

Thursday, June 25, 2020

Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble to Premiere *Rooms2020*

Company: Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble
Venue: Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble
Location: New York, NY

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Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble

Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble will premiere a virtual performance video of Anna Sokolow's *Rooms*, to be titled *Rooms2020*, on Thursday, June 25, 2020 at 7pm. *Rooms2020* will be available to view at sokolowtheatredance.org.

"Art is a mirror."

If life imitates art far more than art imitates life, then Anna Sokolow was distinctly ahead of her time.

Rooms, Sokolow's 1955 masterpiece, examined the psychic isolation and unfulfilled desires of characters isolated in their small, city apartments. The controversial and groundbreaking work breathed with the loneliness and alienation following the breakdown of wartime solidarity, when the threat of atomic annihilation, the 1952 polio epidemic, and the Red Scare hung like invisible contagions and created a mood of pervasive uncertainty and dread over America.

The Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble began rehearsals for *Rooms* in August 2019 as one half of a concert series scheduled for March 2020 entitled "Real+Surreal" that would include Sokolow's 1970 surrealist dance/theatre work *Magritte, Magritte*. *Rooms* was intended to be the 'real' half of a program that celebrated these works on their 65th and 50th anniversaries.

Then, a new contagion spread across the world, and human existence changed. In 2020, *Rooms* has become both real and surreal. Anna Sokolow's 1955 choreography resonates with uncanny power in a world where people everywhere are living quarantined in their homes. Surely, cut off from each other in the grip of a global pandemic, we are all living *Rooms*.

This abrupt change in circumstances has forced an adaptation in our approach to *Rooms* that has required the company to rise to unique challenges to its directors, its dancers, and in how the performance will be presented.

Separated from one another, our rehearsals and theater dates cancelled, The Sokolow/Theatre Dance Ensemble has come together to create a virtual presentation of *Rooms*.

While the three directors-artistic director Samantha Géracht and associate artistic directors Eleanor Bunker and Lauren Naslund-rehearse the dancers and direct camera angles over Zoom, the responsibility of actual video recording has been taken on by the dancers themselves. They were ready for performance in the theatre, and now need to rethink, restage, light, film, and costume themselves with what they have access to where they are self-quarantined.

The recordings made by the dancers will be edited by Ms. Naslund into a full-length video version of *Rooms*, to be titled *Rooms2020*.

About the Artists

Samantha Geracht (Artistic Director) After performing with Anna Sokolow's Players' Project for eleven years, and as a founding member of Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble since 2004, Ms. Geracht was appointed artistic director of Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble in January of 2017. Ms. Geracht has toured and taught Sokolow internationally, and reconstructs Sokolow repertory on professional companies and in college and university dance programs. She has reconstructed Sokolow work at a variety of dance programs including The Boston Conservatory, Franklin and Marshall, Barnard College, Morris County Community College, Centre de Danse Nationale de Paris, Kanopy Dance company, Ellen Robbins Dance as well as worked with various soloists including Jennifer Conelly, Kim Jones, and Sandra Kaufman.

Ms. Geracht has also performed the Humphrey/Weidman repertory with Deborah Carr Theatre Dance Ensemble, and with Gail Corbin since 1993. She regularly works with Rae Ballard's Thoughts in Motion, and she has also performed with Jim May, as a guest artist with David Parker and The Bang Group as well as in her own choreography. In 2016 she choreographed Shadowbox Theatre's *The Earth and Me*, a climate change puppet/dance opera for school aged children. Ms.

Geracht has studied with and been mentored by Jim May, Betty Jones, and Fritz Ludin for the last 25 years. She holds an MFA from Montclair State University and a BS in dance from the University of Wisconsin, Madison and she spent three years in the professional studies program at the Nikolais/Louis dance lab. Ms. Geracht is involved in various projects to maintain the legacies of early American Modern Dance and is committed to making these early works more accessible both to new artists and audiences. She has often taught in the Professional Studies program at the Limon Institute, HB studios, and she is on the middle school arts faculty at the Hoboken Charter School.

Jim May (Founder and Director) Mr. May was a devoted disciple of Anna Sokolow for 35 years and co-artistic director of her dance company, Players' Project, since 1990. His aim as founder of the Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble was to expand the art of dance to include the other arts (music, theater, painting, literature), working toward a progressive new style of theater/dance.

Mr. May was a dancer on the New York scene for over 40 years, having also danced with the Limón Company under Jose Limón's direction and as a soloist under Carla Maxwell's direction, the Ruth Currier Company, and as a principal dancer with the Danny Lewis company. Mr. May embraced the distinct dance styles of both Ms. Sokolow and Mr. Limón. He won a 1996 Fulbright Scholarship to Mexico City to extend his studies of his two mentors and their roles in the "across the border" relationship between modern dance in the US and Mexico.

Mr. May has taught on the faculties of SUNY Purchase, Juilliard School of Music, and Princeton University, and was on the faculty of the Limón Institute for many years. In 1992 he received the Marcus Award for Teaching Excellence from Washington University. He taught extensively in Taiwan, where he founded the company Dance Forum Taipei, and in Mexico at Central de Investigacion Corografica. He has taught at many Universities and schools in Italy, France, Germany, Korea, Canada, South America, Switzerland and the United States, and was granted a Fulbright award to teach in Chile. His choreography has been in the repertoires of Dance Conduit, Dance Forum Taipei, Thoughts in Motion, and the Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble. He has danced on Broadway and was a member of the Eliot Feld Ballet Company. As a guest artist, he has performed works by Donald McKayle, Don Redlich, Murray Louis, Pauline Koner, and Kurt Jooss.

Mr. May received the 1999 Bessie Award for lifetime achievement, "for a sustained achievement over decades as dance's premiere leading man, an actor-dancer of extraordinary range and scope of character, in the living theater of Anna Sokolow."

Eleanor Bunker (Associate Artistic Director) holds degrees from Hartford College for Women and SUNY Empire State College. She began her modern and ballet training at the Hartford Ballet where she studied with Enid Lynn, Lisa Bradley, and Michael Uthoff. She was a soloist and rehearsal director for eleven years with Rondo Dance Theater, a repertory company which featured masterworks of the American Modern Dance genre under the artistic direction of Elizabeth Rockwell. She continues to perform the repertory of Isadora Duncan, and is the dance faculty at Dominican Academy in NYC. Eleanor was a member of Anna Sokolow's Players' Project for 14 years and has been a member of Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble since its founding. Eleanor reconstructs Anna Sokolow's repertory and directs rehearsals for the company and for schools and professional dancers. She also oversees costuming for the company.

Lauren Naslund (Associate Artistic Director) began her modern dance studies in Chicago with Frances Allis. She holds degrees in biology from the University of Chicago and Harvard. She danced in Cambridge, MA with the Performing Arts Ensemble and the Massachusetts Dance Ensemble and in New York with the theater/dance company Plath/Taucher Productions. She has performed the works of Charles Weidman and Doris Humphrey with Deborah Carr's Theatre Dance Ensemble, and under the direction of Gail Corbin. She also works with Rae Ballard's Thoughts in Motion and Andrew Jannetti & Dancers. She was a member of Anna Sokolow's Players' Project for 15 years and has been with Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble since its founding. Lauren reconstructs Anna Sokolow's repertory and directs rehearsals for the company and for schools and professional dancers.

Luis Gabriel Zaragoza was born in Mexico City. He received his BFA, Cum Laude, from the National School of Dance of Mexico (NSDM). He also has a BA in Philosophy, an MFA in Dance Education, and has specialized in Dance Philosophy. He has studied with Anna Sokolow, Jeff Duncan, Tim Wengerd, Jim May and Betty Jones, among others, and attended the Merce Cunningham Studio as a scholarship student. Gabriel was a teacher at the NSDM for eight years. He received the award of Best Dancer of the Year in 1990 Best Choreographed Solo (for Nijinsky, El Ojo de Dios) in 1999 from Asociación Danza Mexicana. In 1991, La Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico granted him the Artistic Creative Award. As a choreographer he has created over 64 works, which have been performed worldwide. He was a member of the Martha Graham Ensemble and has danced with several companies in France and Mexico. He was a member of Anna Sokolow's Players' Project for four years and a member of the Sokolow Theatre Dance Ensemble since its founding. Gabriel teaches company class and assists with rehearsals.

Margherita Tisato started studying dance in Italy at the age of 8. Her background is in Humphrey-Limon, contemporary, and dance-therapy. She counts in her roster of practices a variety of movement techniques including dance and yoga, Butoh, somatic movement, and recently the exploration of body suspension. Margherita moved to New York in 2006, and also works with Dances by Isadora, Francesca Todesco, and others. Margherita was a principal dancer with the Vangelina Theater from 2008 until 2017, and has presented her own work in New York and abroad. She is a teacher for the New York Butoh Institute and teaches butoh workshops internationally. Margherita lives in Brooklyn, teaching yoga and mindful movement in studios, jails and substance abuse recovery facilities and coaching individuals in finding embodiment and recovering from PTSD. Margherita has danced with Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble since 2008.

Erin Gottwald is from Stoneham, Massachusetts and received her formative training at the Boston Ballet School for 11 years. She holds a BA in Theater from Bates College and a BA Hons from the London Contemporary Dance School in London, England. In 2017, Erin celebrated her eighth season with The Bang Group's *Nut/Cracked* - her second as Rehearsal Director. Her ongoing collaboration with John Carrafa was named one of the Top 10 Dance Highlights of 2012 by the Boston Phoenix. She first performed with Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble in 2011.

Erika Langmeyer is from Seattle, Washington, and graduated cum laude with a BFA in Dance from the Honors College at George Mason University. Since moving to NYC, she has danced with Buglisi Dance Theatre, Rae Ballard's Thoughts in Motion Dance Company, The Moving Beauty Series, Kinetic Architecture, and Naganuma Dance. Ms. Langmeyer currently dances with TAKE Dance and has embarked on a production career, presenting "Anamnesis" at West End Theatre in 2018. She is a performer and the assistant rehearsal director with Shadow Box Theatre, and a founding member of Suzanne Ponomarenko Dance, with whom she traveled to Guatemala to teach at-risk youths through the "A Chance to Dance" program. Erika joined Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble in 2017.

Brad Orego originally hails from Buffalo, NY. He comes from a diverse background in sport, martial art, and dance. Brad's formal dance training began at the University of Rochester. After earning the University's first Minor in Dance, along with degrees in Computer Science and Psychology, in 2011, he moved to Madison, WI, where he has worked with Kanopy Dance Company since 2013. Brad moved to NYC and joined Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble in fall 2017.

Ilana Ruth Cohen is originally from Portland, Oregon where she grew up dancing in the rain. At Pomona College she studied dance, focusing on the work of historic modern choreographers. In addition, she studied chemistry with a focus on protein crystallography. Ilana is passionate about keeping historical works of modern dance alive through performance. Ilana joined Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble in 2018.

Sierra Powell, from Madison, WI, studied Graham, Hawkins, Limon, ballet, and more with Kanopy Dance Academy from the age of four and performed with Kanopy Dance Company from 2010-2016. After moving to New York, she performed with Graham 2 and graduated from the certificate program at the Martha Graham School in 2018. Sierra has performed lead and solo roles in the works of Martha Graham as well as works by many other modern and contemporary

choreographers. She has also extensively studied Bharatanatyam Indian dance and classical piano. Sierra joined Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble in 2018.

Samuel Humphreys received his initial training from Brynar Mehl, and then from Larry Ensign, Lori Belilove, the Gelsey Kirkland Ballet conservatory, and the Martha Graham School. He has performed in New York City with the Isadora Duncan Dance Company, Anabella Lenzu, Ballet for Young Audiences, and Shadow Box Theatre. He currently also dances with Dance Visions/NY. A long-time student of Jim May, Sam performed with the Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble in 2007 and 2008 and rejoined the company in 2019.

About Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble

The Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble was founded in 2004 to be the artistic repository of Anna Sokolow's repertory. The company's aim is to reconstruct and perform the Sokolow repertory, teach and coach her repertory on other professional companies, and make her works accessible for students ranging from middle school to college and pre-professional. The company also encourages contemporary choreographers interested in dance theater, through projects allowing them to choreograph on experienced Sokolow dancers. The multi-generational makeup of the company dancers, ranging in age from 25 through over 60, is unusually inclusive for a dance company, enhancing Ms. Sokolow's dances, which explore the depths of the human experience. Since 2004, the ensemble has reconstructed and performed over 20 of Ms. Sokolow's works. Several have been restaged from archival footage and original cast memory in order to recreate and preserve the legacy.

The aim of the Sokolow Theatre/Dance Ensemble is to present works from Sokolow's vast choreography that are relevant to the times we live in and touch the hearts of all people, everywhere, struggling with the universal issues of living despite differences in place and culture.

For more information, visit sokolowtheatredance.org.

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Schedule
June 25, 2020: 7:00pm

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