



TE AHUREI TOI O TĀMAKI
AUCKLAND
ARTS FESTIVAL



Lula Washington Dance Theatre

45 years of Creativity & Innovation



Digital Show Programme

Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, Aotea Centre

13–16 March 2025

Lula Washington Dance Theatre

Credits

Board of Directors

Dr. Bede Ssensalo

Michelle Flewellyn-Wiggins

Jane Dawson

Lula Washington

Erwin Washington

Tamica Washington-Miller

LWDT Company Dancers

Danny Guerrero

Lainey B. Brooks

Ongelle Johnson

Kozue Kasahara,

Michael Tomlin, III

Micah Moch

COMPANY ASSOCIATE

Thomas Davis & Company

APPRENTICE

Khaleela Jones

? **2hrs approx inc interval and short pauses between works**

Recommended for ages 14+. The dance work *And We Can Fly* presents confronting imagery. It addresses important yet challenging historical societal themes, including colonisation, enslavement and racism.



Lula Washington Dance Theatre

Credits

LWDT STAFF

Co-Founder/Artistic Director

Lula Washington

Co-Founder/Executive Director

Erwin Washington

Associate Director

Tamica Washington-Miller

Executive Assistant

Phelencia White

Lighting/Technical Director

Milton Tatum

Musical/Media Director

Marcus L. Miller

Production Assistant

Nelan-Ay Miller

Audio & Production Assistant

Xavier Muepo



Lula Washington Dance Theatre

Programme



Lula Washington Dance Theatre

Programme

AND WE CAN FLY (World Premiere)

CHOREOGRAPHED AND WRITTEN BY
Tamica Washington-Miller

RECORDED MUSIC BY
Parliament Funkadelic

SOUND DESIGN BY
Marcus L. Miller

VIDEO CREDIT
Aiseborn, (Jacori Perry)

MUSIC COMPOSED BY
**Marcus L. Miller: God,
Money, Power, Watson
Wiggle Boogaloo remix**

INSPIRED STATEMENTS BY
**Nikki Giovani, Khalil
Ghibran & Bob Marley**

MUSIC PERFORMED BY
**Marcus L. Miller
Ensemble, featuring
James A. Forbes, III**

NARRATOR
Jai-Jae Johnson

ASSISTANTS TO TAMICA
**Danny Guererro &
Ongelle Johnson**

FILMOGRAPHY BY
Marcus L. Miller

This work is based on the spiritual concept, movements and phenomenon of the Ring Shout and other African American Healing Technologies that we have forgotten. This story is inspired by the African American Folk Tale, “The People Could Fly” by Virginia Hamilton.



Lula Washington Dance Theatre

Programme

TODAY (2020)

CHOREOGRAPHY BY
Lula Washington

COSTUME CONCEPT BY
Lula Washington

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Milton T. Tatum

Today is a collection of Lula's thoughts and feelings during Covid and the racial reckoning brought on by the killing of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter Movement. Each section is only a brief moment, a thought, connected by passing 'hashtags'.

EXCERPTS

I'm Walking In The Light

SPOKEN WORDS WRITTEN BY
Lula Washington

PERFORMED BY
Tamica Washington-Miller

I Walked 1600 Hundred Miles

SPOKEN WORDS WRITTEN BY
Lula Washington

PERFORMED BY
Danny Guerrero

#Stop the Hate!

SPOKEN WORDS WRITTEN BY
Lula Washington

PERFORMED BY
Kozue Kasahara

A Mother's Thought

POEM BY
Nikki Giovanni "Mercy"

PERFORMED BY
Ongelle Johnson

Don't You Remember What Happened?

SPOKEN WORDS WRITTEN BY
Lula Washington

PERFORMED BY
Michael Tomlin, III

SoBrevirie "I Will Survive! A Message To The World!"

PERFORMED BY
LWDT Dance Company
& Apprentices



Lula Washington Dance Theatre

Programme

— *PAUSE* —

WE WORE THE MASK (2006)

CHOREOGRAPHY BY
Lula Washington

COSTUME CONCEPT BY
Lula Washington

ORIGINAL MUSIC COMPOSED BY
Marcus L. Miller

SOLOIST
Ongelle Johnson

LIGHTING DESIGNER
Milton T. Tatum

PERFORMED BY
The Company

This work was inspired by the poem, “We Wear The Mask,” written by Paul Lawrence Dunbar. The dance explores what happens when people remove old masks that were once needed to survive in America; and celebrates the true face revealed. Vibrant and full of energy, spirit, fire, beauty and creativity.

Lula Washington Dance Theatre

Programme

— *INTERVAL* —

THE MASTER PLAN (World Premiere)

CHOREOGRAPHED BY

Lula Washington

PERFORMED BY

The Company

Special thanks to Marcus L. Miller and Tamica Washington Miller for introducing me to the music of Pharaoh Sanders. “The Creator Has a Master Plan” is an amazing creative body of work which for me represents what the planet earth needs. As the world is still dealing with Covid; Russia’s invasion of Ukraine; constant mass shootings of people of color; equity for women and the LGBTQ communities; limitations on students in schools; and Trump’s attempt to overthrow the government, we need a Master from a higher power. I hope this dance will help viewers to hear and feel the power of the music and see the power of the dance as a connection to a higher consciousness. A consciousness that promotes peace, love, respect and happiness to all who open up their hearts to the music and the dance.

— Lula



Testimony by Vuong Nguyen (LWDT Alumni)

Master Plan is an ensemble work that highlights individual dancers on a collective journey of self-healing. It asks: What is the internal process of moving from trauma to peace? How does energy look when trauma is present, and how does it look when peace is achieved?

Master Plan, choreographed by the visionary Lula Washington, is, in my perception, a journey of internal self-discovery inspired by the seven chakras: Root: Groundedness, Sacral: Creativity, Solar Plexus: Confidence, Heart: Love, Throat: Speaking Truth, Third Eye: Intuition, Crown: Bliss and connection to the universe.

Each chakra is associated with a specific color, reflected in the choreography through seven long, flowing fabrics that move throughout the piece. During the early stages of rehearsal, I sensed a disconnect between the dancers and the choreography. But when Lula introduced the chakra-colored fabrics, the energy in the rehearsal space shifted noticeably. There's a theory that seeing, wearing, or consuming colors associated with the chakras can help realign them.

The piece itself holds many representations of the chakras. At the beginning, the dancers sit in a straight line, symbolizing aligned chakras. As the dance unfolds, they move out of line, reflecting

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Programme

the natural human experience of becoming unbalanced. By the end, the dancers find peace within themselves, gently rocking back and forth, embodying neutrality, true bliss, and centeredness.

Throughout *Master Plan*, the rippling fabrics mirror energy waves, illustrating how external forces and internal emotions interact. As you witness the movement and energy on stage, I invite you to reflect: How do you feel after watching the dance?

REIGN (2009)

CHOREOGRAPHY BY
Lula Washington

MUSIC BY
James 'JT'
Wilconson

PERFORMED BY
The Company

Originally created for LWDT, *Reign* represents Rennie Harris' personal struggle with love. He explains, "I fell from the grace of heaven and although my heart hurts I know I will one day return. So until then, I will continue to create work about love. The love of family, friends, lovers, husbands, wives, humans. These relationships are designed to ultimately bring us back to God and the glory of heaven."



Lula Washington Dance Theatre

About the Company



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About the Company



Lula Washington Dance Theatre (LWDT) is a 10-member contemporary modern dance company founded in 1980 by Lula and Erwin Washington.

Since its beginnings in South Los Angeles, California, LWDT has risen to become one of the most admired African-American contemporary dance companies in the West — known for powerful and high-energy dancing, unique choreography and exceptional educational residencies. LWDT's mission is to build a world-class, professional, contemporary modern dance company in South Los Angeles that reflects the many aspects of African-American culture and history, and that celebrates and uplifts the human spirit through innovative, evocative, exciting, educational and accessible dance.

Lula Washington is artistic director, choreographer, teacher, and dancer, and hails from Watts, California. The oldest of eight children, Lula grew up in poverty. She was too poor to take dance lessons and worked nights in hamburger stands, a skating rink and a movie theater in order to buy clothes for school. Lula did not experience modern dance until she was a nursing student at Harbor Community College in Los Angeles. There, a teacher took Lula and other classmates to see the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater at UCLA. Lula



Lula Washington Dance Theatre

About the Company

was so mesmerised by the beauty of Ailey's dancers that she decided to pursue dance as a career.

Later, Lula applied to UCLA's dance programme and was rejected because the school said she was too old to begin a dance career at age 22, but Lula appealed the decision and was admitted to UCLA. After graduation, Lula established the Los Angeles contemporary Dance Theatre, later renamed Lula Washington Dance Theatre.

Since founding the dance company, Lula has gained national and international respect as a dance leader, teacher, entrepreneur, and choreographer. Her choreographic style is a unique and highly theatrical blend of African, modern, ballet and performance art. She has received numerous awards, including a National Endowment for the Arts choreography fellowship, the California Dance Educators Award of Excellence, and a Woman of the Year Award from the California State Legislature.

The African-American Experience, current events, and local events to the Los Angeles area are often reflected in the dances that Lula creates. Lula has created works about being homeless, 9/11, police brutality, the Civil Rights movement and the Underground Railroad. Lula has also choreographed for movies, such as Walt Disney's *The Little Mermaid* and *Avatar*. She has created classic works to Bach and Vivaldi, along with African dance and hip-hop pieces.



About the Festival

Who We Are

Te Ahurei Toi o Tāmaki Auckland Arts Festival is a melting pot of shared experiences, whakaaro, live entertainment and kōrero every March.

Our lifeblood is arts and culture in contemporary Tāmaki Makaurau. We care deeply about celebrating artists both here in Aotearoa and from around the world, serving the creatives and communities behind the works we present, honouring te reo and te ao Māori in all that we do, and contributing to a better city and society. That's us.

Every March you'll see a big reunion with our city's arts community — many of whom we consider our whānau whānui, our extended family — alongside our mahi towards better accessibility and education opportunities for our audiences. We're also passionate about the works we curate and our collaboration with the many people who make those experiences happen. We strive to celebrate with generosity; human connection and manaakitanga will always be at the heart of what we stand for.

When we're on, we're on a mission to make Auckland an amazing place to socialise and be entertained in. Whether you're discovering the city for the first time or rekindling your love for its hidden gems, we truly believe there's something for everyone at the Festival.

The Auckland Festival Trust Ph +64 09 309 0989 Email info@aaf.co.nz

Ground Floor, 48 Greys Avenue, Auckland 1010

PO Box 5419, Victoria Street West, Auckland 1142, Aotearoa New Zealand



About the Festival

Who We Are

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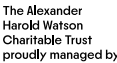
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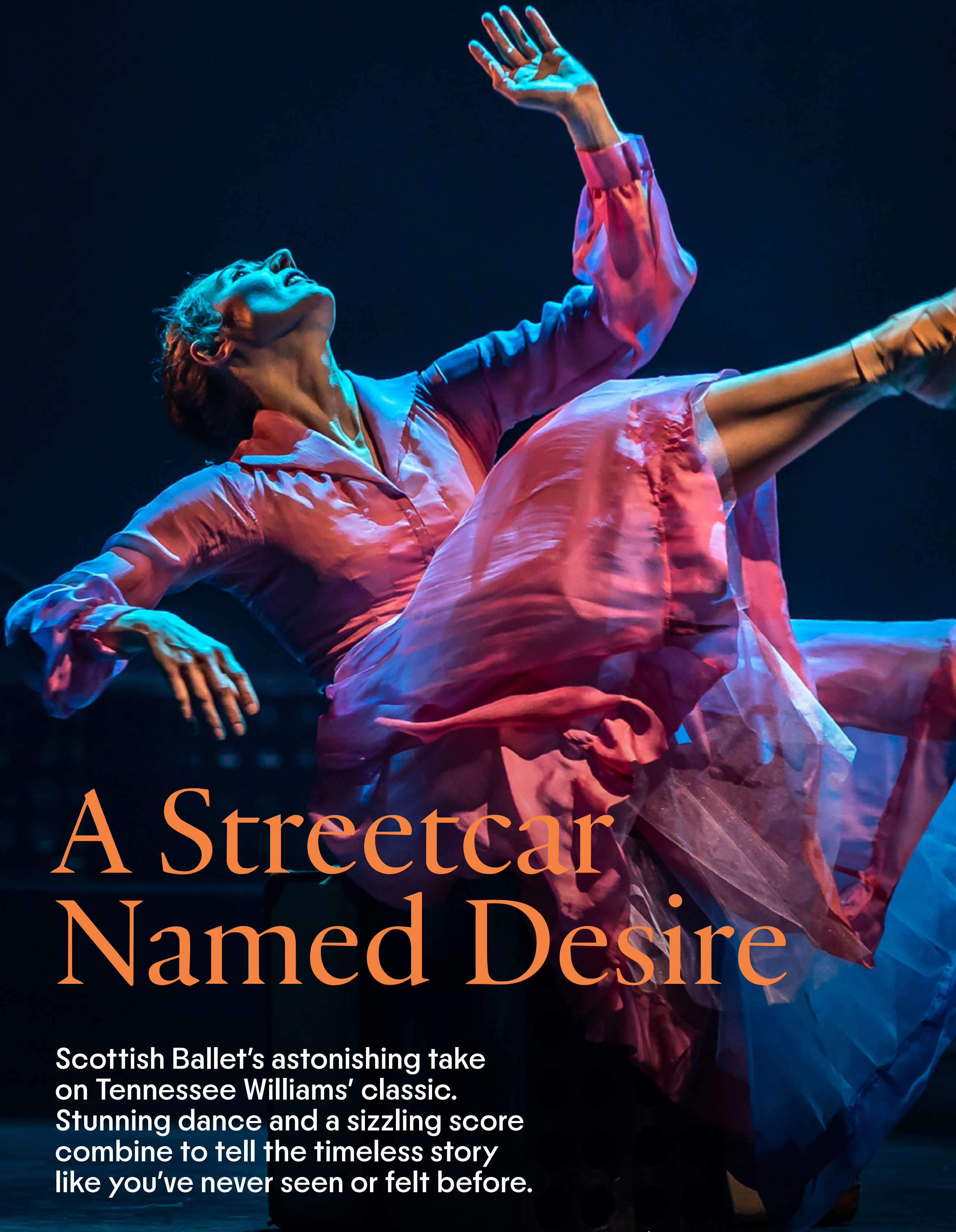
Digital Show Programme





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Kiri Te Kanawa Theatre, Aotea Centre

20–23 March 2025

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