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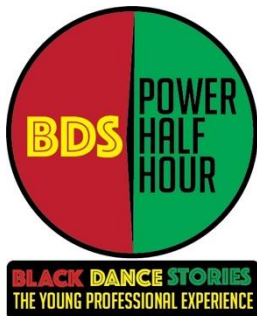
Artist Images & Full Release [here](#)

Black Dance Stories announces new monthly series focusing on emerging artists called Power Half-Hour

Guests Include Brooke Rucker, Johnnie Cruise Mercer, Cortney Taylor Key, and Dre Drummond

**Watch the first episode on Instagram Live
Next Mon, Sep 27 at 12 pm EST**

(NEW YORK, NY)—Black Dance Stories announces a new monthly series, *Power Half-Hour*, exploring how emerging dance artists and arts leaders shape the industry and their careers. On Monday, September 27 at 12pm EST, the first episode airs live on @blackdancestories Instagram Live. Viewers are invited to join this new engaging conversation each month (Sep-Dec) with different artists making an impact in the dance field—**Brooke Rucker (September 27), Johnnie Cruise Mercer (October 25), Cortney Taylor Key (November 29), and Dre Drummond (December 27)**. The artists will share their experience as performers, choreographers, and art administrators doing the work in our dance communities.



The *Power Half-Hour* series is a part of a new Black Dance Stories initiative—The Young Professionals' Experience—created to highlight emerging Black artists who are impacting the dance field. The series continues BDS's commitment to supporting Black creatives by pairing each artist with an established dance artist. In the spirit of community, the mentors will engage with the artists over six months. The 2021 season *Power Half-Hour* mentor-mentee pairings are Jawole Jo Zolar and Brooke Rucker; Zane Booker and Johnnie Cruise Mercer; Amy Hall-Garner and Cortney Taylor Key; and Abdel R. Salaam and Dre Drummond. Black Dance Stories' very own emerging creatives Makeda Smith (Director of Digital Media) and Makeda Roney (Director of Production) conceived and produced the new series and initiative.

Black Dance Stories' *Power Half-Hour* series kicks off Monday, September 27 at 12 pm EST on Instagram Live (@blackdancestories) with Urban Bush Women's Development/Visioning Partner Assistant **Brooke Rucker (@brookerucker)**, a Brooklyn-based artist and activist working at the intersection of dance and literature to center marginalized voices. Brooke is a mentee of UBW Founder & Chief Visioning Partner Jawole Willa Jo Zollar.

The series streams live at 12 pm EST via Instagram Live the last Monday of the month through December 2021. Episodes will be available to view, with closed captioning viewable from @blackdancestories Instagram TV (IGTV) after the live show.

Episode 2: Johnnie Cruise Mercer
Mon, October 25 at 12 pm EST

Episode 3: Cortney Taylor Key
Mon, November 29 at 12 pm EST

Episode 4: Dre Drummond
Mon, December 27 at 12 pm EST

Click [here](#) to receive more information and updates regarding future live streams and episodes. Also please consider donating to Black Dance Stories in support of the free programs. Venmo your contribution to @BlackDanceStories.

Continue the conversation! For exclusive photos, updates and more follow *Black Dance Stories*
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EDITORS' NOTES

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Artist Bios

Johnnie Cruise Mercer is a New York-based queer black thinker, maker, performer, educator, and social entrepreneur born in Richmond, VA. His most recent processes and work have been hosted and presented by: The 92Y Harkness Dance Center, Gibney: Agnes Varis Performing Arts Center, The Dixon Place, Danspace Project Inc, and The Clarice Performing Arts Center's The BlackLight Summit. He was recently honored as the 2021 Princess Grace Award Recipient in Choreography. Mercer is the founder and Company Director of TheREDprojectNYC (TRPNYC), a multidisciplinary arts ensemble dedicated to the study of movement philosophy and its use toward building communal spaces for black/other process, documentation, and investigation. TRPNYC is in year four of the six-year project, "A Process Anthology: The Decade from Hell and the Decade that Followed Suite." The project will soon close with two DocuEpic Works, set to launch in fall 2022 (commissioned by Gibney) and Spring 2024. More information Instagram @jcruisem, @jcm_redprojectnyc or www.trpnyc.com

Brooke Rucker is a Brooklyn-based artist and arts administrator specializing in dance. She began her arts training in her hometown Cartersville, GA, and went on to earn her BFA in Dance at Florida State University in 2018. She has performed with Charles Anderson's dance theatre X (2018-2019) and Gaspard & Dancers (2019) as a company member, and she has also apprenticed with Urban Bush Women. Currently, Brooke is a member of TheREDprojectNYC's Movement Ensemble. In addition to her dancing, Brooke works at Urban Bush Women as their Development/Visioning Partner Assistant and TheREDprojectNYC as their Company Assistant. Brooke is a member of Dance/NYC's Junior Committee, a proactive working committee for emerging leaders in the field. You can connect with Brooke through her Instagram @brookerucker

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.

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