

2018 NY DANCE AND PERFORMANCE AWARDS RECIPIENTS

Thursday, October 11, 2018

2018 NY Dance and Performance Awards Recipients

By The Bessies

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The night remained forever young at The New York Dance and Performance Awards, The Bessies, with live performances, videos, tearful and grinning thank you's, hugs and cheers for this year's award recipients, and a costume sashay thrown into the wild mix of celebration tonight, October 8, at NYU Skirball Center for the Performing Arts. Installation dance performances took place outside the theater, along with Simone Forti's Huddle. Ayodele Casel and Shernita Anderson hosted the Awards. A pre-ceremony cocktail party at NYU's Kimmel Center honored Deborah Sale and Ted Striggles with the 2018 Bessies Angel Award. Following the awards ceremony at NYU Skirball, the night of celebration continued with The Bessies After Party at the legendary Judson Memorial Church.

The evening at NYU Skirball began with New York Dance and Performance Awards Executive Director Lucy Sexton, Managing Director Heather Robles, and former Dance/NYC Director Lane Harwell welcoming the audience of over 800 dance community members. Kitty Lunn, Taylor Mac, Greg Miller, Jennifer Monson, Dean Moss, Dwana Smallwood, Dormeshia Sumbry-Edwards, Dr. Donald J. Rose and Eduardo Vilaro served as presenters. Opening the festive evening was an excerpt from Robert Battle's "Ella" by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, with additional performances by Pooh Kaye, and Mariana Valencia. A scrolling list of names in honor of those who passed away during the past year was projected and read by Sylvia Waters, who also spoke about Arthur Mitchell and Donald McKayle while Peter Born, Umechi Born, David Thomson and Okwui Okpokwasili chanted "A Song for Sam", created by Okpokwasili in honor of Sam Miller. A short video of Paul Taylor was shown following the chant.

The 2018 Bessie Awarded artists are as follows: for Outstanding Performer, Courtney Cook for Sustained achievement with Urban Bush Women, Maria Bauman, and Marguerite Hemmings, Germaine Acogny in Mon élue noire (My Black Chosen One): Sacre #2 by Olivier Dubois at BAM Fisher, Elizabeth DeMent in 17C by Big Dance Theater at BAM Harvey, and Sara Mearns for Sustained Achievement in the work of New York City Ballet, Isadora Duncan, Jodi Melnick, Wang Ramirez and Matthew Bourne. For Outstanding Visual Design, Mimi Lien, Peiyi Wong, Tuçe Yasak, Meena Murugesan, and Richard Forté for Memoirs of a... Unicorn by Marjani Forté-Saunders presented by New York Live Arts at Collapsible Hole. For Outstanding Music Composition or Sound Design, Jeremy Toussaint-Baptiste for Sustained achievement in music composition with choreographers Jaamil Olowale Kosoko, Jonathan Gonzalez, André M. Zachery/Renegade Performance Group, and Will Rawls. For Outstanding Revival, 40th Anniversary Retrospective by Jane Comfort & Company at La MaMa. For Outstanding Production, Geoff Sobelle for HOME at BAM Harvey, David Thomson for he his own mythical beast at Performance Space New York; Marjani Forté-Saunders for Memoirs of a... Unicorn presented by New York Live Arts at Collapsible Hole, Nami Yamamoto for Headless Wolf at Roulette. Service to the Field of Dance to Marya Warshaw. Lifetime Achievement in Dance to Simone Forti.

Nominees and awardees alike in the categories of Outstanding Production, Outstanding Performer, Outstanding Revival, Outstanding Music Composition or Sound Design, Outstanding Visual Design, and Outstanding 'Breakout' Choreographer will receive a \$500 gift made possible by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

ABOUT THE BESSIES

The Bessies were established by David R. White in 1984 at Dance Theater workshop to recognize outstanding work in choreography, performance, music composition and visual design. Nominees are chosen by a Selection Committee comprised of artists, presenters, producers, and writers, which this year is comprised of Ronald Alexander, Elise Bernhardt, Diana Byer, Tymberly Canale, Alexis Convento, Leah Cox, Parijat Desai, Maura Donohue, Boo Froebel, Angela Fatou Gittens, Diane Grumet, Brinda Guha, Joseph Hall, Irel?ne Hultman, Celia Ipiotis, Koosil-ja, Matthew Lopez, Matthew Lyons, Lydia Mokdessi, Harold Norris, Craig Peterson, Doug Post, Rajika Puri, Susan Reiter, Ali Rosa Salas, Walter Rutledge, George Emilio Sanchez, Andrea Snyder, Carrie Stern, Risa Steinberg, Sally Sommer, Kay Takeda, Catherine Tharin, Muna Tseng, Eleanor K. Wallace, Martin Wechsler, Adrienne Westwood, and William Whitener.

Responsible for setting policy and providing ongoing oversight, the 2018 Bessies Steering Committee is comprised of Cora Cahan, Beverly D'Anne, Lane Harwell, Jeanne Linnes, Stanford Makishi, Nicky Paraiso, Carla Peterson, Paz Tanjuaquio, Laurie Uprichard, and Sylvia Waters.

CITATIONS FOR RECIPIENTS OF 2018 BESSIE AWARDS

2018 BESSIE JURIED AWARD

Presented in July 2018

Kyle Marshall

For exploring important ideas around race and sexuality in dances that embody rather than illustrate complicated issues. For drawing on a variety of movement styles to create accomplished, witty, and immensely engaging choreography.

OUTSTANDING 'BREAKOUT' CHOREOGRAPHER

Presented in July 2018

Mariana Valencia

For seamlessly blending ethnography, memoir, and observation of cross-cultural identities in choreography that engages from start to finish. For a unique vision that uses humor and sadness, reality and imagination, to push dance and performance into new territory.

2018 BESSIES ANGEL AWARD

Deborah Sale and Ted Striggles

For a lifelong commitment to supporting dance

For working to better the lives of dance artists on and off the stage

For warmly gathering and connecting the dance-making community across decades

OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

Courtney Cook

For bringing a powerhouse presence and a soulful strength to every performance

A riveting performer of searing vocal work and sensuous explosive movement, who brings her rich range of dance forms and unique theatrical power to the work of Urban Bush Women, Maria Bauman and Marguerite Hemmings.

Germaine Acogny

For her fierce, fearless embrace of the "sacrificial one" in a reimagined Rite of Spring created especially for her. No longer doomed, she performs a powerful solo celebrating her heritages in dance, and women, and black women dancing.

in Mon élue noire (My Black Chosen One): Sacre #2 by Olivier Dubois at BAM Fisher

Elizabeth Dement

For her cool, intelligent presence, exquisite dancing, and ability to move seamlessly between spoken text and virtuosic dance. For a brilliantly nuanced performance, comic and serious and continuously captivating as a 17th century woman and the narrator of the piece.

in 17C by Big Dance Theater

BAM Harvey

Sara Mearns

Sustained Achievement in the work of New York City Ballet, Isadora Duncan, Jodi Melnick, Wang Ramirez and Matthew Bourne

For her work as a mesmerizing ballet dancer and insatiable dance explorer, known for consummate musicality, imagination, and theatricality.

For an extraordinary season in which she boldly immersed herself in work by masters of hip hop, classic modern, experimental post modern, and theater ballet.

OUTSTANDING PRODUCTION

David Thomson for he his own mythical beast

Performance Space New York

For demolishing the idea of a 'neutral' body in a revelatory excavation of his own mythological identity as a dancer, performer, artist, man, person.

For the team creation of an inexhaustible, ecstatic, sweaty swirl of voice and movement addressing race, gender, and the many selves contained within a body.

Geoff Sobelle for HOME

BAM Harvey

For exploring and exploding the relationship between house and home.

For collaborating with a brilliant team using dance, illusion, live music, scenic engineering and audience interaction to create a moving, poignant and zany theatrical work.

Nami Yamamoto for Headless Wolf

Roulette

For an entertaining and profound journey through the range of human experience.

For interweaving five distinctive performers, a puppet, and yards of paper into a total work of theater, a contemplation of birth and death and all in between.

Marjani Forté-Saunders for Memoirs of a . . . Unicorn

Presented by New York Live Arts at Collapsible Hole

For an installation and performance that digs underground to mine memory and mythology

For conjuring family, friends, and ancestors as she navigates a magical landscape, weaving intersecting tales into a collective memoir.

OUTSTANDING REVIVAL

40th Anniversary Retrospective

by Jane Comfort & Company

La MaMa

For a program highlighting four decades of illuminating work delving into politics, family, friendship, and pure dancing.

For a pivotal exploration of language, music and movement in pieces addressing social issues in ways that continue to have impact in the current moment.

OUTSTANDING SOUND DESIGN OR MUSIC COMPOSITION

Jeremy Toussaint-Baptiste

For mobilizing the technologies of the age to conjure new worlds.

For bringing forth hidden languages and primal presences via layered soundscapes in his own work and in collaborations with Jaamil Olowale Kosoko, André M. Zachery/Renegade Performance Group, Jonathan Gonzalez, and Will Rawls.

OUTSTANDING VISUAL DESIGN

Mimi Lien (set), Meena Murugesan (media), Peiyi Wong (installation), Tuçe Yasak (lighting), and Richard Forté (set construction)

Memoirs of a . . . Unicorn by Marjani Forté-Saunders

Presented by New York Live Arts at Collapsible Hole

For creating a mythical, multi-sensory and immersive design in the industrial basement space of Collapsible Hole.

For beautifully integrating all the visual elements in a way that heightened the emotional impact of the choreographer's journey through time and memory.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT IN DANCE

Simone Forti

For her revolutionary, fearless, and widely influential approach to movement, pushing the boundaries of what dance could be—in her dance constructions and improvised work.

For years of investigation into the human body in motion, finding poetry in gravitational forces, the movement of animals, and the natural world.

SERVICE TO THE FIELD OF DANCE

Marya Warshaw

For her visionary work at the Brooklyn Arts Exchange creating a space for choreographers of all identities and backgrounds, and for students of all ages and incomes.

For finding new and comprehensive ways to support the long process of creation through pioneering residencies and by fostering of a true home for dance artists and innovators.

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