

EMPAC





Black Body Amnesia is a performance project by author, performance artist, educator, and curator Jaamil Olawale Kosoko. The project accompanies Kosoko's forthcoming **Black Body Amnesia: Poems and Other Speech Acts** (Wendy Subway, 2022), which blends poetry, memoir, conversation, and performance theory to enliven a personal archive of visual and verbal offerings. Inspired by Audre Lorde's concept of biomythography, Kosoko's archive refracts the shapeshifting, illegible, and fugitive realities of Black diasporan people within the American context to tell a complex narrative rooted within a queer, Black, self-defined, and feminist imagination.

Now, Kosoko brings their work to the stage for a live performance melding vocalization, music, spoken word, movement, moving-image, sculpture, and fabric.

Black Body Amnesia is performed by Kosoko with an alternating cast of musicians, DJ's, and vocalists including Raymond Pinto, DJ Maij, and sound designer/composer Everett Saunders. For the work, Kosoko uses complexity theory—which they define as the study of adaptive survivalist strategies inside complex networks or environments—as a choreographic device. From this artistic vantage point, the artist explores how minoritarianized communities record and affirm their existence through collaborative actions and protests, and how they then archive these personal freedom narratives to subvert culturally charged fields of systemic oppression, loss, and erasure.

The performance of **Black Body Amnesia** follows Kosoko's remote day long April 22, 2020 EMPAC presentation titled **Chameleon (The Living Installments)**, which re-purposed the online social platform Discord as an interactive venue where the artist hosted audio streaming of original sound, footage from a new moving-image work, a multi-media zine, remote conversations, a somatic workshop, and an archive of images, videos, and links. Many of the theories and documents from this event will find themselves in **Black Body Amnesia**, now staged in person for deeper theatrical exploration.

Kosoko and their team was in-residence at EMPAC to develop and rehearse **Black Body Amnesia** in advance of their performance. The residency supported lighting design and set design, and included a film shoot. The performance of the work was open to Rensselaer faculty, staff, and students; and was staged for a dynamic film shoot that will be streamed at a later date.

JAAMIL OLAWALE KOSOKO

BLACK BODY AMNESIA

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 3PM

BIOGRAPHIES



JAAMIL OLAWALE KOSOKO Director, Choreographer, and Performer
Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, a multi-spirited Nigerian American choreographer, performance artist, poet, and curator originally from Detroit, MI, is a 2021 MacDowell Fellow, 2020 Pew Fellow in the Arts, 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in Choreography, 2019 NPN Development Fund Awardee, a 2017-19 Princeton Arts Fellow, 2019 Red Bull Writing Fellow, 2018 NEFA NDP Production Grant recipient, 2017 MAP Fund recipient, and a 2017 Cave Canem Poetry Fellow. Kosoko's creative practice draws from Black study and queer theories of the body, weaving together visual performance, lecture, ritual, and spiritual practice. Their most recent work Chameleon (The Living Installments) premiered virtually in April 2020. Their previous works: Séancers (2017) and the Bessie nominated #negrophobia (2015), have toured internationally appearing in major festivals including: Tanz im August (Berlin), Moving in November (Finland), Within Practice (Sweden), TakeMeSomewhere (UK), Brighton Festival (UK), Oslo Teaterfestival (Norway), Center for the Less Good Idea (South Africa) and Zürich MOVES! (Switzerland) among others. They teach regularly at Stockholm University of the Arts, Exerce in Montpellier, France, and Princeton University. Their book, Black Body Amnesia: Poems and Other Speech Acts is released in Feb. 2022. Learn more at jaamil.com or on IG @[jaamil_means_beauty](https://www.instagram.com/jaamil_means_beauty).



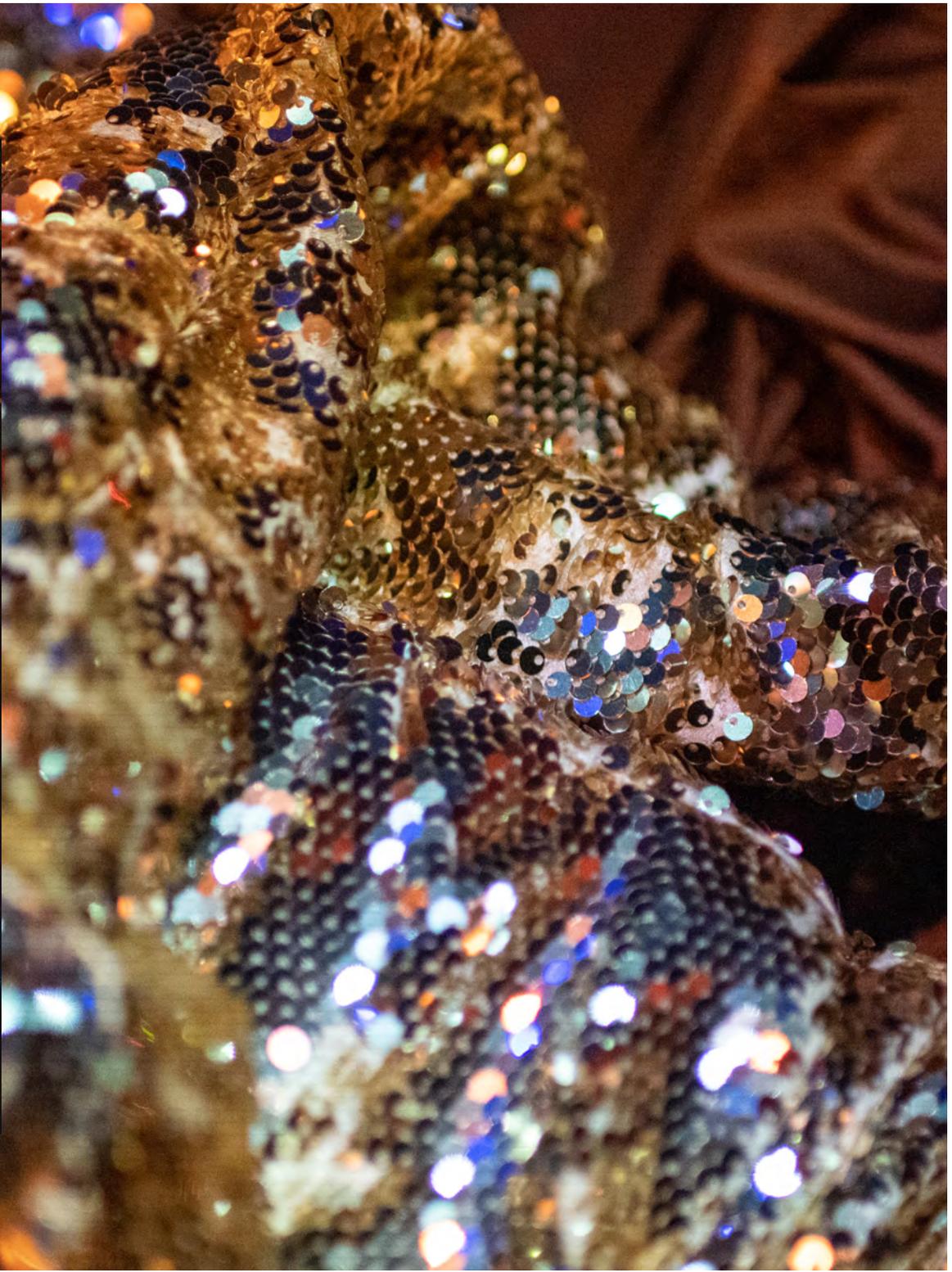
KARA JENELLE Assistant Director and Virtual Doula
Kara Jenelle (KJ) is a dance performer, choreographer and teaching artist bi-coastal between Los Angeles, CA & Atlanta, GA. She has worked as a performer and choreographer for artists such as Janet Jackson, Lauryn Hill, Black Eyed Peas, Beyoncé, Jidenna, Khalid, and Will Smith just to name a few. Her choreography has been seen on platforms such as BET, Black Girls Rock, NBC's The Voice, Nike, Lifetime, Essence and more! As an international educator she has taught in over 10 countries and she works diligently to represent the African diaspora in the commercial dance industry. Most recently KJ has been featured in Beyoncé's film, 'Black Is King' on Disney, Coming 2 America, and The Ellen Show for the Juneteenth Special 2021. She also earned her MFA at UCLA as a Graduate Fellow from the Department of World Arts & Cultures/Dance this Spring 2021. Her thesis work and dance film, ÌYÁguration was selected for the Liberation Film festival hosted by Southern California GrantMakers as well as highlighted by the Daily Bruin and UCLA Newsroom. Kara Jenelle is the Founder of Delta Chi Xi Honorary Dance Fraternity, Inc and a proud member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated.



EVERETT SAUNDERS Sound Artist
A Sonic Artist who's composed on Bessie award-winning projects, National Dance Project grant winner, Everett Saunders, with numerous scores for theater and film is among one of the newest and most sought-after talents in the industry. A real soundophile, his approach to film and theater is not only supported by his musicality, but also his understanding of the distinct nuances of film and theater.

With an uncanny knack for entering the minds and creative processes of directors, choreographers, and producers, Saunders' work enhances any project he's involved in. Working with directorial minds from Ron Howard's Project Imagination and internationally renowned dance companies such as Urban Bush Woman, Marjani Forté & Works, and various others, his unique understanding of musical dramaturgy and theatrical score development has impacted audiences across the nation.

Alongside his studio works, Saunders's music industry experiences have landed him the ability to work with acts such as DJ Cassidy's "Paradise Royale" and engaged his skillset for records involving John Legend, Mary J. Blige, Usher, Earth Wind & Fire, Kelly Roland, and various others. These projects have gratefully charted here in the U.S. and abroad. As a sonic artist and dedicated audiophile Saunders was also awarded the New Music USA grant to research composition and application of 3-D Audio for performance that has been presented in various museum installations. Everett Saunders continues his journey through the art of sound and continues to search for learning experiences and inspiration to better his sound, ear, and craft.



RAYMOND PINTO Performer and DJ

Raymond Pinto was born in Bridgeport, Connecticut. He studied dance and graduated from the Juilliard School in 2013. He was awarded a Princess Grace Foundation Award in 2012 for his achievement as a dancer and was a Young Arts Award winner in 2009. He has worked with internationally touring dance companies such as Les Grandes Ballet Canadien de Montreal, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, The Royal Ballet of Flanders, The Phantom of the Opera on Broadway, and the Ballet Nacional de Marseille. Throughout his career as a professional dancer, he has been grateful to work with and perform the works of notable choreographers and artist alike. As an artist himself, Raymond has presented his own works at festivals, theaters, galleries, workshops, and conferences both locally and globally. He has presented his work at the Judson Memorial Church, MoMA PS1, and the Venice Biennale. In addition to creating new performance art works, Raymond also holds a Master's Degree with a focus in Performance Studies from New York University. Despite the precious conditions of today's world, Raymond intends to continue to create new works that situate the African and Latinx diasporas as a contextual point of departure.

**MAIJ** Cellist and Tarot Reader

Brian Aladesuyi a.k.a. Maij, 32, was born in Atlanta, GA in 1990. He began playing classical cello at age 10 and studied music at Indiana University Bloomington under the tutelage of the famed Sharon Robinson. After college, Maij moved to Rochester, NY and started working in the restaurant industry, where he discovered his passion for wine. Through self-study and motivation, he earned his Level II Sommelier Certification from the Court of Master Sommeliers. In 2017, he moved to New York City where he spent time working in fine-dining restaurants and wine bars. No longer working in the restaurant industry, Maij commonly hosts events, dinners, and tasting seminars that not only include wine, but whisky, tequila, rum and more. Going by 'Black Maij' he is a very passionate DJ whose main style of music is House. He performs in various clubs, bars, hotels, fundraisers and parties throughout New York City. Multi-talented, Maij is also an Astrologer and Tarot reader.



In 2021, alongside Caitlyn Guarano, he founded Mindful Creatives with the intention of bringing the artistic community together to discuss how different disciplines like art, music, wine, photography, and even tarot all speak a universal language. He currently lives in Brooklyn, NY.

GEORGE MACLEOD Post Production and Video Editor

George MacLeod is a writer and interdisciplinary artist based in Philadelphia. They hold a BA from Bennington College with a focus in video and live performance. They are an active member and organizer for media arts collective, Lino Kino. Their time-based work has been featured in Philadelphia at the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PAFA), Cherry Street Pier, Da Vinci Art Alliance, HOT•BED and AUTOMAT; as well as the Center on Contemporary Art (CoCA), Seattle, WA; Neighborhood Film Festival, Montreal, QC; No Theme Performance Festival, Poughkeepsie, NY; Built on Stilts, Martha's Vineyard, MA; and many DIY and outdoor spaces in Philadelphia and New York City. Their written work has been twice featured in the Johns Hopkins literary journal, Tendon.

**SHANA CRAWFORD** Production Manager

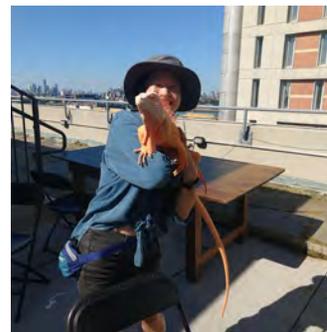
Shana Crawford entangles herself in dance and performance across New York City as a dance artist, lighting designer, production manager and educator. Her work in all forms create structures for acts of togetherness and celebration. She collaborates with Jessie Young, Juliana May, Jaamil



Olawale Kosoko, Laurie Berg, Madeline Best, Stephanie Acosta, and Yanan Yu, among others. You can find her at the Chocolate Factory Theater, LMCC's River to River Festival and AUNTS, Shana has a degree in dance and mathematics from Bennington College and is getting her MS in Public Education at the Bank Street School. Shana orchestrates the Sometimes Together group and her work has been shared in NYC, MN, VT, HA, PA, MA, Italy and Spain. See more at sortoffhere.com

SERENA WONG Lighting Designer

Serena Wong is a Brooklyn-based freelance lighting designer for theater and dance. Her designs have been seen at the State Theater at Lincoln Center, Fall For Dance at City Center, Danspace, and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. Most recently she has designed for choreographers Gemma Bond, Caleb Teicher, Leonardo Sandoval, and Jaamil Olawale Kosoko. She enjoys biking, baking, and pottery.



DAHLIA LI Dramaturg

Dahlia Menghui Li (she/they) is an artist, writer, and doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania in the Department of English with certificates from the Program in Cinema and Media Studies and Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies. Her dissertation explores 20th and 21st-century experimental dance as it intersects with histories of diaspora, race, and theories of technological mediation. In addition to her scholarly writing, she is working on a series of nonfiction essays on the gendered afterlives of diasporic revolution and is a practicing dance artist who collaborates with Be Heintzman Hope, Jaamil Olawale Kosoko, Ogemdi Ude, and Elisa Zuppini.



SAVONNE WHITFIELD Costume Stylist and Fabricator
Oakland, CA native, SaVonne N. Whitfield, M.A. is a self-taught seamstress. She is a fashion & costume designer, stylist, and wardrobe consultant. Living and working in the essence of style she has wardrobe multiple theatre productions and is no stranger to collaborating with Jaamil Kosoko. SaVonne has worked in NYFW, worked for FIDM and maintains entrepreneurial design ventures of her own. She has earned a trusted rapport of style direction and garment construction from her exposure and desire to learn and experience the multi-faceted elements of all things fashion, style and body positivity.

**DEDE** Make up

Sandra (Dede) Sackey is a NYC based Pro MUA & licensed cosmetologist having graduated with her degree in Acting from Ithaca College. She currently freelances working with her own clientele as well as working on set with different photographers/creatives. Aside from makeup artistry, she's also a wig designer who loves creating custom units for her clients.

**CREDITS**

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Dahlia Li, Dramaturgy + Writing Editor

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