



Friday and Saturday, December 8–9, 2017, 8pm
Sunday, December 10, 2017, 3pm
Zellerbach Playhouse

Camille A. Brown & Dancers *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play* (2015)

Directed and Choreographed by Camille A. Brown
in collaboration with the women of CABD

Performers

Beatrice Capote, Kendra 'Vie Boheme' Dennard,
Catherine Foster, Mayte Natalio, and Camille A. Brown

Scott Patterson, *piano*

Robin Bramlett, *electric bass*

Music

Original compositions

“Back in the Day,” “All Grown Up,” and “Beautiful Memories” by Scott Patterson
“Jump!,” “She Fast,” and “Tender” by Tracy Wormworth

“Everything in its Right Place” by Radiohead – Rendition by Scott Patterson and Tracy Wormworth

Handclap/Nursery Rhymes

“Miss Mary Mack,” “Miss Susie Had a Steamboat,” and “Green Sally”

Robert McIntyre, *production stage manager*

Daniel Banks, Kamilah Forbes, and Talvin Wilks, *dramaturgs*

Burke Wilmore, *lighting design*

Sam Crawford, *sound design*

Elizabeth C. Nelson, *set design*

Zulema Griffin, Carolyn Meckha Cherry,

Mayte Natalio, and Catherine Foster, *costume design contributors*

Shaune Johnson and Marshall Davis, *tap coaches*

Cal Performances' 2017–18 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.



Camille A. Brown & Dancers

Recognized for its introspective approach to cultural themes through visceral movement and socio-political dialogues, Camille A. Brown & Dancers soars through history like a whirlwind. Known for high theatricality, gutsy moves, and virtuosic musicality, the company's work explores a range of themes with an eye on the past and present. Making a personal claim on history, Camille A. Brown leads her dancers through excavations of ancestral stories, both timeless and traditional, as well as immediate contemporary issues. The work is strongly character-based, expressing each choreographic topic by building from little moments to model a filmic sensibility. Theater, poetry, visual art, and music of all genres merge to inject each performance with energy and urgency. For more information, visit www.camilleabrown.org.

Choreographer's Note

BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play celebrates the unspoken rhythm and language that black girls have through Double Dutch, social dances, and hand-clapping games that are contemporary and ancestral. As I began to create the work, I realized that I was exhausted by stereotypes and tropes because, as a black female director, I battle with them daily.

Kyra Gaunt's book, *The Games Black Girls Play*, inspired the concept for the work. The

word "play" immediately shot out. I started thinking about my childhood and the many games I used to play—Double Dutch, Red Light/Green Light, Marco Polo—and how it was hard for me to find narratives within the media that showcased black girls being just that: girls. This instantly resonated and became personal. Who was I before the world defined me? What are the unspoken languages within black-girl culture that are multidimensional and have been appropriated and compartmentalized by others? What are the dimensions of black-girl joy that cannot be boxed into a smile or a grimace, but demonstrated in a head tilt, lip smack, hand gesture, and more?

BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play showcases and elevates the rhythms and gestures of childhood play, highlights the musical complexity and composition, and claims them as art. It shows the power of sisterhood and the fact that, as we mature, black girls still play. It is remembering, conjuring, honoring, and healing. It is a black girl's story through her gaze. This work is a gift to myself and black girls everywhere.

If our audiences see parts of themselves in our work—their struggles and their joys—regardless of their color, gender, or socioeconomic background, then I know we have done our job.

Let's play!

—Camille A. Brown

The creation and presentation of *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play* is supported by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project with lead funding provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the Community Connections Fund of the MetLife Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. Major support for this new work also comes from the MAP Fund, primarily supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation with additional funds from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; Engaging Dance Audiences, administered by Dance/USA and made possible with generous funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; a Jerome Foundation 50th Anniversary Grant; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; Harkness Foun-

ation for Dance; and a 2014 New York City Center Choreography Fellowship.

BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play was commissioned by DANCECleveland through a 2014 Joyce Award from the Joyce Foundation, the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland, Juniata Presents, and Juniata College. It was developed, in part, during a residency at Baryshnikov Arts Center, New York, awarded through the Princess Grace Foundation—USA Works in Progress residency program; a creative residency at The Yard, the Flynn Center, and the Wesleyan Center for the Arts; a technical residency at Juniata College in Huntingdon, PA; a residency at New York City Center; and a residency at Newcomb Dance Program, Tulane University Department of Theatre and Dance.



Camille A. Brown (*performer*) is a prolific choreographer making a personal claim on history through the lens of a modern black female perspective. She leads her dancers through excavations of ancestral

stories, both timeless and traditional, that connect history with contemporary culture. Brown is a 2017 Ford Foundation Art of Change Fellow, four-time Princess Grace Award winner (2016 Statue Award, 2016 Choreographic Mentorship Co-Commission Award, 2013 Works in Progress Residency Award, 2006 Choreography Award), 2016 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award recipient, 2016 Guggenheim Fellowship recipient, 2015 USA Jay Franke & David Herro Fellow, 2015 TED Fellow, and 2015 Doris Duke Artist Award recipient, and she was nominated for the 2015 Lucille Lortel Outstanding Choreographer Award (for *Fortress of Solitude*). Her company, Camille A. Brown & Dancers, received a 2014 "Bessie" Award for Outstanding Production for the work *Mr. TOL E. RANcE* and most recently was nominated for a 2016 "Bessie" Award for Outstanding Production for *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play*.

Brown's work has been commissioned by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Philadanco!, Complexions, and Urban Bush Women, among others. Her theater credits include Broadway's *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *Fortress of Solitude*, *Stagger Lee*, *Cabin in the Sky*, Jonathan Larson's *tick, tick...BOOM!* starring Lin Manuel Miranda, and the musical *BELLA: An American Tall Tale*, among others. Recently, Brown premiered her new work, *ink*, the final installation of the company's dance-theater trilogy about culture, race, and identity.

Initiatives: *The Gathering*; *BLACK GIRL SPECTRUM* (BGS). Publication: Cover of *Dance Teacher* magazine (August 2015). Program: Co-directed (with Moncell Durden) *Social Dances: Jazz to Hip-Hop* at Jacob's Pillow in 2015. Public Speaker: 2015 TED Conference, 2016 TEDx - BeaconStreet, 2016 TEDxEsteLauderCompanies. Brown's TED-Ed talk, *A Visual History of*

Social Dance in 25 Moves, was chosen as one of the most notable talks of 2016 by TED Curator Chris Anderson, and has more than 15 million views on Facebook.

Brown is the choreographer for the current Broadway revival of *Once on This Island*, which opened on Broadway on December 3.

www.camilleabrown.org

Beatrice Capote (*performer*) began her dance training at Amaryllis Dance Academy, and continued at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, where she was chosen to perform "Wade in the Water" from Alvin Ailey's *Revelations*. She was also featured in the book *Attitude*. Capote has performed with companies and choreographers including INSPIRIT, a dance company; Maverick Dance Experience; the Wells Performance Project; Areytos Performance Works; Earl Mosley; Matthew Rushing; Antonio Brown; and Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion. She has received a grant from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and has choreographed and performed her solo work in venues including the WestFest Dance Festival, Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance (BAAD), and Pregones Theatre. Capote is a graduate of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and Montclair State University. Currently, she is on the faculty at the Alvin Ailey School, Joffrey Ballet School, and Montclair State University. She originally worked with the company in 2008 and rejoined in 2014.

Kendra 'Vie Boheme' Dennard (*performer*) was born in Motown, developed her skills in Pittsburgh, and refined them in Minneapolis. She is a former dance artist with TU Dance in Saint Paul, Minnesota; a founding member of the August Wilson Center Dance Ensemble; and a soul, funk, and jazz vocalist and choreographer of her own solo dance work. Dennard is also a Vinyasa yoga instructor. She was trained at Point Park University's Conservatory of Performing Arts (Pittsburgh, PA) and the Ailey School (NYC). Over the course of her career, she has performed the works of Kyle Abraham, Camille A. Brown, Dwight Rhoden, Gregory Dolbashian, Uri Sands, Darrell Grand

Moultrie, and Sidra Bell. This is her first season with Camille A. Brown & Dancers.

Catherine Foster (*performer*) is from Washington, DC. Training: DC Youth Ensemble, Baltimore School for the Arts, Alvin Ailey American Dance Center. Awards: National Arts Recognition (second place) and a recipient of the Astaire Award for Best Broadway Female Ensemble. She has worked with and performed the works of noted choreographers, companies, and recording artists including Kevin “Iega” Jeff, Hinton Battle, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Fred Benjamin Dance Company, Forces of Nature, Alicia Keys, The Roots, Jazmine Sullivan, Angelique Kidjo, and Lauryn Hill. Film/TV: TEDx, *Black Girls Rock* (BET), *Good Morning America*. Broadway/Tour: *FELA!* (original cast) produced by Jay Z and Will Smith. Foster is an experienced personal trainer and group fitness instructor (Equinox, Zumba Certified, Pre Natal, Kettlebell, Pilates). A dance educator for more than 10 years, she teaches regularly in after-school programs in New York City and at the Alvin Ailey School. Foster thanks her ancestors and loved ones for her success and their guidance! She has worked with Camille A. Brown & Dancers since its inception.

Mayte Natalio (*performer*) is a native New Yorker and has had a versatile career that has spanned all genres of theater. Natalio received her BFA in dance from SUNY Purchase and is a proud co-founder of the immersive events company Minute Zero. She has toured extensively with the Parsons Dance Company and Camille A. Brown & Dancers. Natalio has performed in musical theater productions at the Ogunquit Playhouse in Maine, the Tony Award-winning Dallas Theater Center, Pregones Puerto Rican Traveling Theater, and New York City Center Encores, among others. She has also performed with Kanye West and French pop star Mylene Farmer. Natalio was in the original cast of the immersive production *Queen of the Night* and Third Rail’s *The Grand Paradise*.

Scott Patterson (*performer*), a pianist and composer, has been praised by the *Pittsburgh*

Tribune-Review for his virtuosic singing style. His music is a rich and emotive blend of classical, soul, and rock. The recording *Scott Patterson Piano Music* (available at cdbaby.com/cd/scottpatterson) features Patterson’s award-winning compositions for Camille A. Brown’s *Mr. TOL E. RANcE*, winner of a 2014 “Bessie” award, and *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play*. More information about Patterson can be found at Afro House (afrohouse.org), a music-driven performance art house that uses images, movement, and sound to tell stories.

Robin Bramlett (*performer*) is a recording artist and bassist who is primarily self-taught. Her debut CD and 2013 release, *This is My Life*, is an instrumental autobiography that combines her musical experiences throughout her career while staying true to her first loves, jazz and neo-soul. Other than two covers (Teena Marie’s “Square Biz” and Slave’s “Steal Your Heart”), Bramlett wrote and produced the entire project. She is also touring with the all-female jazz ensemble Jazz In Pink, which is led by keyboardist Gail Jhonson. In addition, Bramlett has performed and/or recorded with Karen Briggs, Althea Rene, Eric Darius, Jeanette Harris, Jessy J, Brian Culbertson, Dave Koz, Christette Michelle, Shanice Wilson, Miki Howard, Pete Escovedo, After 7, Jon B., and Malcolm Jamal Warner, to name just a few.

Robert McIntyre (*production stage manager*) is originally from Scranton (PA) and works all over the northeast region, freelancing in theater and dance. McIntyre holds a BS in business management and technical theater from East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, from which he graduated in 2012. He has had the opportunity to intern at Williamstown Theatre Festival and Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, where he has served as the production coordinator for their Inside/Out Series. McIntyre has been the stage manager for Stephen Petronio Dance Company, TAKE Dance, Gallim Dance, Encompass New Opera Theatre, Keely Garfield Dance, and Damage Dance. Recently, he lit the student company and Dance for PD® at Mark Morris Dance Group.

Burke Wilmore (*lighting designer*) grew up in Sun Valley, Idaho, and now lives in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. He is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829 and an honors graduate of Wesleyan University. Wilmore has designed or adapted seven works for BODYTRAFFIC, including Arthur Pita's new *Death Defying Dances*. He has also lit the work of Camille A. Brown & Dancers (*BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play, Mr. TOL E. RANcE, City of Rain, Good & Grown*). Wilmore was the resident designer for Battleworks (2001–10) and to date has lit five of Robert Battle's works for Alvin Ailey American

Dance Theater. He designed Stephen Petronio's *Tragic Love* for Ballet de Lorraine and has designed more than two dozen works for Keigwin + Company. He frequently collaborates with Broadway star André de Shields, for whom he lit the Louis Armstrong musical *Ambassador Satch*, and designed scenery and lighting for de Shields' production of *Ain't Misbehavin'*. Wilmore designed scenery and lighting for *Apollo Club Harlem*, directed by Maurice Hines, and the recurring hit *Ellington at Christmas*, both at the Apollo Theater.

Reference and Resource Guide

BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play

Social Dances

Camille A. Brown's *BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play* draws from dance, music, and hand-game traditions of West and Sub-Saharan African cultures as filtered through generations of the African-American experience. The result is a depiction of the complexities in carving out a positive identity as a black female in today's urban America. The core of this multimedia work is a unique blend of body percussion, rhythmic play, gesture, and self-expression that creates its own lexicon.

The etymology of Brown's linguistic play can be traced from pattin' Juba, buck and wing, social dances, and other percussive corollaries of the African drum found on this side of the Atlantic, all the way to jumping Double Dutch, and dancing The Dougie. Brown uses the rhythmic play of this African-American dance vernacular as the black woman's domain to evoke childhood memories of self-discovery.

Hambone, Hambone, Where You Been? Around the World and Back Again

Let's use the hambone lyric as a metaphor for what happened culturally to song-and-dance forms developed in African-American enclaves during the antebellum era. The hambone salvaged from the big house meal made its way to cabins and quarters of enslaved Africans,

depositing and transporting flavors from soup pot to soup pot, family to family, generation to generation, and providing nourishment for the soul and for the struggle. When dancing and drumming were progressively banned during the 18th century, black people used their creativity and inventiveness to employ their bodies as a beatbox for song and dance. In the Americas, this music helped them connect with their homeland and keep cultural traditions alive. It was termed "pattin' Juba."

Juba contained features that persist in African-American dances, notably improvisation, shuffle steps, supple body movements, and sharp rhythms. Skill and dexterity ruled the day in performing and developing artisans in this new genre. "Pattin' Juba" means slapping the hands, legs, and body to produce complex, rapid rhythms. The dance has survived the plantations and social dance circles and made its way onto the platforms of dance halls and palaces. These movement elements served as the phonemes of a dance vocabulary that persists more than two centuries later.

By 1845 William Henry Lane, a free black man born in Rhode Island, had become most prolific in Juba and gained unimaginable national and international recognition as a master of the form. Often billed as "Master Juba," he danced an amalgam of the jig, Juba, clog, buck,

long dog scratch, and wing dances, taking this African-American dance “around the world and back again.”

The wobbly legs of buck dancing, the flighty limbs of the wing step, and the staccato quick feet of the jig served as the morphemes for popular social dances throughout the 20th century. Metal scraps were nailed to shoe bottoms and morphed into the theatrical tap dance form we know today. One can draw a through-line from Juba to the Charleston and Black Bottom of the 1920s to the Funky Chicken of the 1960s, the Kid ’n Play of the 1980s, and to the Bop and DLow Shuffle of the 21st century. The vernacular of these early social dances began to spread from dirt floors to dance halls and beyond. In fact, a long-limbed street dancer-turned-chorus girl named Josephine Baker exported the dances to France and all around Europe, achieving great notoriety.

Social Dancing Through the Decades

The Great Migration helped transport these social dances out of the South and into Northeast and Midwestern cities as blacks headed to industrial centers in search of jobs and new beginnings. Each region developed idiosyncratic constructs of popular dances of the day. New York City was the cauldron of creativity and Harlem was its flame. The Savoy Ballroom in Harlem billed itself as the “Home of Happy Feet.” It was there that a new migration occurred; whites headed uptown to be entertained and dance to the big band orchestras of Chick Webb and Benny Goodman side by side with African Americans. Dancers extraordinaire Norma Miller, Frankie Manning, and “Shorty George” Snowden incorporated the syncopation of tap and the improvisation of jazz into the Lindy Hop and jitterbug steps that developed in tandem with the explosion of artistic expression of the Harlem Renaissance.

Social dance during the Civil Rights and Black Power movements started to prominently reflect the times. Dances with African names—like the Watusi and the Boogaloo—mirrored and proclaimed the African pride and heritage of American blacks. The frenetic and frenzied dances of the 1960s, including The Jerk, The

Twist, and The Monkey, paralleled the social and political turmoil the United States was experiencing.

Have you ever attended a family cookout/wedding/pool party/social event with multiple generations present? Grandpop and Nana, Aunt Denise and cousin Deion, you, your cousins were just chillin’, and a really good song played on the Victrola/radio/8-track player/boom box/MP3 player? In an instant everyone is up on the dance floor, checking out each other’s moves. It is a battle of old-school vs new-school terpsichorean feats/feet, and the conversations go something like: “Look, those kids aren’t doing anything new. Back in the day we called that move the (...)” and, “Oh wow, look at Nana and Grandpop trying to do the (...), I wonder where they learned that?” As the saying goes, sooner or later, everything old is new again.

These days a quick tutorial on the foot patterns of the Funky Chicken or the ankle alignment of the Mashed Potato can be found on YouTube. The video-sharing website now supplements and supplants the social forums that African Americans traditionally used to create and learn dances. Anyone can view, teach, and try any dance from any decade with just a few clicks of a mouse. Watch “Soul Brother #1,” James Brown, break down the hippest dances of the 1970s. And if you think Michael Jackson invented the moonwalk, YouTube shows you all the entertainers who did that slick backwards glide decades before the King of Pop.

Looking Back, Jumping Ahead, and Stepping Forward

In addition to popular dance, another form of linguistic play influenced the rhythmical education of the urban black girl. Two friends, a long clothesline, telephone cable, or jump rope were all that was needed for the fun pastime of Double Dutch. You have to pound the pavement for hours, and in many cases years, to earn your stripes on the playground or city sidewalks. Listen to the click-clack of the ropes, absorb the rhythm into your body, time the loop and swoop, and jump in! Rope jumpers sprinkle hand games, chants, and acrobatics into the

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milliseconds between the beat and devote vast amounts of time perfecting routines alone or with a partner. Black girls start sharpening their corporeal coordination at an early age and begin to incorporate complex steps, patterns, and speed into the aerobic game-sport-dance as they advance. Michelle Obama honed her skills on the streets of Chicago and demonstrated her jumping prowess on national television and in China. Double Dutch contests and competitions are now found worldwide and are featured on ESPN2. Each December Harlem's Apollo Theater hosts an international showdown (Japan has amazing contenders), and in 2008 New York City public schools began offering Double Dutch as a varsity league activity—proving very popular with predominantly African-American high schools. Movies like *Doubletime* and *Jump In!* spotlight the focus and determination required for competition-level jumping, and the pride (and bragging rights) that accompany the fun.

The animated and vibrant “step” dances performed by sororities and fraternities are superb examples of the body linguistics Camille A. Brown plays with in her work. The percussive, stylized, and coordinated group dances that feature chants and shouts bring together African song and dance traditions mixed with ring shouts, Juba, military precision, Motown, and modern Greek culture. By the 1970s, “stepping” gained popularity due to widespread demonstrations on college campuses. Today, film also provides windows into the African-American dance traditions found in the black Greek-lettered organizations established at historically black colleges and universities. Spike Lee's *School Daze* and Sylvain White's *Stomp the Yard* are two films that helped expand the influence and popularity of the form. Stepping is no longer just a “Greek thing”; it has transcended race and can be found outside the African-American fraternal community.

BLACK GIRL: Linguistic Play embodies all of these movement languages that have been rooted in African-American culture and tradition. What influences have shaped your own linguistic play? Let's talk about it with Camille A. Brown & Dancers.

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Text by *Heather McCartney*

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For more information on Camille A. Brown & Dancers, please visit www.camilleabrown.org.

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#BGLinguisticPlay
#BlackGirlJoyOnTour

Berkeley **RADICAL** – JOINING GENERATIONS

These performances are part of the 2017/18 Berkeley *RADICAL Joining Generations* programming strand, which explores the work of four generations of African-American choreographers who have expanded the terrain of contemporary dance, each speaking profoundly, deliberately, and uniquely to issues of identity. *Joining Generations* continues later this season with Donald Byrd's Spectrum Dance Theater in *A Rap on Race* (Feb 9–10) and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (Apr 10–15). For more information, please visit calperformances.org.