THE LIVING WORD PROJECT
/peh-LO-tah/

FRI—SAT
NOV 18—19
8PM

SUN
NOV 20
5PM

YBCA THEATER

YBCA.ORG
#PEHLOTAH

Produced by:

YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS
When Marc Bamuthi Joseph first told me about /peh-LO-tah/, he didn’t start by describing a multidisciplinary performance project. Instead, he described the moments in his own life when he feels free – weightless, without race, incredibly alive. He talked about feeling this freedom when dancing and also right at the moment that his own body, positioned just perfectly, slices the soccer ball past the goalie and lands it squarely in the net.

The feeling of freedom . . .

Bamuthi’s work – from Youth Speaks and the Living Word Project to his organizational home at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts – has certainly been about creating these moments not just for himself but also for all of us. No matter which role he is playing – educator, curator, poet, or performer - he is building an ecosystem and he is “freeing” us to ask the questions, turn over the stones, confront the demons, imagine the possibilities.

/peh-LO-tah/ centers on the question what does freedom feel like? At the same time, YBCA – through the YBCA Fellows program – is asking the related question can we design freedom? This is not convenient or coincidental rather it is an intentional effort to bring creative people of all kinds together in pursuit of interrogation that will lead to cultural shift.

At the time of this writing, we don’t know who will win the national election but we do know that, regardless, we are a perilously divided country and that fewer and fewer people live a life that is free – free from fear of violence, free from worrying about where the next meal will come from, free from the tyranny of racism, free from the unending fear that our babies will not survive the day. At YBCA, we follow the artists who pave the way, the ones who inspire us to confront what is wrong and imagine and reach for what is right.

On behalf of YBCA, I am immensely proud to bring the very first performances of /peh-LO-tah/ to San Francisco and to the world.

Warmly,

DEBORAH CULLINAN
CEO of YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

/peh-LO-tah/
A FUTBOL-FRAMED FREEDOM SUITE...
CONCEIVED AND WRITTEN BY MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH
DEVELOPED WITH AND DIRECTED BY MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS
CHOREOGRAPHY BY STACEY PRINTZ
Produced by MAPP International Productions

Photography and film: Joan Osato
Production manager: Josh Johnson
Stage management: Amanda Novoa

Performed by The Living Word Project: Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Amara Tabor-Smith, Tommy Shepherd, Traci Tolmaire, and Yaw Agyeman

The company wishes to thank our ancestors, our families, and our professional colleagues for their inspiration and support. The author wishes to thank Christine Marie, Paul Turbiak, Catherine Adell, Brittney Leeanne Williams, Corrie Besse, and TaiRecka Glover for their work on the development of this project. Much love to Erik Mayo for your unbridled support and facilitation, and to Deborah Cullinan and the staff of YBCA for your understanding and permission.

This piece is dedicated to Diana Cohn, a beacon of belief on our path, without whom this work quite literally could not have been made.
remains an enduring and captivating work. It has been performed on the West Coast and across the United States, and has received critical acclaim and community engagement. Joseph's dedication to breakdancing as a platform for social change has been widely recognized, and he has been honored with prestigious awards and fellowships.

**MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH**

MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH is an inaugural recipient of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship, the winner of the 2011 Alpert Award in Theater, and an inaugural recipient of the Doris Duke Performing Artist Award. He has served as an advisor and panelist for the Rockefeller MAP Fund, the PEW Charitable Trust, and the Zellerbach Family Fund, among other national philanthropies. He is the founding program director of the exemplary nonprofit Youth Speaks, and a cofounder of Life Is Living, a national series of one-day festivals designed to activate under-resourced parks through hip-hop arts and focused environmental actions. Joseph recently premiered the Creative Time commission Black Joy in the Hour of Chaos in New York’s Central Park, and is currently completing a new work with Bill T. Jones for the Philadelphia Opera. He is Chief of Program and Pedagogy at YBCA. His evening-length piece /peh-LO-tah/ has been commissioned by the Kennedy Center, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and the Guggenheim Museum.

**MICHAEL JOHN GARCÉS** previously collaborated with Marc Bamuthi Joseph on red, black and GREEN (a blues) and the break/s. His directing credits in San Francisco include Wrestling Jerusalem by Aaron Davidman (Intersection for the Arts) and The Box by Sarah Shourd (Z Space). He is the artistic director of Cornerstone Theater in Los Angeles, where he recently directed Urban Rez by Larissa FastHorse and California: The Tempest by Alison Carey. Other recent credits include District Merchants by Aaron Posner at the Folger Theatre in Washington, DC, and Seven Spots on the Sun by Martin Zimmerman at the Theatre @ Boston Court. He is a member of the Woolly Mammoth Theater Company.

**STACEY PRINTZ**, artistic director of Printz Dance Project, is a Bay Area–based choreographer, dancer, and educator. She graduated cum laude from the University of California, Irvine, with degrees in sociology and dance, and she teaches for ACT’s MFA program and at Alonzo King’s LINES Dance Center, where she has been on the faculty for fifteen years. She has also taught her hybrid contemporary-jazz technique across the United States and annually in Europe. Her company has performed in San Francisco for fifteen years, and has toured across the country and internationally in Russia, Lithuania, Ireland, the Virgin Islands, and Mexico. Her show Hover Space inspired one reviewer to say, “With a talented cast, unique concept and inventive movement, Hover Space is a slam dunk.” Printz has also choreographed Aaron Davidman’s Wrestling Jerusalem, Sarah Shourd’s The Box, and Marc Bamuthi Joseph’s internationally recognized works Scourge, the break/s, and red, black and GREEN (a blues). Printzdance.org

**DAVID SZLASA** is a media, video, and public art designer. His work spans performance, video, public art, and social practice. He is a recipient of the Gerdobe Award, a Kenneth Rainin Foundation NEW Program grant, a CCI Investing in Artists grant, a Future Aesthetics Artist Award, a Zellerbach grant, a Light Artists in Dance Award, a CASH grant, a Siff grant, and commissions from the National Science Foundation / UC Berkeley, Triangle Lab, the Contemporary Jewish Museum, 3200 Stories, the San Francisco Arts Commission, and YBCA. Szlasa holds a BFA in theater from NYU Tisch School of the Arts and an MA in integrations of new media and performance from NYU Gallatin School of Interdisciplinary Studies. His work has been presented worldwide in galleries, theaters, and public spaces. His collaborators include Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Sara Shelton Mann, Joanna Haigood, Dihee Lee, Yuri Zhukov, Hope Mohr, Bill Shannon, Rennie Harris, Deb Margolin, Myra Meiford, and others.

**TOM ONTIVEROS** designs with light and projection for theater, dance, and live music. His design for Completeness was nominated for best lighting design (2014) by the Los Angeles Ticketholders Awards. Other recent work includes Happy Days with Brooke Adams and Tony Shaloub (2014 Ticketholders Awards, Top 10 Revival Productions) and jFigaro! (90210) for the LA Opera. Ontiveros collaborated with Bob Balaban on the New York premiere of The Exonerated (2003 Lucille Lortel and
Drama Desk Awards for unique theatrical experience and the Outer Critics Circle Award for outstanding off-Broadway play). He is a three-time recipient of the Dean Goodman Award for lighting design and was featured in San Francisco's Callboard magazine. He designed the lighting for the inaugural Tune-in Festival at the Park Avenue Armory in New York, curated by Eighth Blackbird Ensemble and featuring Bora Yoon, Paul Haas, Paul Fowler, Newspeak, Red Fish Blue Fish, John Luther Adams, the Argento Chamber Ensemble, and others. He is an assistant professor of lighting design at the University of Southern California.

ROBERT KAPLOWITZ has spent the last twenty-four years designing sound and composing, and has been honored with an Obie Award for sustained excellence and a Tony Award for Fela! A Philadelphian since 2010, he has designed there for PlayPenn, the Wilma, Interact, the Arden, Lucidity Suitcase, Pig Iron, the Lantern, PTC, and others; other regional credits include the Guthrie, the Alley, Sundance, the O'Neill, and the National Theatre of England. Previous work with Michael John Garcés includes The Body of an American at the Wilma in Philadelphia and Light Raise the Roof at NYT in New York. In New York, his work has been heard on Broadway as well as at Lincoln Center, the Public, NYT, MCC, Second Stage, the Vineyard, MTC, and just about every ninety-nine-seat and smaller venue in that city.

TOMMY SHEPHERD is an actor, playwright, composer, educator, rapper, drummer, and beatboxer. He is a cofounder of the live hip-hop collective Felonious, a resident company at Intersection for the Arts; Shepherd created the original music and performed in their recent project Babylon Is Burning. He is a longtime member of the performance groups Campo Santo (a Parents Choice Award–winning educational hip-hop group), Alphabet Rockers, and Oakland’s own Antique Naked Soul. Shepherd has performed and toured internationally with Marc Bamuthi Joseph, collaborating on Scourge, the break/s, Spoken World, and red, black and GREEN (a blues).

MEGHAN HEALEY is a designer based in New York who specializes in new plays and experimental work. Her most recent work includes costumes for José Rivera’s adaptation of The Maids (One-Eighth Theater / INTAR), The Body of an American (Wilma Theater), WE ARE PROUD... (Woolly Mammoth Theater), costumes for URBAN
A DANCE ABOUT THE ECONOMY, CHOREOGRAPHED TO THE RHYTHM OF THE BEAUTIFUL GAME.

MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH
CREATOR OF /peh-LO-tah/

Photo by Jon Lowenstein
REZ, and Love on San Pedro, and scenery for Plumas Negras, all for Cornerstone Theater Company, and costumes created for plays in northeast for Enchanted, a dance tribute for the opening of the Native Plants Garden at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (Delirious Dances). She received her MFA in design from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, and teaches costume and scenic design at Queens College CUNY, where she is chair of the Department of Drama, Theater, and Dance.

JOAN OSATO is the producing director of Campo Santo and the Living Word Project in San Francisco. She is the visual designer for Tree City Legends by Dennis Kim, The River by Richard Montoya, and Alleluia, the Road by Luis Alfaro. She has designed for Berkeley Repertory Theatre (Tribes) by Nina Raine, directed by Jonathan Moscone for which she won a Theater Bay Area Award in video design. She has produced the new plays Chasing Mehersele by Chinaka Hodge and H.O.M.E. by Star Finch. Her current projects include Reflections of Hurricane with the muralist Brett Cook and Life Is Living, a nationwide community development project. She is a MAP Fund recipient (2013 and 2014), an inaugural recipient of the SFAC Artists and Communities Partnership grant, and a recipient of Surdna Foundation’s Artists Engaging in Social Change Award (2015).

JOSH JOHNSON is a technical artist who uses all the tools of our time to support the emotional expressions of theater artists. He has engineered performances in airplane hangars and train stations, toured with shows to thirty-five countries, and worked with such notables as Robert Wilson, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Robert Rauschenberg, and the Flying Karamazov Brothers. A highlight of his career was the years spent as resident lighting designer for Merce Cunningham, who taught him how to see again. Johnson loves being the bridge between concept and reality, empowering artists to realize their visions through whatever means necessary.

AMANDA NOVOA holds an MFA in stage design and costume design from the University of California, Irvine. She has worked with Cornerstone Theater Company, Center Theatre Group, El Teatro Campesino, NBC-Universal, South Coast Repertory, and the Para performance house. Novoa is most passionate about community-engaged productions and new works that share previously untold stories.

AMARA TABOR-SMITH is an Oakland-based performer and choreographer who has performed in the works of such choreographers as Ed Mock, Joanna Haigood, Ronald K. Brown, Adia Tamar Whitaker, and Faustina Linyekula. She is the former associate artistic director and dancer with Urban Bush Women. She has performed in the works of the theater artists Anna Deavere Smith and Aya de Leon, and in Marc Bamuthi Joseph's Scourge. Tabor-Smith is the artistic director of Deep Waters Dance Theater, and she currently teaches dance in the Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of California, Berkeley. deepwatersdance.com

TRACI TOLMAIRE is an actor, dancer, singer, and choreographer from Chicago. Her credits include The High Priestess of Dark Alley (Le Petit Theatre), Cherchez la Femme (La MaMa ETC), Dancing on Eggshells (Billie Holiday Theatre), Black Joy in the Hour of Chaos (Creative Time), The Circle Unbroken Is a Hard Bop (651 Arts / MAPP International Productions), red, black and GREEN (a blues) (MAPP International Productions / Living Word Project), Plenty of Time (New Federal Theatre), Mirrors in Every Corner (Intersection for the Arts / Campo Santo), Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat (Fulton Opera House), and Trouble in Mind (Actor's Express). Her choreography credits include Gee's Bend (Hartford Stage), Rejoicel, a holiday musical (Lorraine Hansberry Theatre), and Dancing on Eggshells. tracitolmaire.com

YAW AGYEMAN has toured in the play red, black and GREEN (a blues) (MAPP International Productions / Living Word Project) and performed in the world premiere of the musical Mister Chickee's Funny Money (Chicago Children's Theater), the latter featuring music from the Motown great Lamont Dozier. He has been featured on VH1’s Soul Cities, a show produced by Nelson George that showcases singers in cities all over the country, as well as on the Africa Channel’s Soundtracks at Red Kiva, a program that focuses on artists of African descent. Currently he is a member of the artistic collaboration Black Monks of Mississippi, headed by the dynamic and prolific Theaster Gates. In addition to performing in /peh-LO-tah/., Agyeman wrote and composed the song “No Looking Back” which is performed by the ensemble.

MAPP INTERNATIONAL PRODUCTIONS is a nonprofit producer of major performing arts projects that raise critical consciousness and spark social change. We support all phases of an artist's creative process, from concept and production to premiere and touring, while also engaging audiences in the issues behind the art. Through this heightened focus, we support an evolving and elite cadre of creators whose work ignites communities worldwide. mappinternational.org

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