Jean Appolon Expressions

ANGAJE
A world premiere
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In partnership with the BCA Dance Residency program
Plaza Theatre at Boston Center for the Arts
March 27 and 28, 2015 8pm

Choreography: Jean Appolon
Dancers: Melissa Alexis, Eboni Baptiste, Cha-Cha Epps, Isabelle Morse, Jennifer Passios, Meghan Riling and Sophie Trentin
Percussionists: Joel Augustin, Juju, Emmanuel “Q” Lerboat and Jean Marseille
Guest Artists: Claudia Eliaza (voice) and Steve Desrosiers (guitar)
Set design: Anya Smolnikova
Costumes: Jean Appolon
Lighting: Paul Marr
Sound: Fritz Jean
Music: recorded music and voice by Toto Bissainthe, with the exception of “Edem Chante” by the Creole Choir of Cuba; live music based on interpretations and recordings by Toto Bissainthe

I. Ayizan
Dancers: Melissa Alexis, Eboni Baptiste, Cha-Cha Epps, Isabelle Morse, Jennifer Passios, Meghan Riling
Ayizan voye rele lwa yo pou mwen
Ayizan* call the spirits for me
M’angaje-o
I need help (I’m stuck)
M’angaje-o
I need help (I’m stuck)
Depi en an si mwa mwen
For a year and six months
sou lanme a
I’ve been out at sea
Anyen pasa fe mwen
They can’t do anything for me

II. Yanvalou
First Movement
Dancers: Melissa Alexis, Eboni Baptiste, Cha-Cha Epps, Isabelle Morse, Jennifer Passios, Meghan Riling

III. Loko
Musicians: Joel Augustin (percussion), Steve Desrosiers (guitar), Claudia Eliaza (voice)
Dancers: Jennifer Passios, Meghan Riling
Papa Loko ou se van
Papa Loko* you are the wind
Pouse n ale
Push us
Nou se papiyon
We are butterflies
Na pote nouvel bay Agwe
We’ll bring the news to Agwe*
E tout sa ki byen
And all those who are well
Je m la ye
My eyes are open
E tout sa ki di mal
And all those who speak
Je m la ye
of the bad
My eyes are open

IV. Payette
Dancers: Melissa Alexis, Eboni Baptiste, Cha-Cha Epps, Isabelle Morse
Mete m nan folklo
Put me in the folklore

SECOND MOVEMENT
Dancer: Sophie Trentin

INTERMISSION

I. Edem
Dancers: Melissa Alexis, Eboni Baptiste, Cha-Cha Epps, Isabelle Morse, Jennifer Passios, Meghan Riling, Sophie Trentin
Gen lontan n’ap cheche
We’ve been searching for ages
Yon kote pou n viv
A place to live
Yon kote pou nou tout ka viv an pe vre
A place where we can all really live in peace
W’a ede m chante chante sa a
Help me sing this song
Se chita n chita n ap gade
We’re sitting, watching
Nou we se tout bon lavi n menase vre
We see our lives are threatened
Fo n ede m chante chante sa
You must help me sing this song
Twop pwoblem nan peyi mwen
Too many problems in my country
Fe nou pa ka juwnn yon kote pou nou tout ka viv an pe vre
Making it hard for us to find a place to live peacefully
M’oblise chante chante sa a
I have to sing this song
Monkonpe mwen, awoulo woule
My brother, awoulo woule
Monkonpe mwen
My brother
II. Fòs
Dancers: Melissa Alexis, Eboni Baptiste, Cha-Cha Epps, Isabelle Morse

III. Lamize Pa Dous
Musicians: Joel Augustin (percussion), Steve Desrosiers (guitar), Claudia Eliaza (voice)
Dancers: Melissa Alexis and Cha-Cha Epps

Mwen malad, m kouche, pasa leve
Palmannan ou, m pa moun isit o
Bondye rele m, m prale
Osanyo lamize pa dous o agoye.
Agoye m pral chache lavi yon lot kote woy.

IV. Dèy
First Movement
Dancers: Isabelle Morse, Jennifer Passios, Meghan Riling

Second Movement
Dancers: Eboni Baptiste, Isabelle Morse, Jennifer Passios, Meghan Riling, Sophie Trentin

Dèy o, m rele dèy o
Ayiti way
Ayiti chéri men piti ou mouri
Men lòt yo toutouni
Sa ka pote dèy la pou ou way
Ayiti Toma men san-ou lan diaspora
Men peyi-a ap kaba
Sa ka pote dèy la pou ou O!

(V) Aranye
Dancers: Melissa Alexis, Eboni Baptiste, Cha-Cha Epps, Isabelle Morse, Jennifer Passios, Meghan Riling, Sophie Trentin

*Ayizan, Papa Loko, Palmannan and Osanyo are references to deities in the pantheon of Vodou.

ABOUT ANGAJE
In Haitian Creole, “Angaje” means “committed” or “engaged,” with the implied meaning of political engagement. “Angaje” also describes a strand of protest music rooted in Vodou rhythms that lie at the heart of Haiti’s culture and its founding as the first black republic in the world. Haitian folkloric music or “mizik rasin” has historically played an important role in Haitian identity politics. Beginning in the 1940s, the “mouvement folklorique” marked a major turning point in the recognition of the Haitian folkloric tradition as an artistic force, as well as the revaluing of the traditional arts and practices of the Haitian culture.

Angaje is a meditation on the realities of post-quake Haiti, where social, economic and political injustice persists despite promises and reconstruction efforts of Haitian and foreign leaders and institutions alike. Among the many forms of social oppression, violence against homosexuals is on the rise, as young men are sought out, maimed and sometimes killed by mobs of anti-gay protestors. This issue touches close to JAE’s heart as two young men participating in the annual Jean Appolon Summer Dance Institute in Port-au-Prince were beat up so badly that they were not able to complete the Institute. Angaje gives voice to the broader range of issues through a narrative choreographic arc rooted in Haitian dance tradition and set to music of equal artistic, cultural and political importance.

Haiti’s Vodou religion—practiced by the majority of Haitians—is considered a “safe space” for gays. Haitian folkloric dance and music are drawn from Vodou—secularized and adapted for the stage like many other sacred arts forms around the world. Toto Bissainthe’s folkloric music references Vodou as a source of strength and inspiration.

Meanwhile, many gay young people in Haiti, especially those living in the urban slums of Port-au-Prince, are not only hungry, unemployed and uneducated but also mentally and emotionally lost, alienated from their own Haitian cultural identity. In Angaje, Jean Appolon juxtaposes the struggle of young
gays in Haiti with the power, beauty and rootedness that all Haitians, but especially the marginalized, can find if they just look inside their own culture.


ABOUT TOTO BISSAINTHE
(ADAPTED FROM WIKIPEDIA)

Marie Clotilde “Toto” Bissainthe (1934–1994) was a Haitian actress and singer known for her innovative blend of traditional Vodou and rural themes and music with contemporary lyricism and arrangements. Born in Cap-Haïtien in 1934, she left Haiti at an early age to pursue her studies abroad. Her career started in theatre with the company Griots, of which she was a founding member in 1956. Griots was at the vanguard of nègritude-inspired cultural institutions in France, and was the first African theatre company in Paris.

With a groundbreaking performance in 1973 at La vieille grille in Paris, Toto Bissainthe established herself as singer-songwriter-composer, stunning the audience with her soul-stirring renditions of original compositions that paid homage to the lives, struggles, miseries and spirituality of working class and rural Haitians.

An artist in exile, Toto Bissainthe was unable to return to the Haiti that so inspired her until the departure of Jean-Claude Duvalier in 1986. However, the multiple disappointments of the unending democratic transition and political infighting would forever embitter the outspoken artist, who had long dreamed of a return to help rebuild her motherland. Saddened by Haiti’s social and political degradation, Toto Bissainthe’s health would enter a downward spiral ending with her death from liver damage on June 4, 1994.

ABOUT JEAN APPOLON
EXPRESSIONS (JAE)

JAE’s mission is twofold: to enrich our local and global communities by preserving and advancing Haitian folkloric dance as one of the world’s precious cultural resources; and to develop youth, especially young Haitians without financial resources, as contributing citizens through high quality dance programs. Since 2006 Jean Appolon has conducted a successful annual Summer Dance Institute in Port-au-Prince. The Institute targets young Haitians who lack financial resources and have limited access to dance education. In addition to the annual Summer Dance Institute, JAE aspires to develop DANCE HAITI! as an intensive, daily after-school dance program, which includes wrap-around services in academic tutoring and health education, for young Haitians without financial resources. JAE also conducts performances, and community and youth classes and workshops in the Boston area and beyond, with the goal to use to dance to promote healthy communities through authentic cultural events and educational programming.

ABOUT JAE’S BOSTON-BASED
HAITIAN CONTEMPORARY
DANCE COMPANY

Based in Boston and directed by Jean Appolon, JAE’s Haitian contemporary dance company combines Modern technique, Haitian folkloric dance and live traditional drumming, bringing a new artistic vernacular to its audiences. With its dynamic repertoire, JAE educates audiences about Haitian culture, traditions, history and current issues. The company has performed both at major venues such as Boston’s Paramount Center, and in city parks and community spaces in free performances accessible to the public. JAE also has performed at many schools and colleges, including American University, Harvard University, Lesley College and Wheaton
JAE Company Dancers

MELISSA ALEXIS is a dancer/choreographer, educator, and facilitator. Recent performance credits include work with Rujeko Dumbutshena in the production, Jenaguru, presented at the Smithsonian and Brooklyn Museums. She has been a guest faculty in Dance and Dance/Movement Therapy at Sarah Lawrence College. Melissa is passionate about making the inherent therapeutic properties of dance visible—dance heals! She received her training in the Five College Dance Department (Amherst College), Summer Leadership Institute with Urban Bush Women, Alvin Ailey, and under the tutelage of choreographer/teachers Ronald K. Brown, Lamine Thiam, Yvonne Daniel, and Roseangela Silvestre.

EBONI BAPTISTE is an enthusiastic dancer/actress/choreographer with a passion for the Arts. Her devotion to the art of dance contributed to her success in obtaining her Bachelor of Arts from Dean College. Two of her greatest achievements have been the choreographed productions of “Once on this Island” and the play, “Xerona @ Wheelock College.” Eboni’s talents are multidisciplinary. She has performed with many dance troupes and theater companies within the Boston Area. Her love for the stage was witnessed playing the leading role of Zora Neale Hurston in the Jacqui Parker play “Feathers On My Arm.”

SENORA “CHA-CHA” EPPS, a native of Baltimore, MD, came to Boston to turn her love for dance, teaching, creating, and performing...
into a reality. She graduated from the Boston Conservatory of Music and has danced with Prometheus, Dance Collective, and the Boston Liturgical Dance Ensemble at Boston College. Teaching dance at Boston University, and choreographing musicals for middle and high school students has been a great gift. Cha-Cha’s spirit is always driven to affect people in a positive way to create joy and unity. She also takes great pride in being a singer, songwriter, published poet, and Director and Choreographer of the TBC Liturgical Dance Ministry in Roxbury, MA.

SOPHIE TRENTIN grew up in Newcastle, Australia. She received her training at the National College of Dance, where she received her Diploma in Dance Performance before moving to New York City to study at the prestigious Joffrey Ballet School. She has danced numerous principal roles at locations such as The Sydney Opera House, and has been coached by Davis Robertson, Francesca Corkle, Andrea Schermoly & Darcey Bussell. In her time as a student, Sophie has danced with the Australian Ballet and Sydney Dance Company under secondments. She has also become the face of the internationally acclaimed exercise DVD program, ‘Progressing Ballet Technique’. Sophie has recently moved to Boston to start working with JAE.

JAE Apprentice Dancers

ISABELLE MORSE was born and raised in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. From age six through junior high, she took classes with the Artcho Dance Company. In high school, she studied with the choreographer Jean Rene Delsoin, and also took classes at Institute de Danse Lynn Williams Rouzier. She participated as a special guest in The Jean Appolon Summer Dance Institute in Port-au-Prince in July 2013 and July 2014. She grew up immersed in Haitian music and folkloric dance through her parents’ rasin (roots) band, RAM. She also works for JAE as a teaching artist at the Community Art Center in Cambridge, MA.

JENNIFER PASSIOS began dancing at age five at Michelle Goodwin’s School of Dance in Townsend, MA. She continued her training at Mount Holyoke College, graduating magna cum laude in 2013 with a BA in dance and biology. While in college, she performed works by choreographers such as Ohad Naharin, Adrienne Hawkins, Terese Freedman, and Billbob Brown. She has had the privilege of studying and performing at the Radio City Rockette Summer Intensive (New York, NY), Jazz Dance World Congress (Pittsburgh, PA), Dance For World Community Festival (Cambridge, MA), CheckUsOut Dance Festival (New York, NY), the ICA/Louis Boston First Fridays Fashion Show (Boston, MA), the Giordano Dance School Advanced Scholarship Intensive (Chicago, IL), and the 2014 Bates Dance Festival (Lewiston, ME) as a scholarship recipient. Jen has danced for Boston based companies Tribe the Dance Company and Hyperbole Dance. Presently, she performs with Urbanity Underground in addition to teaching jazz at the Northeast School of Ballet in Reading, MA, and substitute teaching elementary school.

MEGHAN RILING grew up dancing in Connecticut and moved to Boston to study at Boston University, where she joined the Dance Theatre Group and got very interested in choreography and improv dance. Since graduation, she has performed and/or choreographed for the Harvard-Radcliffe Modern Dance Company, the CRLS Modern Dance Company, and Luminarium Dance Company. She now co-directs Calamity Co Dance, which performs goofy modern dance pieces, produces casual modern and pop art variety shows, and maintains an art-centric lifestyle blog. She is also the dance coordinator of Art City Cambridge. Outside of dance, she was one third of the indie pop group One Happy Island and currently teaches math and programming at Watertown High School.

JAE Percussionists

JOEL AUGUSTIN, JEAN MARSEILLE, JUJU and EMMANUEL Q LERBOUT are master percussionists who were born in Haiti where they were immersed in the tradition of Haitian folkloric music and dance and studied with Haiti’s most well-known percussionists. Each of
them has performed with various performing groups in Haiti and the U.S.

**Guest Artists**

CLAUDIA ELIAZA is an established jazz vocalist of Haitian descent who performs regularly in Boston and internationally. She has performed with some of the jazz world’s biggest stars including Nancy King, Barbara Morrison, Frank Foster, and Roy Haynes. Claudia has toured within the US, Dominican Republic, Switzerland, England, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and continues to tour throughout Russia. She graduated from Berklee College of Music.

Haiti-born guitarist/composer/writer STEVE DESROSIERS has an extensive history as both a session and live musician in the Boston and New York area. He honed his skills as a guitarist in Boston’s world music scene with top local groups like Racine bands Batwël Rada, which explored a fusion of Jazz and Haitian roots music. Presently Steve is the lead guitarist for Boston based Afro-Pop ensemble Federator No. 1 and lead guitarist in the Reggae and Jazz-fusion ensemble Liquid Revolution, led by Berklee professor Matt Jenson. Steve also serves as lead guitarist for singer, songwriter, poet and Ted Fellow Iyeoka Okowao and is a founding member of her band The Rock By Funk Tribe.

A Soviet by birth and Belarusian by upbringing, ANYA SMOLNIKOVA has lived in the U.S. since 1999. As an artist and teacher she is primarily interested in the relationship between visual arts, healing and mythology. In her personal and creative research Anya has traveled extensively throughout the Balkans, the Middle East, Eastern and West Europe and the Caribbean. She lives and works in Boston, following a calling in art education and interdisciplinary arts practices.

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JAE would like to thank all of the volunteers who assisted with the production and performance of *Angaje*, including Rocco Ricci who made studio space available for the creation of the set for *Angaje* by Anya Smolnikova.

Jean Appolon Expressions would like to express our sincere gratitude to the many institutions and individuals who are making our vital work in Boston and Haiti possible during our 2014–2015 season.

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