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OCT 30–NOV 2 / 2024

CITADEL DANCE MIX

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PHOTO BY ALAN COLEMAN

CITADEL DANCE MIX

October 30-November 2, 8pm | The Citadel: Ross Centre for Dance

Sama

Choreographer and Performer: Meryem Alaoui (Jasad Dance Projects)

Textile Artist: Jana Ghalayini

Sound Designer: Omar David Rivero

Sweet Mother

Choreographer: Baffour Kwasi Obeng-Adjei

Performers: Janice Ellis,
Esie Mensah,
Baffour Kwasi Obeng-Adjei,
Martin "Prempz" Prempeh,
Cassandra Toutou

Music Composition: Yohance Francis

Production Team

Lighting Designer: Mathilda Kane

Technical Director: Eliajah Stefura

Stage Manager: Helin Gungoren

Citadel Dance Mix 2024 is presented in partnership with Dancemakers and made possible (in part) by the Government of Canada.

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CENTRE FOR CREATION

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*Sama and Sweet Mother were created with support from
The National Ballet of Canada's Open Space Programme.*

Running time approximately 1hr 35 minutes – 15 minute intermission. This performance uses haze.

Choreographer and Performer: Meryem Alaoui (Jasad Dance Projects)
Textile Artist: Jana Ghalayini
Sound Designer: Omar David Rivero

Sama (transliteration of "sky" and "listening" from Arabic) is a solo research into breath, faith, lamentation, persistence, silence, devotion, loss and hope. It is a practice of trust. It is a performance of surrender. *Sama* is an exercise of ritual of embodying presence and witnessing possession. It is a call for being with what has left and what has yet to become. *Sama* is hearing the voices of the sky and the earth together. *Sama* is a worship of hope. *Sama* is a call to prayer.

Meryem Alaoui would like to thank Laurence Lemieux and The Citadel for their support with the presentation of this phase of this work, as well as Charles C. Smith and The Wind in the Leaves Collective for the opportunity to show the very first steps of this solo research at Allies and Friends last year. Meryem would also like to thank Moroccan musician Mourad Belouadi "Magic Fingers" for teaching her the breathing pattern that has become the inspiration for the creation of this piece, and Fides Krucker for her vocal coaching.

Meryem also wants to thank all the people who have supported her work, directly or indirectly, past collaborators, past funders, who have all allowed her to get where she is now.

Sama



SWEET MOTHER

Choreographer: Baffour Kwasi Obeng-Adjei

Performers: Janice Ellis,
Esie Mensah,
Baffour Kwasi Obeng-Adjei,
Martin "Prempz" Prempeh,
Cassandra Toutou

Music Composition: Yohance Francis

Inspired by choreographer Baffour Kwasi Obeng-Adjei's experience in Accra, Ghana, this dance performance incorporates a fusion of traditional and modern African dance styles that will energize and move the audience.



Meryem Alaoui

Meryem Alaoui is a Toronto-based dancer and choreographer from Morocco. Founder and current co-artistic director of Jasad Dance Projects, her work is at the intersection of somatic research using movement and voice, and the exploration of contemporaneity through the reclamation of embodied performance practices, dances and knowledge from her culture as a Moroccan diasporic dance artist. A 2009 graduate of the School of Toronto Dance Theatre, she has danced for choreographers Amanda Acorn, Peggy Baker, Angela Blumberg, Antony Hamilton (with the company Dancemakers), Karen Kaeja (Kaeja d'Dance), among others. Her choreographic work has been presented nationally and internationally, notably in SummerWorks in Toronto, Tangente in Montreal and at the Théâtre National Mohammed V in Morocco. Meryem has received residency support nationally and internationally, and project funding from the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario and Toronto Arts Councils. She is a certified Body-Mind Centering® Somatic Movement Educator and has also been involved in community and arts-education projects such as with Arts Etobicoke, Haneen Women Choir, Dreamwalker Dance Company and The Arab Community Centre of Toronto.



Baffour Kwasi Obeng-Adjei

Baffour Kwasi Obeng-Adjei is a Canadian multidisciplinary artist, emerging choreographer and dance educator based in Brampton, Ontario. Acceptance into the regional arts program at St Roch Catholic Secondary School is where he began his journey and developed his foundation. Training with leading artistic directors and choreographers that include the likes of Esie Mensah and Lua Sheyenne, to name a few, have led to opportunities that include Pan Am games, *KIRA*, *The Path | La Voie*, the Raptors half-time show, *ZAYO* and more. Kwasi believes dance is a spiritual experience that involves connection with all that are among us.

@kwasi.obeng



Janice Ellis

God is love, dance is my freedom. Janice Ellis was born and raised in Toronto, Canada, growing up, she was a very outspoken, shy and quiet girl. Words were not something she used to express herself. Over time, not being able to fully express the things she felt did build up. Then finally she discovered how to channel it all into expression, her expression. She has been dancing since a child and over time realized it is what she wanted to do as a profession. Janice first started her dance journey in high school trying out and being a part of dance teams. In high school, she became a part of a dance group called S.T.O.P.P (Student Triumph Over Peer Pressure) that specialized in traditional African dance. Janice went on to graduate and attend York University's dance program. During her time in university, she started to branch off and touch other styles of dance a bit more seriously, like hip hop, ballet and afro. She then realized where her heart and love for dance was. It was afro. Fast forward to now, she has had the blessing of working with many artists including Asake, Yemi Alade, Mr. Eazi and many more. She has also opened for Burna Boy, Davido and Kizz Daniel. These opportunities obviously did not arise without the dance crews that she has previously been a part of which are Real 3D & theTEAM. As well, she has been trained over the years by Martin "Prempz" Prempeh, Bizzy Boom, etc.



Esie Mensah

Esie Mensah is an award-winning choreographer, director, dancer, movement director, educator, and TEDx speaker working across dance, theatre and film. A member of the Canadian Guild of Stage Directors and Choreographers, choreographer of *Canada's Got Talent* Million Dollar Finale as well as a four-time Dora nominated artist. Esie has worked with megastars like Rihanna, Drake, Howie Mandell, Kenny Ortega, Janelle Monae, Nelly Furtado, Jullie Black, Arcade Fire and more. Working with historic brands like Holt Renfrew, Coca-Cola, TIFF, Estee Lauder, Giants of Africa, Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto Maple Leafs, and the Toronto Raptors. In theatre Mensah has worked as a choreographer/movement director on *Three Sisters* (Soulpepper/Obsidian Theatre), *Russian Play*, *Victory*, and *Farmers' Revolt* (Shaw Festival), directed *Serving Elizabeth* (Theatre Aquarius) and is making her debut at Stratford Festival choreographing *Ransacking Troy*. Esie's original creations include the Dora-nominated production *Shades*, *The Audition*, *(INNER) Beings*, *The Call* and *ZAYO* whose full production will premiere in 2026. Lastly, Esie was the choreographer for Scott Joplin's *Treemonisha: A Musical Reimagining* presented by Luminato Festival and TOLive that was named in the New York Times as top 10 Best Classical Production of 2023 and will be making its US premiere at the Harris Theatre in Chicago.



Martin "Prempz" Prempeh

Born in Kumasi, Ghana and raised in Toronto, Canada, Martin "Prempz" Prempeh is Toronto's most notable dancer and choreographer. Dancing is something he lives, breathes and loves to do and has high hopes in becoming more successful. With the ability to move his waist in different directions and his non-stop flips, he never fails to grasp an audience's attention.



Cassandra Toutou

Born in Montreal, Quebec Cassandra Toutou is a dance artist and choreographer based in Brampton. Her love for Afro-dance was cultivated at home during her childhood via her Cameroonian upbringing. From then on, she has continued to develop her training by including elements of her cultural background and personal style. She fuses aspects of Ndombolo, Afrobeats and Coupé Décalé into her movement. Growing up in an African household, her ear for music was developed early on being surrounded by the grandiosity of music videos and live performances, while listening to a variety of different genres such as Makossa from Cameroon, Soukous from Congo, Highlife from Ghana and Nigeria. These experiences have helped shape her training and her love for teaching in Afro Fusion. Cassandra has been featured on the CBC Kids dance segment *Come Dance with Me* where she highlighted the beauty of Afro-fundamental steps, the cultural importance and the historical aspects of the style. She has performed under Esie Mensah's The Black Stars T.O. Collective for events such as Afrofest 2022 and the Giants of Africa Halftime Raptors Performance, at the 2022 YENSA Festival: *A Celebration of Black Women in Dance* under the artistic direction of Zahra Badua and for Baffour Kwasi Obeng-Adjei's piece *Y3N KO* for Nightshift 2023 hosted by Citadel + Compagnie. In addition, she has recently travelled to Barcelona, Spain to train with other talented Afro-dance artists and industry professionals during the bi-annual OYOFE African Street Dance Festival. Cassandra hopes to continuously elevate Afro dance to newer heights worldwide while honouring the work, energy and time of those who came before her. She hopes to blaze a path that champions the genre in all of its authenticity as a dance artist, choreographer, and movement director.

Yohance Francis

Yohance started his musical career at the age of two at the Beaches Jazz Festival. As a veteran of Toronto's West African Dance community and founding member of Ngoma Drum and Dance Ensemble, Yohance Francis states that his love for music comes from the fact that it is an important part of his life that has always been at the centre of his being. He lists Quincy Jones and Michael Jackson as his musical influences due to the whole picture approach they have maintained; from writing, arranging, producing and performing. He performed for the late Johnny Cochrane and values his experience at the Me to We Day Celebration, Muthadi Drum Festival in Tobago and the Reveration Night- Emancipation Day celebration performance at Cape Coast Castle, Ghana. Yohance is the member of a very artistic family who has nurtured him in a very generous arts community. He counts M'bemba Bangoura as his djembe master and has attended workshops taught by internationally renowned djembe masters.

Jana Ghalayini

Jana Ghalayini (b.1993, Jeddah) is an artist based between Tkaronto, Canada and Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Ghalayini holds a BFA in Printmaking from OCAD University and is a self-taught weaver who draws inspiration from her Palestinian heritage. Between intuitive weaving, mixed-media work and printmaking, she is interested in repetition and mark-making as process-based forms that act as rituals leading up to the final form of an artwork. She consistently investigates and reflects on the connection between tangible materials and fragmentation while exploring layers in her work and mindfully uses her practice to keep a record of gestural marks documenting personal memory, experience and ideas that can evolve as time goes on.

Omar David Rivero

Omar David Rivero, who goes by the alias Driftnote, is a Venezuelan-born musician and multimedia artist now residing in Tkaronto. Their artistic focus revolves around improvisation, interactivity, and the creation of audio and visual installations, along with expertise in 3D imaging. Rivero delves into inquiries about materiality and embodiment, particularly in the context of examining systems, cultural erasure, and identity within the African/indigenous diaspora. His research is dedicated to reevaluating methodologies related to image creation, archives, and self-portraiture.

Mathilda Kane

Mathilda (She/They) is a Toronto based Lighting Designer, Theatre Maker, and Canadian Green Alliance 2024 Green Mentorship Recipient. They received their BFA in Performance Production and Design from TMU. Select design credits Include: *Cymatix* - Citadel + Compagnie (2024), *C³* - Dance Arts Institute (2024), *Insert Clown Here* - Parlous Theatre (2024), *ZAYO* - Citadel + Compagnie (2024), *Killing Time: A Game Show Musical* - Mixtape Projects (2023), *TEASE* - Crows Theatre (2023), *Visual Connects* - Sasha Speed (2023), *Estranged Poets* - Zachary Bastille (2022).

mathildakane.com

Helin Gungoren

Based in Toronto, Helin Gungoren (she/her) works primarily as a stage manager and arts administrator with a focus on dance, festivals, and events. Some companies Helin has worked with/for include Canadian Stage, princess productions, Political Movement, School of Toronto Dance Theatre, Souleppper Academy, Granite Motion Gallery, and Wild Rabbit dance projects. She received her BFA in Performance Production from TMU's School of Performance.

Eliajah Stefura

Eliajah Stefura (He/Him) is a technician in the city of Toronto. He began working professionally in the industry after his graduation from Toronto Metropolitan University in 2019. Eli joined the C+C team in 2021 and is now the Citadel's Technical Director, also acting as engineer of the company's livestream programming.

Citadel + Compagnie is an artistic and community entity with a dual purpose. It is at once both place and people.

The Citadel: Ross Centre for Dance is a remarkable building nestled in the Regent Park neighbourhood of Toronto. Since 2012, The Citadel has established itself as an open and welcoming space for artists to rehearse, create and perform, and where the community can learn, communicate, and share.

The Citadel plays host to a range of presentation platforms and residency programs for some of Canada's most interesting choreographers and dance companies. It is also the home of the Citadel Dance Program, providing free dance education to local children and youth, and neighbour Toronto Council Fire's Indigenous dance program, *First Fire*.

Compagnie de la Citadelle is the professional dance company within Citadel + Compagnie. Founded in 2000, the Compagnie is known for its creative processes and intimate performances of classic works and new creations. Through remount initiatives, the Compagnie also dedicates itself to the preservation of important Canadian dance work, making available iconic repertoire to a new generation of dance artists.

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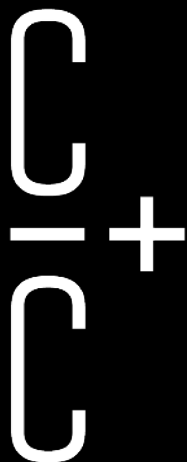
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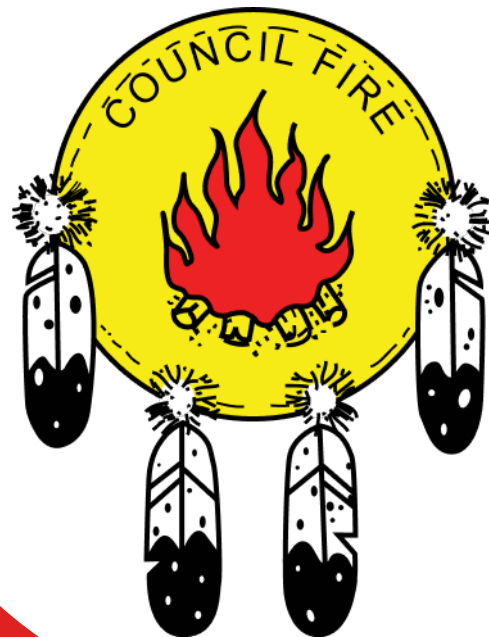
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Raven Mother

illustrates the vast impact Elder Harris had on the revitalization of Indigenous dance along the Northwest Coast, and the integral role of women in holding cultural knowledge.

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danceworks.ca/raven-mother

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