Friday, August 24, 2018

Variations on Themes from Lost and Found: Scenes from a Life and Other Works by John Bernd

Company: Ishmael Houston-Jones
Venue: Hudson Hall
Location: Hudson, NY

Part of LUMBERYARD's inaugural season of performances in the Hudson Valley:

In 1988, choreographer/dancer John Bernd died at age 35 of complications of AIDS. Bernd was a pivotal figure of the New York downtown dance scene of the early 1980s, and was one of the first people from the community to contract HIV (though the virus had yet to be identified). He created several solos, semi-autobiographical pieces, a duet—Live Boys, made in collaboration with his then-partner, Tim Miller—and three versions of an ensemble dance, Lost and Found: scenes from a life. Bernd's final piece was a duet, Two on the Loose, made and performed with choreographer Jennifer Monson just months before Bernd died on August 28, 1988.

Ishmael Houston-Jones originally created Variations on Themes from Lost and Found: Scenes from a Life and Other Works by John Bernd as part of Danspace Project's Platform 2016: Lost & Found, curated by Houston-Jones and informed by his memories of Bernd's work and the work of other New York dance makers who died during the first 15 years of the AIDS crisis. Houston-Jones and his collaborators use archives of Bernd's performances to produce a collage of work he made during the last years of his life, interrogating what the effects of that loss have had on work being made today. Variations is directed by Ishmael Houston-Jones in collaboration with Miguel Gutierrez, Jennifer Monson, and Nick Hallett, with performers Tony Carlson, Talya Epstein, Alvaro Gonzalez, Charles Gowin, Madison Krekel, Johnnie Cruise Mercer, and Alex Rodabaugh.

Choreographer and improviser Ishmael Houston-Jones, whose dance and text work has been performed throughout the world, is also an author, curator, and teacher whose practices have had significant impact on dance makers of multiple generations. Drawn to collaborations as a way to move beyond boundaries and the known, Houston-Jones celebrates the political aspect of cooperation. Almost never setting his choreography, he sees the dichotomy between improvisation and choreography as a false binary. An activist artist who makes provocative work that has examined and memorialized the impact of AIDS on numerous communities, he also supports—through curation and teaching—the production of challenging art created by queer artists and/or artists of color.

Ishmael Houston-Jones
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Schedule
August 24, 2018: 8:00pm