



Black Dance Stories Presents All-New Episodes Featuring
Robert Garland & Tendayi Kuumba (Apr 8),
Amy Hall Garner & Amaniyea Payne (Apr 15),
NIC Kay & Alice Sheppard (Apr 22),
Christal Brown & Edisa Weeks (Apr 29)
Thursdays at 6pm EST

View Tonight's Episode Live on [YouTube](#) at 6pm EST

Robert Battle and Angie Pittman Episode [Available Now](#)

(Brooklyn, NY/ March 8, 2021) – Black Dance Stories will present new episodes in April featuring Black dancers, choreographers, movement artists, and creatives who use their work to raise societal issues and strengthen their community. This month the dance series brings together **Robert Garland & Tendayi Kuumba (Apr 8)**, **Amy Hall Garner & Amaniyea Payne (Apr 15)**, **NIC Kay & Alice Sheppard (Apr 22)**, **Christal Brown & Edisa Weeks (Apr 29)**, and **Robert Battle & Angie Pittman (Apr 1)**.

The incomparable Robert Garland (Dance Theatre of Harlem) and renaissance woman Tendayi Kuumba (*American Utopia*) will be guests on an all-new episode of Black Dance Stories tonight, Thursday, April 8 at 6pm EST. Link [here](#).

Robert Battle, artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and Angie Pittman, Bessie award-winning dancer, joined the Black Dance Stories community on April 1. In the episode, they talk about [\(and sing\)](#) their favorite hymns, growing up in the church, and the importance of being kind. During the episode, Pittman has a full-circle moment when she shared with Battle her memory of meeting him for the first time and being introduced to his work a decade ago. [View April 1st episode here](#).

Conceived and co-created by performer, producer, and dance writer Charmaine Warren, the weekly discussion series showcases and initiates conversations with Black creatives that explore social, historical, and personal issues and highlight the African Diaspora's humanity in the mysterious and celebrated dance world. Black Dance Stories is presented in association with 651 ARTS. The series streams live on [YouTube](#) Thursdays at 6 pm EST.

Black Dance Stories Upcoming Live Episodes

Thursdays at 6 pm EST

- April 1, 2021 | Robert Battle & Angie Pittman
- April 8, 2021 | Robert Garland & Tendai Kuumba
- April 15, 2021 | Amy Hall Garner & Amaniyea Payne
- April 22, 2021 | NIC Kay & Alice Sheppard
- April 29, 2021 | Christal Brown & Edisa Weeks

In January 2021, Black Dance Stories and 651 ARTS announced their partnership to co-present the series for the Spring 2021 season. The new partnership reflects Black Dance Stories' commitment to support, uphold, highlight, and celebrate Black creatives and mark the first time 651 presents an online series as part of its suite of programming. For more information, visit Black Dance Stories website for more information www.blackdancestories.org

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Please consider donating to *Black Dance Stories* in support of this free virtual program. Venmo your contribution to @BlackDanceStories.

Note to Editor

Robert Battle became artistic director of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in July 2011 after being personally selected by Judith Jamison, making him only the third person to head the Company since it was founded in 1958. Mr. Battle has a long-standing association with the Ailey organization. A frequent choreographer and artist-in-residence at Ailey since 1999, he has set many of his works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ailey II, and at The Ailey School. The Company's repertory includes his ballets *Ella*, *Juba*, *The Hunt*, *In/Side*, *No Longer Silent*, and *Mass*.

In addition to expanding the Ailey repertory with works by artists as diverse as Kyle Abraham, Aszure Barton, Ronald K. Brown, Christopher Wheeldon, Rennie Harris, Hofesh Schechter, Jiří Kylián, Wayne McGregor, Robert Moses, Ohad Naharin, and Paul Taylor, Mr. Battle has also instituted the *New Directions Choreography Lab* to help develop the next generation of choreographers. Mr. Battle's journey to the top of the modern dance world began in the Liberty City neighborhood of Miami, Florida. He showed artistic talent early and studied dance at a high school arts magnet program before moving on to Miami's New World School of the Arts, under the direction of Daniel Lewis and Gerri Houlihan, and finally to the dance program at The Juilliard School, under the direction of Benjamin Harkarvy, where he met his mentor, Carolyn Adams. He danced with the Parsons Dance Company from 1994 to 2001, and also set his choreography on that company starting in 1998. Mr. Battle then founded his own Battleworks Dance Company, which made its debut in 2002 in Düsseldorf, Germany, as the U.S. representative to the World Dance Alliance's Global Assembly. Battleworks subsequently performed extensively at venues including The Joyce Theater, Dance Theater Workshop, American Dance Festival, and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Mr. Battle was honored as one of the "Masters of African-American Choreography" by the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2005, and he received the prestigious Statue Award from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA in 2007. In 2014, he received an honorary doctorate from the University of the Arts and visited the White House to accept from President Obama, on behalf of Alvin Ailey, the National Medal of Freedom – the nation's highest civilian honor. Mr. Battle was named a 2015 Visiting Fellow for The Art of Change, an initiative by the Ford Foundation. In October 2015, Simon & Schuster published *MY STORY, MY DANCE: Robert Battle's Journey to Alvin Ailey*, an inspiring children's book based on Mr. Battle's life. He is a sought-after keynote speaker and has addressed a number of high-profile

organizations, including the United Nations Leaders Programme and the UNICEF Senior Leadership Development Programme.

Angie Pittman is a New York based Bessie award-winning dance artist, dance maker, and dance educator. Her choreographic work has been performed at The Kitchen, Gibney Dance, BAAD! (BlaktinX Performance Series), Movement Research at Judson Church, Triskelion Arts, STooPS, The Domestic Performance Agency, The KnockDown Center(Sunday Service), The Invisible Dog(Catch 73), and Danspace Project (Food for Thought 2017, Draftworks, Platform 2018, A Shared Evening of New Work 2019). Angie has had the pleasure of dancing in work by MBDance, Ralph Lemon, Tere O'Connor, Cynthia Oliver, Anna Sperber, Donna Uchizono Company, Jennifer Monson, Kim Brandt, Tess Dworman, Antonio Ramos and many others. Angie has also been able to create collaboratively with Jasmine Hearn, Jonathan Gonzalez, Athena Kokoronis, and Anita Mullin. She holds a MFA in Dance and Choreography with a graduate minor in African American Studies, and is a M'Singha Wuti certified teacher of the Umfundalai technique. Angie is a founding member of Skeleton Architecture, a vessel of Black womyn and gender nonconforming artists rooted in the rigor and power of the collective in practice. Angie's work resides in a space that investigates how the body moves through ballad, groove, sparkle, spirit, spirituals, ancestry, vulnerability, and power.

Robert Garland was a member of the Dance Theatre of Harlem Company achieving the rank of principal dancer. After creating a work for the DTH School Ensemble, Arthur Mitchell invited Robert Garland to create a work for The Dance Theatre of Harlem Company and appointed him the organization's first Resident Choreographer. He was also Director of the Professional Training Program of the DTH school, and the organization's webmaster. In addition to choreographing several ballets for DTH, Mr. Garland has also created works for New York City Ballet, Britain's Royal Ballet, Oakland Ballet and many others. His commercial work has included music videos, commercials and short films, including the children's television show Sesame Street, a Nike commercial featuring New York Yankee Derek Jeter, the NAACP Image Awards, a short film for designer Donna Karan, and the "Charmin Cha-Cha" for Proctor and Gamble. Mr. Garland holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from the Juilliard School in New York City. Mr. Garland is currently the Dance Theatre of Harlem School Director as well.

Graduate of Spelman College w/ a BA in Drama & Dance, **Tendayi Kuumba** is an international singer/dancer & performer in Brooklyn, NY by way of Atlanta, GA. A Creator and collaborator, she has produced various works of movement and sound under the alias UfflyMothership, with partner Greg Purnell since 2018, including recent visual/sonic album U.F.O "The Mixtape." Platforms for choreography include Dancespace, Harlem Stage *E-Moves*, Czech Center of New York, Hi-ARTS, Park Armory *100 Years / 100 Women*, & Dance Mission Theaters' *D.I.R.T. Festival "Harriets Gun."* Tendayi is a BOLD Facilitator and former touring company member of Urban Bush Women as well as FLUXX w/ former collaborator Courtney Cook. Currently a performer of Ase Dance Theater Collective, she recently made her debut in David Byrne's American Utopia on Broadway and HBO special Directed by Spike Lee. Kuumba has embodied works of Marjani Forte'-Saunders, Nathan Trice/ Rituals Performance Project "StrangeLove", the Illustrious Blacks, Jim Findlay's "Electric Lucifer" workshop & Philadelphia Operas' "We Shall Not be Moved" directed by Bill T. Jones. Diving deeper into her teaching pedagogy, Tendayi explores movement meditations and sonic portals, specifically mapping how sound and vocalizing invokes memory and spiritual conjuring through the body. She gives thanks and blessings for life, love, breath, and the pursuit of happiness through creativity.

Amy Hall Garner is a native of Huntsville, Alabama, and a graduate of The Juilliard School. Her work has been praised internationally and commissioned by Ailey II, ABT Studio Company, Collage Dance Collective, The Juilliard School, The Ailey School, Barnard College, The University of the Arts, Columbia Ballet Collaborative, Point Park University, and Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet. Recently, she has received virtual commissions from BalletX, Dance Theatre of Harlem, the Guggenheim Museum's Works

& Process Digital Series, ABT Studio Company, Boulder Ballet and a virtual collaboration between Miami City Ballet and Paul Taylor American Modern Dance. She personally coached Grammy Award winner Beyoncé, providing additional choreography for The Mrs. Carter Show World Tour. Theatrical choreography credits include: The Color Purple (Milwaukee Repertory Theater) and Invisible Thread, associate choreographer (Second Stage Theater, NYC). In 2018, she was selected to participate in Alvin Ailey's New Directions Choreography Lab supported by the Ford Foundation. Garner was one of the first recipients of the Joffrey Ballet's Choreography of Color Award (now titled Winning Works). She is an adjunct professor at New York University's New Studio on Broadway at Tisch School of the Arts. Currently, Ms. Garner is a Virginia B. Toulmin Fellow at The Center for Ballet and the Arts.

Amaniyea (Pamela) Payne for over fifty years have built an impressive career and is a viable artistic force in the field of dance and is recognized for her many talents in the global dance communities as dancer, singer, consultant, researcher, director, mentor, producer, choreographer, arts educator, costume designer, healer and humanitarian. Known to many in the African Dance genre as a "National Treasure", Amaniyea have been the recipient of many awards, which speaks to her career achievements. As an artist extraordinaire, her style of dance evolves from natural rhythmic movements based and influenced by dances and cultures of the African Diasporas.

She has studied/trained, performed and toured globally with prominent companies and well-known music and dance legends, such as Stevie Wonder, Cab Calloway, Ben Harper, Bunny Wailers, Lindy-hop innovators Norma Miller, Frankie Manning, Momma Lou Parks, Mickey Davidson and Muntu Dance Theatre of Chicago to name a few. In her long-life learning pursuits Ms. Payne have collaborated with artists and organizations in the field of education, mentorship, cultural and performing arts throughout the Diasporas, focusing on finding new ways to translate dance for the stage while also preserving and respecting traditional parameters for performance.

Having a deep sense of responsibility to honor the legacy of great expressions of dance, Amaniyea respectfully continues to provide uplifting cultural initiatives to various communities including youth, teens and adults that aids in the development of the future generations of dancers/artists who will carry the aesthetic and spiritual base of African Centered Movements as it relates to World Dance.

NIC Kay is from the Bronx. They currently reside in New York. NIC is a performer and conceptual choreographer. They are a person who makes performances and creates and organizes performative spaces. NIC Kay began their career as an actor and performer working with playwrights, choreographers, designers, and conceptual artists. NIC's studio practice choreographically highlights and meditates on Black life in relationship to space, social structures, and architecture through centering embodied practices.

Alice Sheppard took her first dance class in order to make good on a dare; she loved moving so much that she resigned her academic professorship in order to begin a career in dance. She studied ballet and modern with Kitty Lunn and made her debut with Infinity Dance Theater. After an apprenticeship, Alice joined AXIS Dance Company where she toured nationally and taught in the company's education and outreach programs.

Since becoming an independent artist, Alice has danced in projects with Ballet Cymru, GDance, and Marc Brew in the United Kingdom. In the United States, she has worked with Full Radius Dance, Marjani Forté, MBDance, Infinity Dance Theater, and Steve Paxton.

As an emerging and Bessie award-winning choreographer, Sheppard creates movement that challenges conventional understandings of disabled and dancing bodies. Engaging disability arts, culture, and history, she is intrigued by the intersections of disability, gender, and race. In addition to performance

and choreography, Sheppard is a sought-after speaker and has lectured on topics related to disability arts, race and dance. Her writing has appeared in the New York Times and in academic journals.

Christal Brown (Mother|Artist|Educator|Disciple|Coach) is the Founder of INSPIRIT, Project: BECOMING, the creator of the Liquid Strength training module for dance, an Associate Professor of Dance at Middlebury College, and the CVO of Steps and Stages, LLC. Brown is a native of Kinston, North Carolina, where she remembers accompanying her mother to NAACP meetings and performing at Black Caucus rallies. This early exposure to social responsibility innately produced a strong desire in Brown to put her gifts to work for the greater good. Brown earned her BFA in Dance and minor in Business from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and her MFA in New Media Art and technology from Long Island University. Brown's evolution combines her creativity, educational gifts and love for people into a dynamic coaching, facilitation, and consulting practice designed to create vision and sustain change.

Edisa Weeks is a choreographer, educator, curator and founder of DELIRIOUS Dances. She creates interdisciplinary interactive work, that explores our deepest desires, darkest fears and sweetest dreams. Her work has been performed in a variety of venues including the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, Works & Process at the Guggenheim Museum and Mount Tremper Arts; as well as in swimming pools, storefront windows, senior centers, sidewalks and living rooms. Weeks grew up in Uganda, Papua New Guinea and Brooklyn, NY, and has a BA from Brown University, and received a full fellowship to attend New York University's Tisch School of the Arts where she obtained an MFA in choreography. She has had the joy of performing with Annie-B Parsons Big Dance Theater, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Co., Dance Brazil, Homer Avila, Jane Comfort, Jon Kinzel, Muna Tseng, Reggie Wilson Fist & Heel Performance Group, Sally Silvers, Spencer/Colton Dance, among others. In addition, she danced in the 2016 "Bessie" award-winning performance by The Skeleton Architecture. She is on the Board of Directors for Movement Research and is an Associate Professor of Dance at Queens College, where she teaches modern technique, improvisation, choreography and mentors emerging artists.

About Black Dance Stories

Black Dance Stories (BDS) is a community working together to support, uphold, highlight, and celebrate Black creatives. They are committed to providing a platform to amplify Black creatives' voices and stimulate conversations around timely issues across the African Diaspora. Through its free, public weekly story sharing series and a variety of education and networking programs, Black Dance Stories fosters community, solidarity, cultural exchange and highlights the work and humanity of Black artists. It launched in June 2021 in response to Black dance artists' need to talk about life during COVID-19 and support the Black Lives Matter movement. The series is consistent with Black artists' tradition of finding a way to amplify their voices during turbulent times. When civil, moral, and social freedoms are challenged and stifled, Black artists find ways to use their talents as activism. Founder and co-creator Charmaine Warren reminds weekly viewers: "Black dance artists have not been quiet since. Black dance artists have been doing the work. Black dance artists continue to make work. To stay involved, we will hold weekly impromptu discussions and tell stories—Black Dance Stories. This is one action—we will stay involved."

Black Dance Stories has featured pioneering dance and movement artists including Kyle Abraham, Oluwadamilare "Dare" Ayorinde, Camille A. Brown, Ayodele Casel, nora chipaumire, Lorenzo "Rennie" Harris, Raja Feather Kelly, Bebe Miller, Kyle Marshall, Maria Bauman Morales, Okwui Okpokwasili, David Roussève, Abdel R. Salaam, Jason Samuels Smith, Marjani Forté-Saunders, Jawole Willo Jo Zollar, and more. The producing team consists of Black creatives in the arts, including Founder and Co-Creator Charmaine Warren, Co-Creator Kimani Fowlin, Graphic Designer Tony Turner, Publicist Cynthia Tate, Web Designer Gabe Dekoladenu, Director of Digital Media Makeda Smith, Video Producer Kaitlyn Chandler, and Director of Finance and Development Renee Redding-Jones. Antonio Burkett (International Interpreting) and Shannon Morrison (Morr Interpreting) have worked together to provide ASL interpreting services for Black Dance Stories.

About 651 ARTS

Founded in Brooklyn, NY in 1988, the mission of **651 ARTS** is to deepen awareness of and appreciation of contemporary performing arts and culture of the African Diaspora, and to provide professional and creative opportunities for artists of African descent.

651's signature programs have featured pioneering Black choreographers from around the world including Germaine Acogny, Nora Chipaumire, Carmen de Lavallade, Diane McIntyre, Bebe Miller, Abdel R. Salaam and Jawole Willo Jo Zollar. As part of its commitment to the furtherance of conversations and celebration of Diaspora music, the institution has presented dialogues and performances by Somi, Hugh Masekela, and Grammy-winning artist Betty Carter, to name a few. Theatrical and text-based works by Anna Deavere Smith, Sekou Sundiata, Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Ntozake Shange, Okwui Okpokwasili and Maria Bauman are representative of the hundreds of artists and productions featuring solo creations, collaborations, emerging artists, and works-in-development all produced by 651's visionary leadership in the field of Black performance.

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