

Saturday, May 24, 2025

Vangeline Theater's MAN WOMAN announced as 2025 National Dance Project Finalist

Company: Vangeline Theater
Location: N/A, NY

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Vangeline Theater proudly announces that *Man Woman* has been chosen as a 2025 National Dance Project Finalist presented by New England Foundation for the Arts. *MAN WOMAN* is a duet about love articulated through the language of Butoh and is one of 40 collaborative, accessible, and provocative new dance projects to be awarded as a finalist. In July, the NDP Advisors will reconvene virtually to determine the 20 new dance projects that will receive an NDP Production Grant and the 20 new dance projects that will receive an NDP Finalist Award. To learn more visit <https://www.nefa.org/news/2025-national-dance-project-finalists>

MAN WOMAN is a 60-minute interdisciplinary Butoh duet about the search for intimacy and the complexities of human connection. Choreographed and performed by acclaimed Butoh artists Akihito Ichihara (Japan) and Vangeline (U.S.), the work draws inspiration from the seminal 1960 photo book *Man and Woman* by Japanese photographer Eikoh Hosoe, which featured Tatsumi Hijikata—the founder of Butoh—and his wife, Motofuji.

MAN WOMAN uses these black-and-white photographs—saturated with ink and emotion—as both structure and departure point. Rather than reproducing the past, the dancers pass through a sequence of iconic poses from the book without physical contact, generating dynamic tension through negative space. Through a sequence of intimate, ceremonial vignettes, the dancers orbit one another—shedding layers and enacting rituals. The choreography becomes a meditation on longing, desire, and connection—culminating in a single, final touch. The piece invites audiences into a visually rich, emotionally resonant space—one that transcends language and cultural boundaries.

In homage to the legacy of Butoh and its disruptive origins, this work resists conventional binaries—male/female, East/West. Ichihara brings the precision and gravitas of Sankai Juku's "classical" Butoh lineage, while Vangeline, informed by jazz, burlesque, and two decades of Butoh pedagogy and performance, brings contemporary nuance. Their collaboration is a rare cross-cultural encounter between two master practitioners at the height of their artistic maturity.

Central to the aesthetic of *MAN WOMAN* are the fantastical costumes by Machine Dazzle, a visionary queer artist whose work pushes the boundaries between performance, sculpture, and fashion. Machine's concept—"Butoh Maximalism"—challenges minimalist assumptions by enveloping the dancers in lush, campy, baroque textures. Imagine creatures from an otherworldly Versailles stumbling through a forest—half human, half mythical. As the piece progresses, layers of costume are gradually removed, revealing the iconic Butoh white underneath. This symbolic unveiling strips away artifice to reveal essence, mirroring the performers' emotional exposure.

The recorded score by Ray Barragan-Sweeten bridges centuries and sensibilities. Built from aleatoric compositions and re-sampled classical works (such as a reversed fragment of Bach), and drawing from the legacies of Pauline Oliveros and Elaine Summers, the music guides the dancers' internal states, emphasizing timbre over melody and creating a soundscape that moves between stillness and intensity.

MAN WOMAN not only redefines Butoh for the 21st century—it also reframes it. In a form historically dominated by Japanese male artists, this piece foregrounds collaboration, gender equity, and queer aesthetics, while honoring Butoh's roots in resistance and reinvention. It is also a challenge to ageism: choreographed and performed by artists in their 50s, it asserts that the peak of creative power does not reside in youth but in mastery, experience, and trust.

MAN WOMAN is a hybrid and visionary encounter. At its heart lies the question: how do we hold space for one another across distance, difference, and time? And in the tension of that space—across cultures, across disciplines, across bodies—we begin to find the answer.

Vangeline is a teacher, dancer, and choreographer specializing in Japanese Butoh. She is the artistic director of the Vangeline Theater/New York Butoh Institute (New York), a dance company firmly rooted in the tradition of Japanese butoh while carrying it into the twenty-first century. The Vangeline Theater/New York Butoh Institute is dedicated to advancing Butoh in the 21st century, with a particular emphasis on education, social justice, research, and archiving.

The Vangeline Theater/New York Butoh Institute reaches out to the New York and international community by offering public Butoh classes, workshops, and performances through collaborations with international and national Butoh artists. Our socially conscious performances tie together butoh and activism; our work addresses issues of gender inequality and social justice. Our yearly New York Butoh Institute Festival elevates the visibility of women in butoh, and our festival Queer Butoh gives a voice to LGBTQIA+ butoh artists.

Our award-winning, 18-year running program, The Dream a Dream Project, brings Butoh dance to incarcerated men and women at correctional facilities across New York State. "The Dream a Dream Project" contributes to the rehabilitation of New York's incarcerated population. Overall, our programs promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in the field of Butoh. <https://www.vangeline.com>

Akihito Ichihara is a Japanese Butoh dancer (Sankai Juku). Parallel to his work with Sankai Juku, he collaborates with various choreographers, directors, and dance groups worldwide and directs the group ELF. He is interested in creating and directing various dance projects that transcend borders, cultural differences, and styles of expression. Ichihara aims to develop a form of dance that promotes empathy and mutual respect. His goal is to do this worldwide, even between countries and cities that still bear the scars of war. He would like to contribute by acting as a bridge and connecting people across the borders despite their differences.

Machine Dazzle. Emmy Award winner. Beloved downtown bon vivant and all-around creative provocateur Machine Dazzle has been dazzling stages via costumes, sets, and performances since his arrival in New York in 1994. Machine designs intricate, unconventional wearable art pieces and bespoke installations. Machine Dazzle's work has been exhibited internationally. His first solo exhibition, Queer Maximalism x Machine Dazzle, was held at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York City in 2022. In April 2024, Machine received the TDF/Irene Sharaff Kitty Leech Ascending Artist Award in recognition for his success in the field of costume design. He was also awarded a 2024 EMMY for "Outstanding Costume Design for Variety, Nonfiction, or Reality Programming" for his work in the HBO documentary "Taylor Mac's 24 Decade History of Popular Music."

Ray Barragan-Sweeten is a visual artist & sound maker based in New York and Rhode Island. He has exhibited, performed, and screened works at Centre Pompidou, Parish Museum, City Center NY, Microscope Gallery, Next Festival at BAM, and Cica Museum, and has taught at Guggenheim Museum.

Vangeline Theater programs are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. This program was supported in parts by the Japan Foundation New York.

Vangeline Theater
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Schedule
May 24, 2025: 12:00am

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