ON THE BOARDS RETURNS TO IN-PERSON PROGRAMMING WITH A FALL FESTIVAL THAT PUSHES THE BOUNDARIES OF SPACE AND FORM, THE NEW NOW FESTIVAL, SEPTEMBER 14 – NOVEMBER 6

Festival Signals Seattle-Based Institution’s Goals for the Future of its Home, the Behnke Center for Contemporary Performance, as a Flexible Hub for Work that Blurs Genres; Immerses and Activates Audiences; and Fosters Community

Programming Includes:

- *Reclaimed Timber*, a Sonic Portrait of Cities’ Unique Housing Histories and Disparities from Chicago-based Ensemble Beyond This Point, September 14 (at Facing Homelessness’ BLOCK Project Shop) and September 16-18 (at On the Boards)

- *This Is a Formation*, the Final Work in jumatatu m. poe and Jermone Donte Beacham’s Let ‘im Move You Series of Performance and Visual Works Informed by Black Queer and Black Femme Innovations, Centered Around the Artists’ Explorations with the J-Sette Form, September 23-25

- Faye Driscoll’s Experiential Exhibition *Come on In*, Which Invites Visitors to Reconceive the Body and Its Limits, October 8-November 6

*On the Boards* (OtB; Rachel Cook, Artistic Director; Betsey Brock, Executive Director) is a rare and increasingly indispensable contemporary performance center that supports ambitious artists as they develop innovative new projects that resonate locally, nationally, and globally. OtB makes a momentous, transformative return to in-person programming with a fall festival, *The New Now Festival*. As the Seattle-based institution begins producing within physical space again, they take this moment to
simultaneously explore and expand the potentials of their home, the Behnke Center for Contemporary Performance, creating new pathways between forms and between the worlds created within the building and the world outside. The festival, beginning September 14, 2021, features work from Beyond This Point, jumatatu m. poe and Jermone Donte Beacham, and Faye Driscoll.

Works in The New Now Festival demonstrate OtB’s consistent aim of dreaming alongside artists to actualize the full scope of an idea—and offering dynamic ways of engaging and presenting their work to audiences and local communities. In various ways, these works are not contained to OtB’s spaces; like much of the work OtB presents, they seek to spill out, with infectious energy and intellectual provocation, into the city, across other spaces, and into discourse.

Audiences will, through Reclaimed Timber, Beyond This Point’s vision of Michael Gordon’s composition Timber, experience music—and the materials from which it’s made—as an evocation of a city and a portrait of its stratified socioeconomic conditions. The work will be presented both at OtB and at Facing Homelessness’ BLOCK Project Shop, which builds fully equipped, healthy homes in homeowners’ backyards for people experiencing homelessness. Through jumatatu m. poe and Jermone Donte Beacham’s This Is a Formation, culminating ten years of collaboration in J-Sette dance through their Let ‘im Move You series, audience members will, in the Merrill Theater and the streets outside the building, share space with dancers (including seven local performers) whose call-and-response movement forges and affirms community around Black queer resistance and delight; in conjunction with these performances, poe and Beacham’s work will kick off with a procession across a mile at sunset in the historically Black Rainier Beach neighborhood. In Faye Driscoll’s form-reimagining work Come On In, reframing her acclaimed trilogy Thank You for Coming, audiences will encounter, and engage, choreography as an activated exhibition—built at OtB, following an initial iteration at Walker Art Center, with touring-readiness in mind.

On the Boards Artistic Director Rachel Cook says, “I’ve heard from a lot of choreographers and artists that they want audiences to be more physically implicated in pieces—I often hear a desire to pull them closer and create this exchange. The work in this festival in many ways does that—it is immersive and experiential. It also opens up a new model of programming for us: a space for exhibitions that don’t fit inside the container of a gallery or museum but rather need a black box, with all the faculties and capabilities of this space.”

On the Boards Executive Director Betsey Brock says, “One of the things that makes OtB unlike any other place else is our ability to build community around an artist and their work, even if it’s not an artist who’s been living and making art in Seattle. We constantly seek understanding and willingness to think with the artist about what they’re looking for, and actually consider and reach out to our local relationships to match them up. This festival offers a thrilling comeback to this work we do, and to doing it in person, both in our spaces and out within local communities.”

With The New Now Festival, OtB makes a thrilling comeback to bringing performers and audiences together in shared space and community—a comeback that’s also, as a seasonal, morph-able event, a
bridge to the organization’s future. Now, as OtB enters a new chapter, it also begins to anticipate how it may rethink its building to further its mission: to make spaces more catalytic of collaboration and amenable to unbridled formal experimentation, and expand its potential as an accessible, inclusive, and inviting hub where community convenes and forms. A space whose only walls are physical—and where even those are as transparent and flexible as possible.

**The New Now Festival - Event Descriptions and Schedule**

**Beyond This Point**  
*Reclaimed Timber*  
**Tuesday, September 14, 8pm** (at Facing Homelessness’ BLOCK Project Shop; 7266 8th Ave S, Seattle, WA 98108);  
**Thursday, September 16, 8pm** (Merrill Theater, On the Boards)  
**Friday, September 17, 8pm** (Merrill Theater, On the Boards)  
**Saturday, September 18, 3pm & 8pm** (Merrill Theater, On the Boards)  
Co-Presented with Arx Duo, Facing Homelessness BLOCK Project, & Puget Sound Music Collaborative  
Duration: 1 hour

*Reclaimed Timber*. Photo by Matthew McCormack

The musical basis for *Reclaimed Timber* comes from renowned composer Michael Gordon’s piece *Timber*, a monumental work for six drummers on six pieces of wood. Chicago-based ensemble *Beyond*
This Point has assembled a team of multidisciplinary artists and musicians, including percussionists from Seattle-based Arx Duo, to bring this mesmerizing and captivating work to On the Boards. Usually, Timber is played using the best tropical wood available (mahogany, rosewood, etc.). For each performance of Reclaimed Timber, Beyond This Point searches a city’s neglected lots and abandoned or soon-to-be-demolished homes to uncover the required instruments: pieces of wood, weathered as a result of unequal growth and opportunity for the city’s residents. In Seattle, they will partner with the Facing Homelessness Block Project to help source the wood. Thus, the performance will have a “sound” unique to each city’s housing history; the homes themselves become the main voice, telling the ongoing story of neglected communities and rapid gentrification.

Reclaimed Timber is presented with a custom-designed visual installation, comprising more than 5,000 LEDs and 200 paper lantern “houses,” that responds to the music in real-time, reflecting the waves of sound as waves of light and shadow. The hour-long work is performed entirely on six slats of amplified wood and is accompanied by dynamic lighting. The mesmerizing, immediate, and visceral experience that Reclaimed Timber evokes in audiences translates to a new and profound awareness of issues that affect tens of thousands of people every day.

Beyond This Point says, “Every iteration of Reclaimed Timber is unique to the city in which it occurs, and Seattle’s version will be especially powerful. The challenges of housing inequality and homelessness in Seattle are being confronted in some of the most original and effective ways by some amazing organizations, and we are honored to further their work and cause as part of our performances.”

jumatatu m. poe & Jermone Donte Beacham

Let ‘im Move You: This Is a Formation
Friday, September 24 & Saturday, September 25 at 7pm (Merrill Theater, On the Boards)
Duration: 2.5 hours

Let ‘im Move You: Intervention
Thursday, September 23, Dusk (Between Rainier Beach and Columbia City)

Queer Slow Jam Party: A dance party following the Saturday performance of This Is a Formation, featuring a stellar line up of DJ’s, to be announced. More details to follow.

Co-Curated by Dani Tirrell
Creative Partnership between On the Boards and Central District Forum for Arts & Ideas (CDForum)
West Coast co-presenters include: Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), Portland and REDCAT, LA
In 2009, jumatatu m. poe and Jermone Donte Beacham began an artistic relationship, initiated by jumatatu’s interest in Donte’s sharply rhythmic approach to J-Sette. J-Sette is a call-and-response dance form originated in the early 80’s by Black southern U.S. majorette lines at various historically Black colleges. Leagues of Black queer men, prohibited from trying out as majorettes, would create competitive teams to practice the form in gay clubs and pride parades. Choreographic phrases are extremely set, confidential until they publicly premiere, and strategically “called” by a captain to be “responded” to by their squad.

Donte’s experience at a pride parade in Atlanta was formative for him. He has said, “That was the first time that I saw guys in uniform, in full costume....It was like six teams, so that was actually my first time seeing that many teams compete. And after that I crunk it up, I turnt it up, and that’s what I’ve been doing since. And then jumatatu and I started working together.”

The Let ‘im Move You series houses Donte and jumatatu’s ongoing collaboration, in which they search for satisfaction and subversion within J-Sette’s team-oriented call-and-response structure. Primarily duet structures, previous works in the series have been performed in black box theaters, white box gallery spaces, and outdoors in predominantly Black neighborhoods with significant foot traffic (small marketplace districts, public transportation hubs, areas proximal to block parties). The Let ‘im Move You series also includes visual installation work that is thought of in partnership with the performance work.
Explaining the titling of the series, jumatatu has said “There were various kinds of intersections that I was interested in, between this style and these Black club styles and religion, specifically Christianity. There is that saying “Let Him move you,” where the “Him” has a capital “H,” and it’s God. I think that there is a reference to that in this title and the kind of transformation that happens on the club dance floor, this ascension, this rise that happens. So there’s that kind of surrender, I wouldn’t say to God but...to the Spirit.”

This Is a Formation, the latest dance performance project in the series, brings together seven Black dancers, a DJ, and a lighting designer. Audiences travel within the space with relative freedom, sharing space with the artists. Live-captured video, focusing on close-ups of the performers, appears on hanging panels throughout, referencing both hyper-surveillance of Black people’s bodies and pop-star scale megalomania.

Faye Driscoll
Come On In
October 8-November 6
Exhibition in Merrill Theater
Opening: Friday, October 8, 4–8pm
Exhibition Hours: Thursday & Friday, 3pm – 7pm, Saturday 1– 6pm (Timed entry)
Co-Presenters include the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA)

Faye Driscoll developed *Come On In*, her first solo museum exhibition, with her long-term artistic collaborators Nick Vaughan and Jake Margolin. The exhibition, which was presented and co-commissioned by the Walker Art Center, is now adapted specifically for On the Boards’ Merrill Theater.

*Come On In* offers an enveloping sensory experience. In a space awash with ambient sound, plush carpet, and pulsating light, visitors are invited to enter a state of repose and listen to individual soundtracks of Driscoll’s voice that guide their experience through a series of prompts and subtle directives. Bringing the immersive experience of her performance works into the gallery *Come On In* activates our innate capacity to be both object and subject, observer and observed. Conjuring states of longing and seizing desire, Driscoll leads us into a private dance that reflects upon power and presence, yearning and absence, and asks us to reconceive our body and its limits.

Driscoll explains, “*Come On In* is built around a series of audio pieces called *Guided Choreography for the Living and the Dead*. I wanted to capture the sensation of being in the audience at one of my shows along with the intensity of being a performer in my work, and my own subjective voice as the director of the show. I wanted to take all of that and remove the performers, remove myself, and remove the theater and give it to the body of the gallery goer. As visitors follow my guiding voice they are guided into a private dance and become a collection of slowly moving sculptures. They become my work.”

**About On the Boards**

As one of the leading organizations of its size and focus in the United States, OtB produces unique performance projects by leading artists and creates one-of-a-kind experiences for our audiences. The organization makes significant investments in the performing arts community to help increase the quality of new work created. It contributes to the vitality of arts and culture in its region by helping launch and continue the careers of some of its most promising artists while growing audiences for experimental performance.

Since its inception, OtB has featured seminal performances by artists including Laurie Anderson, Bill T. Jones, The Wooster Group, Spalding Gray, Dumb Type, Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, Sankai Juku, Gisèle Vienne, Bruno Beltrão, chelfitsch, Romeo Castellucci, John Jasperse, Jan Fabre, Back to Back Theatre, Faustin Linyekula, Mark Morris, Pat Graney, Dayna Hanson, Amy O’Neal, Reggie Watts, Zoe Scofield & Juniper Shuey, and Crystal Pite.

OtB fulfills its mission by supporting artists from the Northwest and beyond through new commissions and existing work presented online and in person. It provides local artists, selected by Artistic Director Rachel Cook, with residencies that include rehearsal space, development support, project management, dramaturgical and curatorial feedback, and advocacy to create new and exciting projects. Its publishing platform, OntheBoards.tv, is a one-of-its-kind portal that features HD performance films and contextual educational material to deepen audiences’ understanding of the field of contemporary performance.

OtB offers a range of resources and events that provide in-depth information and complimentary social experiences to frame the art on its stages and create dynamic access for its audiences. When gathering
in person is possible, Studio Suppers and post-show events provide patrons with ample opportunities for socializing, and OtB creative partnerships with other arts leaders in Seattle nurture a more robust and connected creative community. Online contextual tools such as a curatorial journal, artist interviews, essays and reviews enable better understanding and discussion of the work OtB presents while Q&A sessions and master classes provide direct access to artists.

*On the Boards is located on the traditional homelands of the Duwamish (dxʷdəabš) (Dkhw Duw’Absh) and the customary territories of the Suquamish, Muckleshoot, Stillaguamish and many other Coast Salish Peoples. We also acknowledge the Native peoples from many Nations who call Seattle their home. We aim to honor these communities, past, present, and future.*

**Press Contact**

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