

Kaneza Schaal & Cornell Alston
JACK &

ON THE
BOARDS

May 10–13, 2018

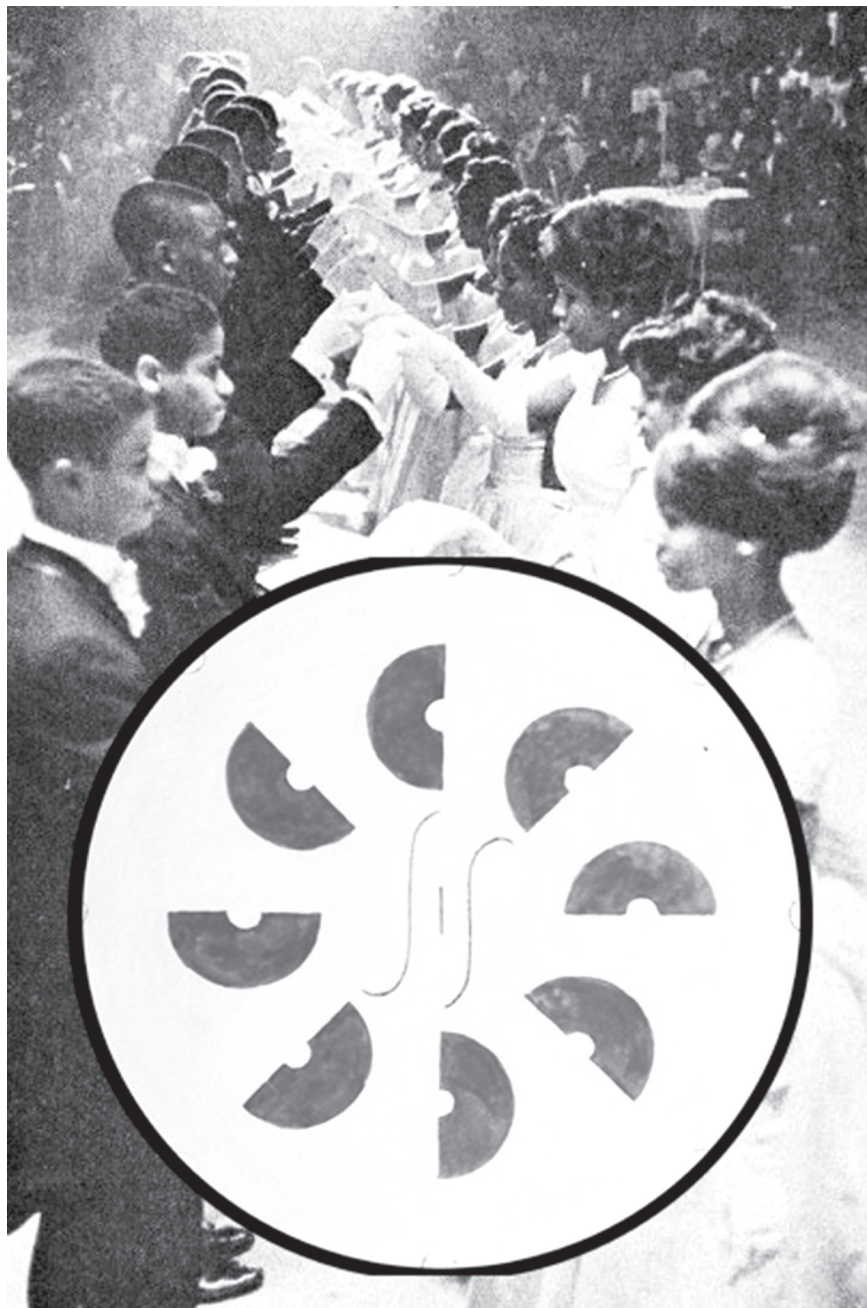


IMAGE: CHRISTOPHER MYERS

On the Boards would like to acknowledge that we are gathered on native land, and that this land was traditionally cared for by the Coast Salish peoples, including the Duwamish.

PART I : The Monologues
What had happened was...

PART II : The Sitcom
The Good Life...

PART III : The Cotillion
Goldfish with wings...

“Jack” works the night shift at an industrial bakery. He returns home to bake a cake for his wife “Jill”. “Jack” ends up whirling through a dance – part dream, part ritual – re-entering his own internal life. The performance draws on aspirational class stories like those in *The Honeymooners* and *Amos & Andy*; the paintings of Agnes Martin, Ellen Gallagher and Ruth Azawa; tigers in Harlem; real and imagined entering society ceremonies like Cotillion balls; and markers of transition from John Canoe traditions, to the mirroring and mimicry found in African American dance pageantry of the late 19th century. The performance considers re-entry into society after prison; focusing not on the time one has served, but the measure of one’s dreaming that is given to the state.

Filming and photography during the performance
is not permitted.

Kaneza Schaal & Cornell Alston: **JACK &**

May 10–13, 2018

On the Boards, Seattle

Running time: 75 min

created and directed by **Kaneza Schaal**
starring **Cornell Alston**

in collaboration with

performers: **Modesto Flako Jimenez, Rucyl Mills, and Stacey**

Karen Robinson

design: **Christopher Myers**

sound: **Rucyl Mills**

light: **Megan Lang and Ashley Vellano**

text: **Christopher Myers** (PART I), **Christopher Myers and**

Jackie Sibblies Drury (PART II), **Keisha** (PART III)

design and production associate: **Cheyenne Williams**

stage manager: **Clarissa Marie Ligon**

producer: **Rachel Silverman**

producer: **Jane Jung**

contributing artists: **Robert Chappelle, Daphne Gaines,**
Yahhkhem Hyman, April Matthis, and Naomi Saito

JACK & is a project of Creative Capital, the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project, and The Map Fund, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation Fund Project co-commissioned by the Contemporary Arts Center (Cincinnati) in partnership with On The Boards (Seattle), Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), REDCAT (Los Angeles), and NPN; a commission by Hartford Stage through the Aetna New Voices Fellowship; and with support from BRIClab, the Baryshnikov Arts Center, and THE LUMBERYARD. JACK & will have its New York City premiere in BAM Next Wave Festival in October 2018.

JACK & is presented with funding from WESTAF's TourWest program, which is funded by the National Endowment for the Arts. This performance has also received funding from the National Performance Network, the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Theater Project, Robert Chinn Foundation, and ArtsWA.

On the Boards' season is supported by the Boeing Company, Garneau-Nicon Family Foundation, Microsoft, The Tulalip Tribe, and ArtsFund.



Special thanks

Miya Carey, Ama Codjoe, Lisa Dent, Charles Fenner, James Finch and Country Boy Bakery, Miranda Haymon, Daniel Alexander Jones, Thomas O. Kriegsmann, Eddy Kwon and MyCincinnati, Sam Miller, Steve Neil, Raquel Palmas, Annie Sieg, Jan Whitsitt, Lily Whitsitt, and Cathy Zimmerman

Post-show discussion

After all performances join us in the main lobby for a cake reception and audience discussion to collectively consider recipes that rebuild dreaming.

A note from Kaneza Schaal

While the problems and problematics of mass incarceration in the United States have been recognized and acknowledged far and wide, the majority of initiatives both artistic and political have focused on the legislative and judiciary aspects of the problem (sentencing guidelines, irregularity of prosecutorial conduct, inconsistent application or access to legal structures). The stories from which these initiatives grow are indeed harrowing and thick with a kind of injustice that mirrors a societal analysis that separates the world into guilty and innocent parties, where the greatest miscarriage of justice is “the conviction or suffering of an innocent person” like some *Perry Mason* 1950s courtroom television show. There are, of course, some narratives that blur these distinctions, asking important questions like, “Do larger social structures have a role to play, or some burden to shoulder, in the guilt or innocence of the party and/or their actions.” But still the question of guilt and innocence looms large in our national narratives about incarceration, the weekly crimes played out across our national consciousness.

What then of the more than two million people currently incarcerated in the United States, who may or may not be able to interrogate their predicaments in terms that are friendly to the guilt-innocence dichotomy provided by the *SVUs*, *NC/ISs*, and *Murder She Wrote’s*? Is there a way to think about the price we as a society pay collectively, for incarcerating or limiting the freedom of over two percent of our population? This question lies less in the guilt or innocence of the parties involved, but rather in the image we have of ourselves or our society. If the United States is a nation made of dreams, what happens to the dreams of these millions of people? What does that debt of dreaming do to us as a country? As individuals?

JACK & is based on the ongoing artistic conversations between Cornell Alston (actor), Christopher Myers (writer & artist) and myself. Cornell and I first met when I saw him perform the title role in August Wilson’s *Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom* in full drag

at an all-male correctional facility. His work expanded my own dreaming of radically hybrid performance. When I found out that he had been released we began working together.

It has taken all kinds of resources for this work to happen. At one point we had four lawyers writing letters to argue that doing theater is in fact ‘gainful employment’ so that we would be granted the travel pass necessary for a development residency. Just a drop in the ocean of what an individual on parole navigates each day. We count among our blessing to be with you all tonight and thank you for coming to join us.

Kaneza Schaal

A note from Rachel Cook

In recent years, a growing number of multidisciplinary artists have employed performative strategies to interrogate social and political topics. Performance has become a working method, a critical framework, and a strategy, rather than simply a medium or discipline. Additionally, many contemporary theater-makers consider their practice similar to that of visual conceptual artists – performative, collaborative, and multidisciplinary. This particular way of performance or theater-making appears to be at the core of Kaneza Schaal’s work and collaborative practice. Schaal comes out of the tradition of American avant-garde theater and NYC downtown experimental theater. First, she worked with The Wooster Group, then Elevator Repair Service, Richard Maxwell, and many others. She toured with them to multiple international locations and was fully immersed in the ensemble tradition.

JACK & weaves a new frame of this ensemble tradition. Schaal considers bringing together different kinds of artists – disciplines, historic traditions, aesthetic traditions – to form a group centered around a particular line of questioning. In a recent interview with *Bomb* magazine Schaal explains, “It’s being built around ongoing conversations with the artist Cornell Alston about how dreaming is built or rebuilt. Specifically, this piece is thinking about reentering society after prison. How can we consider both the time someone has served and the measure of dreaming given over to the state?”

This shift away from performance as medium or discipline comes at a moment when many curators and art institutions are immersing themselves within, and critiquing the nature of,

audience engagement and the roles education and social justice play in cultural institutions. Whole departments have been added to or shifted from Education to Community Engagement. Hybrid social practice curatorial positions have been created to spearhead efforts to attract new audiences into museums or have been tasked with serving under represented audiences through live art.

Schaal's approach to creating art in the world today is decidedly thoughtful and wholeheartedly politically engaged. From the *Bomb* interview, when asked about making work that is in conversation with social practice she states, "This goes back to social practice and creative practice being fundamentally linked, particularly if we want to think about great storytelling as requiring many languages. To me, it's about how we consider both at once – as opposed to this very old idea of one's civic duty being somehow separate from one's art. The idea of one's work being apolitical is false and dangerous. We are political beings."

It has been an immense artistic and personal pleasure to watch this work grow and fill our spaces, and to witness these artists in conversation with our community. I am thankful for all of it, and grateful for us to be in the space together imagining, dreaming, wondering, what possibly futures are still yet to come.

Rachel Cook, Artistic Director

About the Artists

KANEZA SCHAAL is a New York City based theater artist. Her recent work *GO FORTH* premiered at PS122 and then showed at the Genocide Memorial Amphitheater in Kigali, Rwanda; LMCC's River-to-River Festival; Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans; Cairo International Contemporary Theater Festival in Egypt; and at her alma mater Wesleyan University, CT. Schaal received a 2017 MAP Fund award, 2016 Creative Capital Award, and is the current Aetna New Voices Fellow at Hartford Stage. *JACK &* was co-commissioned by Walker Arts Center, REDCAT, On the Boards, PICA, and Center for Contemporary Art Cincinnati with support from the National Performance Network and NEFA National Theater Project. This spring her new piece *CARTOGRAPHY* will be workshopped through New Victory Theater Lab, NYU Abu Dhabi, and will show at The Kennedy Center's New Vision New Voices. Schaal's work has also been supported by Baryshnikov Arts Center, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Theater Communications Group, and a Princess Grace George C. Wolfe Award. Her work with The Wooster Group, Elevator Repair Service, Richard Maxwell/New York City

Players, Claude Wampler, Jim Findlay, and Dean Moss has brought her to venues including Centre Pompidou, Royal Lyceum Theater Edinburgh, The Whitney Museum, and MoMA. kanezaschaal.com

CORNELL ALSTON is a long time member of Rehabilitation Through the Arts, a not-for-profit that uses the arts as a springboard to teach life skills to individuals both inside and outside of state correctional facilities. He initiated the Youth Empowerment Through the Arts initiative that launched in Queens NY, and he continues to work as an arts-in-education advocate. He is the recipient of a 2016 Creative Capital Award. Alston performed and collaborated with Kaneza Schaal on *PLEASE, BURY ME* at Baryshnikov Arts Center and *GO FORTH* during a Performance Space 122 RAMP residency. Other performance highlights include: *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *12 Angry Men*, and the title role in *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*.

MODESTO FLAKO JIMENEZ is a Dominican-born, Bushwick-raised theater maker, producer, and educator. ATI Best Actor Award Winner for 2016. HOLA Best Ensemble Award Winner for 2015 and

HOLA Outstanding Solo Performer for 2017, NY Times and Wall Street Journal profiled. Flako is best known for original productions and three signature festivals – *Ghetto Hors D'Oeuvres*, *One Catches Light*, and *Oye! Avant Garde Night!* – produced with his company Oye Group. Flako has appeared on TEDxBushwick, *Early Shaker Spirituals* (The Wooster Group), *Last Night At The Palladium* (Bushwick Starr/3LD), *Yoleros* (Bushwick Starr/IATI theater), *Conversations Pt.1: How To Make It Black In America* (JACK), *Take Me Home* (3LD/ Incubator Arts Project), and Richard Maxwell's *Samara* (Soho Rep.) *Oye For My Dear Brooklyn* (Abrons Art Center). Modesto received the 2016 Princess Grace Award Honorarium in Theater. In 2018 he became the first Dominican-American Lead Artist in The Public Theater Under The Radar Festival.

JANE JUNG is a Manager and Producer for individual artists, artist-led companies, and theater projects, currently working with Director Kaneza Schaal, Ping Chong + Company, Writer / Performer Diana Oh, and Gung Ho Projects. From 2014–2017, she was Managing Director of The Civilians where she oversaw all administrative, fundraising, general management, and producing areas of the company. During her time at The Civilians, the company was the first theater company in residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and produced premieres of a new musical *Pretty Filthy*, which was nominated for Lucille Lortel and Drama Desk Awards for outstanding new musical, and *The Undertaking*, which premiered at BAM Next Wave Festival and toured to Theatre de la Ville in Paris France. Previously, she was General Manager at Ping Chong + Company from 2010–2014. She has worked as a producer with Little Lord and the Women's Project, and produced new work that was presented at the New Ohio Theater's Ice Factory Festival, The Public Theater's Under the Radar Festival, City Center Stage II, and the Bushwick Starr. She is a board member of Network of Ensemble Theaters and is on the Editorial Board of the Yale Theater Management Knowledge Base.

MEGAN LANG has designed lighting at

BAM, La Mama, Abrons Arts Center, EST, Under St. Mark's, the Wild Project, Dixon Place, 59E59, JACK, Atlantic Stage 2, among others. Recent designs include *A Star Has Burnt My Eye* (BAM Next Wave, directed by Paul Lazar), *Riot Antigone* (La Mama, directed by Seonjae Kim), and *Furry/La Furia!* (The Bushwick Starr, directed by William Burke). She is the resident lighting designer for the Ubumuntu Arts Festival in Rwanda. Assistant/associate special effects work includes Sting's *The Last Ship*, *Our Lady of Kibeho*, and *An Act of God*. BA: Fordham University. meganlangld.com

CLARISSA MARIE LIGON is a stage manager, designer, and classically trained singer. She makes art because she believes it can change the world. Recent production work includes: *Cruel Intentions The Musical* at le Poisson Rouge, *The Rise and Fall of Marcus Monroe* at Jeffrey and Paula Gural Theatre, *3/Fifths* at 3LD, Penny Arcade's *Longing Lasts Longer* at St. Anne's Warehouse, *La Paloma Prisoner* at HI-Arts.

RUCYL MILLS is a sonic new media artist. Her work revolves around a live experimentation performance process, centering sound as a medium to represent non-tactile concepts like time, emotion, identity, and physics. During her live performances she uses MIDI controllers, loopers and effects processors, often with accompanying visual vignettes composed of found footage and abstract personal video. Rucyl.com

CHRISTOPHER MYERS is an artist and writer who lives in New York. While he is widely acclaimed for his work with literature for young people, he is also an accomplished fine artist who has lectured and exhibited internationally. His practice can be divided into two categories, interventions in historical narratives and work crafted with artisans from around the globe. Christopher's work has been exhibited at PS1/MoMA, and included as part of Greater New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Prospect Biennial in New Orleans and Contrasts Gallery in Shanghai. Myers has curated shows in Vietnam, designed theater that has

travelled from PS122 in New York City to the Genocide Memorial Theater in Kigali, Rwanda and collaborated with Hank Willis Thomas on a short film *Am I Going Too Fast* which premiered at Sundance. Myers participated in the Whitney Independent Studio Program. He has written essays that have been published by the New York Times and he is currently working on a book comparing global censorship methodologies.

STACEY KAREN ROBINSON is a multidisciplinary theater artist. She performed her new solo work, *You Never Can Always Sometimes Tell*, in NYC at JACK. She developed the show with the support from the Foundation of Contemporary Arts, a 2017 Process Space Residency from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and a work in progress production at Salvage Vanguard Theater, TX. Her previous one woman show, *Quiet Frenzy*, is published in *solo / black / woman: scripts, interviews, and essays*, Northwestern University Press, 2014. Performances of *Quiet Frenzy* included: JACK, the John L. Warfield Center for African & African American Studies, Northwestern University, and the Wild Project. A Bronx native, she is a proud recipient of the BRIO, Bronx Recognizes Its Own Award for Playwriting, 2009. Stacey has appeared as an actress in many productions, including Daniel Alexander Jones' *DUAT* (Soho Rep.), Toshiki Okada's *Quiet Comfort* (Hoi Polloi) and Erik Ehn's *Her Speech* (Planet Connections – Playwrights for a Cause).

RACHEL SILVERMAN is a New York City based theater artist and producer. Rachel works on the artistic staff at New York Theatre Workshop where she is a curator and producer of all workshops and artist development programs, NYTW's NEXT DOOR series for artists and companies producing their own work, and the 2050 Fellowship for early career directors and playwrights. Currently Rachel is also producing Kaneza Schaal's newest work *JACK &*, which will premiere in New York at BAM's 2018 Next Wave Festival. Rachel served as festival producer for PRELUDENYC in 2012 and 2013 and the associate producer of 13P for its final

years until implosion. Other producing credits include 13P's OBIE Award-winning *A Map of Virtue* and UglyRhino's site specific *What it Means to Disappear Here*. BA: Wesleyan University, Theater and Sociology.

ASHLEY VELLANO graduated from the University of Mississippi with a B.F.A in Technical Theater emphasis in Lighting Design. She has been designing lights in New York City since 2008. She is one of the founding members of Kidz Theater in NYC, a company which provides a free professional training ground for Young Performers. Ashley has worked with Kaneza Schaal since 2014 and designed the lighting for *GO FORTH*.

CHEYANNE WILLIAMS is a New York based theater artist. Recent design collaborations include Assistant Set Designer (*mylingerieplay*), Rattlestick Playwrights Theater), and Props Designer (*Cute Activist*, The Bushwick Starr). Upcoming projects include Props Design for *Big Green Theater* at The Bushwick Starr in spring 2018, as well as the premier of *up your aesthetic.*, a devised retelling of the Ancient Greek myths of the Amazons, at the DC fringe festival this summer.

Reentry Community Connections

Over the past few months, the *JACK* & team and On the Boards had many conversations with individuals, groups, and organizations working in reentry and prison reform in Seattle. We spoke to staff members of agencies serving thousands of formerly incarcerated per year, providing job training and transitional housing; individual case workers; city officials; justice and reform advocates; formerly incarcerated individuals organizing groups around a shared racial identity; groups using the arts as healing practice or as an alternative to juvenile sentencing.

These conversations are an integral part of the creative project. Through this work, we encountered a constellation of perspectives and experiences that all contribute to an ongoing dialogue around the national trauma of mass incarceration.

The *JACK* & team and On the Boards thank the following folks for taking the time to talk, meet, and organize groups to attend performances.

- Aaron Counts and Nikkita Oliver, Creative Justice (creativejustice.4culture.org)
- Alex Mayo and Maria Moody, Civil Survival (civilsurvival.org)
- Angeline Thomas, Washington Appleseed (waappleseed.org)
- Byron Au Yong
- Caedmon Cahill, City of Seattle Re-entry Workgroup
- Carolyn Dougherty, Recovery Cafe (recoverycafe.org)
- Christopher Poulos, Statewide Reentry Council (Washington)
- Daemond Arrindell, Freehold Theatre/Engaged Theatre Program
- Dan Satterburg, King County Prosecuting Office
- Dominique Davis, Community Passageways (communitypassageways.org)
- Fidelma McGinn, Seattle Foundation (seattlefoundation.org)
- Franklyn Smith, Transition Resource Specialist, Department of Corrections

- Holly Jacobson, Elise Holschuh, Path with Art (pathwithart.org)
- James Amos, Transition Resource Specialist, Department of Corrections
- Jan Whitsitt
- Joe Garcia, King County Community Partnership for Transition Services
- Kathy Wong, King County Community Partnership for Transition Services
- Keith Marler, King County Community Partnership for Transition Services
- Many Uch and Brandon Wong, F.I.G.H.T. (fightwa.org)
- Mary Flowers
- Nanette Sorch, Pioneer Human Services (pioneerhumanservices.org)
- Richard Gold, Pongo Publishing (pongoteenwriting.org)
- Robin Lynn Smith, Freehold Theatre (freeholdtheatre.org)
- Shontina Vernon
- Stephan Thomas, King County 180 Program and King County Prosecuting Office
- Sue Mason and Roz Solomon, What's Next Washington (whatsnextwashington.org)
- Trina Kinney
- Willard Jimerson, Urban League's GROOM program (urbanleague.org)

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Founded by artists in 1978, On the Boards invests in leading contemporary performing artists near and far, and connects them to a diverse range of communities interested in forward-thinking art and ideas. We believe if we are successful in our work that we can grow our field, enrich peoples' lives, and contribute to civic and global dialogues.

We value: artistic risks while being fiscally responsible; leadership in our field and the multiple communities we serve to strategically advance the role contemporary artists play in society; racial and social equity, and accountability, to ensure our organization includes multiple viewpoints; provocative art as a vehicle to connect people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives; our local creative community as we engage with international artists and peers; and professional and transparent management.

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