives Matter. In June 2018, *Enough?* was performed by Lula Washington Dance Theatre at the Ford Theatres. Roussève has created three short films, the most recent screening at festivals in 11 countries and receiving 10 awards including four for Best Film. Roussève has been published in collections by Bantam Press and Rutledge Press and was twice a Fellow in the Sundance Institute's Screenwriter Lab. Roussève just completed *Twit*, a feature screenplay based on his 2014 dance/theatre work *Stardust*. In 2017, *Twit* was a finalist in two Best Screenplay categories at the Nashville Film Festival and a semifinalist for the

Los Angeles Outfest Screenwriting Lab. Among others, Roussève's awards include a Bessie (New York Dance and Performance) Award, Creative Capital Fellowship, three Horton Awards, the CalArts/Herb Alpert Award in Dance, and seven consecutive National Endowment for the Arts fellowships. At UCLA, Roussève is Distinguished Professor of Choreography in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance. For the UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture he has served as Associate Dean (2014-15), Acting Dean (2015), and Interim Dean (2015-17).

L. MSP BURNS (dramaturgy) has written about the racial politics of performance, the performance of race, and about the Philippines and its elsewhere, published in several journals including *The Dance Research Journal*, *Women & Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory*, *The Asian American Literary Review*, and *The Writing Instructor*. Burns' monograph, *Puro Arte: Filipinos on the Stages of Empire* (Asian American Studies Outstanding Book Award in Cultural Studies 2014), is published by New York University Press. As a dramaturg, Burns has collaborated with notable artists such as David Roussève, R. Zamora Linmark, and TeAda Productions. Burns is currently at work on *Qnoum Kaun Khmer/I am Khmer*, a musical/movement performance with mixed-race Cambodian singer/songwriter/dancer Tiffany Lytle. Among Burns' writing projects is *Personating Robots, Impersonating Humans*, a book on racialization and a robot race.

D. SABELA GRIMES (sound design) is a 2017 County of Los Angeles Performing Arts Fellow and 2014 United States Artists Rockefeller Fellow, a transmedia storyteller, sonic ARKivist, and movement composer cultivating a devoted interest in AfroBiquitous life practices. Sabela has conceived, written, scored, choreographed, and produced several dance theatre works including *BulletProof Deli*, plus *Philly XP*, *World War WhatEver*, and *40 Acres & A Microchip: Salvation or Servitude* from his EXPERIMENT EARTH sound-movement triptych. Recent creative projects include *ELECTROGYNOUS* (2017) and *Dark Matter Messages* (2018). *ELECTROGYNOUS* is a dance theatre experience which articulates that Black gender qualities are infinite, multidimensional, and distinct manifestations of wombniversal consciousness. *Dark Matter Messages* is a collection of live poetry, video projections, and music interwoven with improvisational movement meditations that realize AfroFuturism as a means to play within the nowness of impending futures. Moved by how Octavia E. Butler invents interrelated notions of humanness in her *Parable* series, *Dark Matter Messages* dreams Butler's unfinished manuscript, *Parable of the Trickster*, into a live performance experience. On faculty at the University of Southern California's Glorya Kaufman School of Dance, he continues to cultivate Funkamental MediKinetics, a movement system he created that focuses on the methodical dance training and community building elements evident in hip-hop, Black vernacular, and street dance forms. Sabela loves pancakes, declarative realness, and his kinfolk.

CHRISTOPHER KUHL (lighting design and technical direction) is a lighting and scenic designer for new performance, theatre, dance, and opera. Recent work includes *Stardust* (David Roussève); *Inflatable Trio* (Lionel Popkin); *PANG!* (Dan Froot); *Home* (BAM); *The Parable of the Sower* (The Public Theater); *Dog Days* (Los Angeles Opera); *The Object Lesson* (BAM, Edinburgh Festival, Sydney Festival); *The Source* (San Francisco Opera, REDCAT, BAM); *The Institute of Memory* (The Public Theater, Time-Based Art Festival); *Straight White Men* (Young Jean Lee's Theater Company, The Public Theater, Kaaithater, Centre Pompidou), *The Elephant Room* (St. Ann's Warehouse); *ABACUS* (BAM, Sundance Film Festival, EMPAC). Kuhl has received two Bessie Awards, two Ovation Awards, and a Sherwood, Drammy, and Horton Award. He is originally from New Mexico and a graduate of California Institute of the Arts.

LEAH PIEHL (costume design) has recently worked on *Romeo and Juliette* (Oregon Shakespeare Festival); *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Underneath The Lintel* (Geffen Playhouse); *Kings, Once, The Light in the Piazza, Mr. Wolf, The Motherf**ker with the Hat* (South Coast Rep); *Race, Twist Your Dickens* (Kirk Douglas/Center Theatre Group); *The Steward of Christendom* (Mark Taper Forum/Center Theatre Group); *The Most Deserving* (Denver Center Theatre Company); *Intimate Apparel, Pygmalion, The Heiress* (Pasadena Playhouse); *Arcadia, The Doctor's Dilemma*, and *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* (A Noise Within); *Paradise Lost* (Intiman Theatre); *Bars and Measures, Futura, The Pain and the Itch, Tartuffe* (The Theatre @ Boston Court); *Hedda Gabbler* (Antaeus Theatre Company), and *Full Still Hungry* (Ford Amphitheater). She designed the feature films *All Stars* and *BuzzKill*. Her work has been featured at The Museum of Modern Art, Art Basel Miami Beach, and 2010 Whitney Biennial at the Whitney Museum of American Art. Piehl has a BA from the University of California at Berkeley and an MFA in costume design from California Institute of the Arts.

CARI ANN SHIM SHAM* (video artistry) is a wild artist who captures and floats images and reflects light for movers, screens, and musicians between la-la land and Gotham. She is attracted to things that sparkle, is a wild edible mushroom hunter, and a collector of antique doorknobs. She recently directed a music video for Joan Baez's *The Last Leaf*, is in beta testing on her own interactive inflatable sea anemone *Shimmer*, and in pre-production on her first feature film. Her favorite place to be is underwater, and her current movement practice consists of Contact Improv

and free-diving with wild spotted dolphins in the Bahamas. Cari Ann Shim Sham* is grateful for the ability to have her work seen in notable venues around the world and for that work to receive its accolades, yet relishes most in that precious process of the making of the art and the longtime collaborations that this process fosters. She serves as a guide to young artists at New York University Tisch School of the Arts as Associate Arts Professor of Dance and Technology and feels extremely lucky to walk the creative path for so long with David Roussève.

KATELAN BRAYMER (tour management and technical direction) is a lighting designer and technical director for theatre, dance, and opera. Recent designs include *You in Midair* (Danna Schaeffer); *Underneath, Silent, Forgotten, Kiss, A Taste of Honey, The Hairy Ape* (Odyssey Theatre); *MEAT* (Emma Zakes Green); *TIM* (Brandon Baruch); *Jocasta Project* (Ghost Road); *Free Outgoing* (East West Players); *K-A-D-VER* (LAPP), *ROSEWOOD* (Michaela Taylor); *Berlin Diary, Psychic Utopia* (Hand2Mouth Theatre); *Excerpts* (Samantha Goodman); and *Bi, Lydia, El Payaso* (Milagro). Braymer's technical direction on tour includes *Stardust* (David Roussève); *Inflatable Trio, Ruth Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (Lionel Popkin); *PANG!* (Dan Froot); *Object Lesson* (Geoff Sobelle); and *Half Life* (Cloud Eye Control). Selected venues include Jacob's Pillow, Kirk Douglas Theatre, 59E59 Theaters, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, On the Boards, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and Bootleg Theater. Braymer is the director of production and lighting for the upcoming Live Arts Exchange Festival (LAX). Braymer has been a lighting assistant at the Los Angeles Opera since 2011.

PERFORMERS

BERNARD BROWN, a Lester Horton Award and Westfield Emerging Artist Award recipient, has performed with David Roussève/REALITY, Lula Washington Dance Theatre, Doug Elkins Choreography, Etc., Shapiro & Smith Dance, and was a founding member of TU Dance. He was invited to perform with Mikhail Baryshnikov in Robert Wilson's *Letter to a Man* with choreography by Lucinda Childs. He has had the pleasure of working with Donald McKayle, Rennie Harris, Rudy Perez, Louis Johnson, Ann Carlson, and Tamica Washington-Miller. Brown received his MFA in choreography from UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance and his BFA from State University of New York at Purchase. Brown's choreography has been presented at Royce Hall, REDCAT, ODC Theater, Highways Performance Space, University of Chicago, Southern Methodist University, and he has choreographed Scott Joplin's opera *Treemonisha* for Skylark Opera Theatre. Brown is an assistant professor of dance at Sacramento State University and a certified Dunham Technique Instructor candidate. The *Los Angeles Times* has called him ". . . the incomparable Bernard Brown . . ."

RAYMOND EJIOFOR, a Gates Millennium Fellow, earned a Master of Public Health Policy from the University of Southern California and a BS in decision science from Carnegie Mellon University. He began his training under Judith Rhodes Calgaro in Arlington, Virginia, and the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Ejiofor has danced and created works with Daniel Ezralow, Ryan Heffington, Aszure Barton, Lula Washington, Bryan Arias, Danielle Agami, Sidra Bell, Kyle

Abraham, and Robert Battle. Ejiofor currently collaborates with various companies including Ezralow Dance, Ate9 Dance Company, Lula Washington Dance Theatre, Heidi Duckler Dance Theatre, Post:Ballet, and David Roussève/REALITY. Some of his credits include the 59th Annual Grammy Awards, MTV Video Music Awards, Audi, Toshiba, Hermès, Samsung, Apple, Beijing Dance Festival, Springboard Danse Montréal, Israeli Opera House, and Lincoln Center: David H. Koch Theater. He has performed with artists such as Sia, Katy Perry, Pharrell, 30 Seconds to Mars, Little Boots, Fitz and the Tantrums, and Daft Punk.

DEZARÉ FOSTER is native to Cleveland, Ohio, where she began her dance studies at Newton D. Baker School of the Arts and Cleveland School of the Arts before joining Cleveland Contemporary Dance Theatre (CCDT). CCDT made a guest appearance in *The Wild Party*, which led her to become a musical theatre choreographer. In 2007, Foster joined Dancing Wheels Company, performing and touring for over seven years in collaboration with various choreographers. She has also performed in Dianne McIntyre's *why I had to dance*, Cleveland Cavaliers' Scream Team, and multiple years at Cleveland Public Theatre's *Pandemonium*. In 2015, Foster moved to Ga'aton, Israel, for the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company's Masa program. After returning home, she choreographed *Labyrinth: A Tribute* on Dancing Wheels Company and performed in Northwest Dance Project's LAUNCH Program in Portland, Oregon. Foster is in her third season as a company member with David Roussève/REALITY in Los Angeles, California.

JASMINE JAWATO was born and raised in El Segundo, California, and studied dance at The Studio Art of Dance in her hometown before receiving her undergraduate degree from the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance at UCLA. Jawato has performed both nationally and abroad for Michel Kouakou, David Roussève, and Kevin Williamson and continues to teach dance and yoga in El Segundo. She is currently pursuing her multiple-subject teaching credential in hopes of integrating her performing arts education into the classroom curriculum. Jawato is dancing in her second piece for Roussève.

KEVIN LE is a native of Los Angeles and graduate of UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance. He began his dance training at the age of 12 under Jessie Riley's WESTSIDE Dance Project. There he studied and performed with choreographers Jessie Riley, Peter Chu, and Sonya Tayeh. During his undergraduate studies at UCLA, he had the privilege of performing with David Roussève/REALITY in venues throughout the United States including Jacob's Pillow, Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, and REDCAT. Since 2013, he has been touring with Kevin Williamson's *The Lost Boys* and *Trophy*, performing in Beijing, San Francisco, Austin, Texas, and New York City. Currently, Le is a dance instructor and choreographer working in the South Bay of Los Angeles.

JULIO MEDINA is an artist from Los Angeles. His work draws from various movement styles such as breaking, Latin social dances, and modern dance, engaging mediums such as movement, film, and text. Medina studied hip-hop on the concert stage and earned his MFA at UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance. Prior, Medina completed his BA in dance and movement studies at Emory University as a Quest Bridge Scholar. While there, he was a member of StaibDance Company until 2013. In 2009, Medina founded TrickaNomeTry (TNT) Dance Crew, a hip-hop crew that continues to perform in the Atlanta community. Medina is an Assistant Professor of Dance at California State University Long Beach, where he teaches hip-hop and modern dance.

SAMANTHA MOHR is a California native and body-based artist, choreographer, and certified yoga instructor. When in Los Angeles, she collaborated as a performer with David Roussève, Laurel Jenkins, Jay Carlon, Rebecca Bruno, Nina Waisman, Flora Wiegmann | LEI , No One, Art House, Lionel Popkin, Julien Prévieux, Victoria Marks, Elizabeth Leister, Maria Garcia, and Alexx Shilling. Currently based in New York, she was honored to join Elkhanah Pulitzer in her new production of Bernstein's *MASS* with Gustavo Dudamel at Walt Disney Concert Hall and with Louis Langrée for Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival. Mohr has also performed and presented shared works at REDCAT, the Annenberg Community Beach House, Highways Performance Space, Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions, the Los Angeles Municipal Art Gallery, Hammer Museum, Honor Fraser Gallery, Pieter Performance Space, and Women's Center for Creative Work. She holds a BA in World Arts and Cultures/Dance from UCLA.

LEANNE IACOVETTA POIRIER is originally from Columbus, Ohio, and moved to Los Angeles in 2008 to attend UCLA where she graduated magna cum laude with BA degrees in World Arts and Cultures/Dance and Communications. Upon graduation, Poirier was invited to join David Roussève/REALITY and toured the United States with *Stardust* (2014). Besides dancing professionally, Poirier works actively in arts administration assisting select artists, nonprofit organizations, and dance companies, including David Roussève/REALITY, with administrative needs. She also served as Program Director for The Flourish Foundation for three years. Poirier has taught dance for 10 years and is the co-director of the UCLA Dance/Performing Arts Summer Institute. She currently resides in Charlotte, North Carolina, with her husband.

KEVIN WILLIAMSON is a Los Angeles-based movement artist and Assistant Professor of Dance at Scripps College. A Lester Horton Award recipient, Bates Educators Fellow, and Center Theatre Group Sherwood Award finalist, Williamson's dance works have been presented at venues including DanspaceProject, REDCAT's New Original Works Festival, Dixon Place, CounterPulse, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the OUTsider Festival in Austin, Texas, and the Beijing Dance Festival. Williamson has created original works for LA Contemporary Dance Company and Loyola Marymount University and choreographed opera/theatre projects for The Juilliard School, Yale Repertory Theatre, Opera UCLA, Atlantic Theater Company, Washington National Opera, and Geffen Playhouse. Williamson received his MFA in choreography from UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance and is a certified Laban/Bartenieff Movement Analyst.

*For booking information, contact
Sophie Myrtil-McCourtly
Lotus Arts Management
347-721-8724
sophie@lotusartsmgmt.com
www.lotusartsmgmt.com*

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our mailing list visit www.davidrousseve.com.
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