Christopher Williams

CONTACT

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New York NY 10033

718.664.7279
amphibiously@gmail.com
christopherwilliamsdance.org

501 (c)(3): New York Foundation for the Arts

PAST GRANTS AWARDED

2013 Seed - Wolf-in-Skins
2006 Project - The Tale of Layla and Manjun
2005 Seed - The Tale of Layla and Manjun
2003 Project (3k) - Virgo Genitrix
2002 Seed (1k) - Marginalia

Wolf-in-Skins

Inspired by themes of the "mythic hero's journey" found in Welsh faerie lore, "Wolf-in-Skins" is a two-act dance opera directed and choreographed by Christopher Williams and composed by Gregory Spears interweaving puppetry, dance, music, and visual design to re-imagine lost Insular Celtic mythology as a contemporary staged ritual.

VIDEO SAMPLE


Artists: For "The Golden Legend": Puppeteers: Lake Simons, Erin K. Orr, Takemi Kitamura, Kate Brehm, & Coco Karol

Description: This sample shows the Otome-Bunraku inspired puppetry in “The Golden Legend” (my epic work based on early male saints' lives for 23 male dancers, 2 movement choruses, 5 puppeteers, and a live chamber ensemble with singers & period instrumentalists).
**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

*Wolf-in-Skins* is a two-act dance-opera directed and choreographed by Christopher Williams and composed by Gregory Spears. Inspired by ancient themes of the “mythic hero’s journey” found in Welsh faerie legends and folklore, the work’s dream-like narrative bears witness to the initiation rites of a central hero character grappling with queer identity via bouts with supernatural agency, otherworldly passage, and transformation. Driven primarily by detailed choreographic, musical, visual, and poetic sequences supported by narration, the complete work interweaves puppetry, dance, music, and visual design to re-imagine lost Insular Celtic mythology as a contemporary staged ritual.

Opera singers singing in a quasi-archaic English represent the work’s human characters on stage, whereas dancers and puppeteers embody its supernatural characters. An offstage choir singing in Welsh voices the supernatural characters. Large “body prosthetic” puppets featuring low arm stilt techniques will be designed and fabricated by Christopher Williams and Eric Wright to represent the work’s bestial characters. Supernatural characters that have undergone or undergo bestial transformation throughout the story are represented by dancers wearing masks and other detailed prosthetic costumes by Christopher Williams and visual designer Andrew Jordan.

Composer Gregory Spears’ musical language for the work has been forged using a host of historical accents (such as early music, romanticism, modernism, and minimalism) as well as a lexicon of musical symbols, leitmotivs, and styles that knit the poly-lingual/interdisciplinary elements of the libretto together into a mythic-system of musical references. The music is scored for an 11-piece chamber orchestra (consisting of a blend of modern and early baroque instruments) in an effort to create a timeless sonic world for the characters and voices to inhabit.

The artistic intention behind this work continues my longstanding impulse to create public performance that draws primarily upon the movement of the human body. For this reason, the puppets and body prosthetics will be designed to enhance the movement of performers manipulating or wearing them in order to devise new choreographic possibilities. The work strives to dovetail the traditional live performance genres of opera, dance, theater, and puppetry into a visual, sonorous, and spatial ”polyphony” that forges new territory as its own performance hybrid – a 21st century magnum opus inspired by traditions such as Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* and Diaghilev’s *Ballets Russes*. 
**PROJECT BUDGET**

**WOLF-IN-SKINS**
*(Philadelphia Dance Projects “Informance” 2017)*

**EXPENSES**

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<th>Personnel</th>
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<tr>
<td>Choreographer/Director Honorarium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Composer Honorarium</td>
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<td>Puppeteer Fees</td>
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<td>Design/Construction Fees</td>
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<td><strong>Subtotal Puppet Design &amp; Construction</strong></td>
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**Total Expenses**  
$28,000

**INCOME**

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<td>NEA funding garnered by Philadelphia Dance Projects</td>
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<td>Exploring the Metropolis Residency at JCAL Stipend</td>
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<td>Individual Donors</td>
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<td>Jim Henson Foundation</td>
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**Total Income**  
$28,000

*An “Informance” (part fully staged live performance, part workshop performance, part concert, and part lecture/demonstration) will take place in Philadelphia the fall of 2017.*
Christopher Williams, hailed as "one of the most exciting choreographic voices out there" (The New York Times) and "the downtown prodigy" (The New Yorker), is an award-winning choreographer, dancer, and puppeteer devoted to creating new movement-based works in New York City and abroad since 1999. In addition to touring internationally in France, England, Italy, Spain, Holland, Colombia, and Russia, as well as nationally in Kalamazoo, Princeton, Carlisle, and Philadelphia, his work has been presented in many New York City venues including Lincoln Center, City Center, Dance Theater Workshop, Danspace Project, the 92nd Street Y, Dance New Amsterdam, Joyce SoHo, Symphony Space, HERE Arts Center, P.S. 122, La Mama, Dixon Place, One Arm Red, as well as in the Late Night Cabaret of the Jim Henson International Festival of Puppet Theater, and via American Opera Projects in OPERA America's New Works Forum.

He has been commissioned by the Opéra national de Bordeaux, the English National Opera, Teatro Real, Perm Opera & Ballet Theater, Interlochen Center for the Arts, 10 Hairy Legs, DTW, Danspace Project, the Harkness Dance Center, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, as well as the Dream Music Puppetry Program, and has set original works on students at Princeton University, NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Sarah Lawrence College, Dickinson College, and Interlochen Arts Academy. He has also had the great fortune of collaborating with many distinguished artists including world-renowned opera director Peter Sellars, composers Gregory Spears and Robert Een, costume designers Andrew Jordan and Carol Binion, puppeteer and set designer Tom Lee, as well as with members of Ensemble Pygmalion, Piffaro, Lionheart, and the internationally acclaimed vocal ensemble Anonymous 4. Most recently, his collaboration with director Michel Fau and musical director Raphaël Pichon on a production of Jean-Philippe Rameau's Dardanus presented at the Opéra Royal du Château de Versailles won the Grand Prix du Syndicat de la Critique 2015 and his collaboration with Peter Sellars on a new adaptation of Henry Purcell's The Indian Queen presented at The Bolshoi Theater won five Golden Mask Awards in Moscow.

Christopher received a New York Dance & Performance "Bessie" Award in 2005 for his work Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins (2005) and an impromptu Ishmael Houston-Jones 'Messie' Award for his work The Golden Legend (2009), which was listed among the 10 best dance performances of 2009 by Joan Acocella in The New Yorker. He has been awarded fellowships from The New York Foundation for the Arts, The Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and the Bogliasco Foundation for multiple residencies at The Liguria Study Center for Arts & Humanities in Bogliasco, Italy, and received a Bessie Schönberg Memorial Endowed Fellowship for a residency at the Djerassi Resident Artist Program. He has received an EtM Choreographer + Composer Residency via Exploring the Metropolis, and has also been granted creative residencies at the Kaatsbaan International Dance Center, Joyce SoHo, Dance New Amsterdam, White Oak Plantation, The Yard, Bates Dance Festival, LMCC, Mt. Tremper Arts, Robert Wilson's Watermill Center, on Captiva Island via the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation through Movement Research, the Harkness Dance Center, the HERE Artist Residency Program, the Tyrone Guthrie Center in Ireland, and at Yaddo, where he was named for the Charles and Candace Wait Residency in 2014. He has also received former grants from the Jim Henson Foundation, the O'Donnell-Green Music & Dance Foundation, LMCC, American Music Center's Live Music for Dance Program, the International Festival Society, and the Greenwall Foundation.

As a puppeteer, Christopher has worked with the award-winning master puppeteer Basil Twist, both serving as the Ballet Captain for the puppets' choreography as well as developing roles in his versions of the ballets Petrushka and The Rite of Spring. He has also toured with the award-winning work of Dan Hurlin, including Everyday Uses for Sight no. 3 and Hiroshima Maiden, has collaborated with Phantom Limb Company, and has appeared in puppet works by Chris M. Green, Erin K. Orr, and Lake Simons. As a dancer, Christopher has worked for Douglas Dunn & Dancers, Rebecca Lazier, Tere O'Connor Dance, Yoshiko Chuma & the School of Hard Knocks, John Kelly, David Neumann, Sally Silvers, Mina Nishimura, Michou Szabo, Yvonne Meier, Jon Kinzel, Renée Archibald, Edisa Weeks, Risa Jaroslow, Eliza Miller, Nanine Linning, Beppie Blankert, Wendy Rogers, Lisa Gonzales, and Anita Cheng, and has also performed for Peter Sellars, Fred Ho, and Charles Atlas.

Christopher was born in Washington, D.C. and grew up in Syracuse, New York where he began early studies of gymnastics, drama, music, and ballet. He earned a diploma from the École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris where he studied physical theatre, acrobatics, and mask traditions from 1996-1998, and received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1999 from Sarah Lawrence College where he studied choreography with the late Viola Farber and puppetry with Dan Hurlin.
VISUALS
(puppet design sketches for the Gwartheg y Llyn from “Wolf-in-Skins”)
September 1, 2016

Cheryl Henson
The Jim Henson Foundation
37-38 Northern Boulevard, Suite 400
Long Island City NY 11101

Dear Ms. Henson,

This letter is to confirm that Philadelphia Dance Projects (PDP) will be presenting Christopher Williams in an “Informance,” a works-in-process showing, of the Wolf-In-Skins Act 2 slated for the Fall of 2017 in Philadelphia.

In 2013, PDP co-supported the development of Wolf-In-Skins and presented Act 1, to much critical acclaim and enthusiastic sold-out audiences. We are pleased to currently have support from the NEA Dance program to assist in the further development of this wonderful work by Williams and composer Gregory Spears. This creative process will take place in 2017.

One of the defining aspects of Williams’ work is use of costume and puppetry which he can masterfully set into motion in service of his operatic dance works. Having the Henson Foundation support to develop this important aspect of Wolf-In-Skins would be a great asset.

Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions or would like more information.

Best regards,

Terry Fox
PDP Director
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mobile:609.805.8747