



presents

Coffeehouse Chronicles #167

Rod Rodgers Dance Company -
55th Anniversary



Ellen Stewart Theatre
66 East 4th Street, NYC, 10003
Nov 19, 2022

Coffeehouse Chronicles #167: 55th Anniversary of Rod Rodgers Dance Company

**Moderator:
Ayo Harrington**

**Panelists:
Kim Grier-Martinez
Alex Harsley
Jason Rodgers
Rachel Lubell
Noel Hall
E. Laura Hausmann
Ellen Robbins
Nami Kagami
Jendaya Dash
Tiona Nekkia McClodden
Carlos Martinez**

**Dancers:
Nami Kagami
Jendaya Dash
Yasmin Venable
Jamal Green
Lauren Sion**

Curated and Directed by Michal Gamily

Running time 120 minutes with no intermission

RRDC will perform live excerpts from the company 's Repertoire:
Tangents and *Box '71* , along with a new piece *Blackness, Body, Mother's Love*.

Video clips excerpts from Rod Rodgers's interview with Dr. Roscoe C. Brown JR.

Slideshow Presentation

Michal welcomes the audience

Live Performance #1: *Tangents*

Video Clip #1 Rod Rodgers talks about Cultural Imperialism

Panel #1 Ayo Introduction

Video Clip #2 Rod Rodgers talks about his childhood

Panel #2 -Ayo introduces Kim

Video Clip #3 - Rod Rodgers Interview

Panel #3 Ayo and Kim

Video Clip #4 *Rhythm Ritual*

Panel #4 Former Company Members:

Noel Hall, Laura Hausmann, Ellen Robins join panel

Video Clip #5 *Box 71*

Live Performance #2 *Box 71*

Video Clip #6 - Rod Rodgers talks about creativity, MLK, and Malcom X

Panel #5 Jason, Alex, and Rachel join panel

Video Clip #7 Rod Interview: "Moving to 4th street"

Panel #5A Rachel and Kim

Video Clip # 8 *African Memories*

Panel #6 Nami and Jendaya join panel

Video Clip # 9 The Youth Program

Panel #7 -The Youth Program: Carlos joins panel

Video Clip #10 - *Uh'men of the Sea Line* Wwomen

Panel #8 Tiona Nekkia McClodden join panel

Live Performance # 3:

Blackness, Body, A Mother's Love

Q & A

The End

Rod Rodgers (1938 – 2002) was a second-generation choreographer who worked extensively in modern dance and musical theater. Rodgers, who was best known for the development of his concert repertoire via the NYC-based company that bears his name, has been described as a unique voice in the field of contemporary dance today.

Under Rodgers's direction, productions by the versatile ensemble toured across the US and abroad, including festivals in Mexico, Italy, and via USIS (now part of the US State Department) for an extended international tour to Senegal, Kenya, Nigeria, Zaire, Zambia, Syria, and Portugal. Many of Rodgers's works explore and celebrate the Black experience. Drawing from his background as a percussionist and choreographer, he developed a unique signature repertoire including his acclaimed contemporary Rhythmdances, in which the dancers contribute to the musical environment with hand-held instruments as they move, and several major works of social commentary, *Victims*, *Cameos of Women*, and "POETS & PEACEMAKERS," a multi-arts series of tributes to Black heroes.

His last works included *She Sayings & Soul Songs*, set to the songs and voice of Nina Simone, and *Jazz Fusions*, set to music by Leon Parker. Rodgers developed interdisciplinary collaborations with a number of noted musicians and designers. In addition to his concert repertoire, Rodgers's credits include choreography for the Syracuse Opera Company production of *Aida*, direction and staging of *The Black Cowboys* for the Harlem Opera presented at the City Center of Music & Drama (today's New York City Center), the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), and on an international tour.

He choreographed *A Study In Color* by Malcolm Boyd and *The Prodigal Sister*, an Off-Broadway musical for Woody King Jr. Rodgers created the choreography and had a lead acting role in a WABC-TV special, *Like It Is TV*, based on the song "And This Is My Beloved." He also staged a reading of Ntozake Shange's *Sassafras, Cypress & Indigo* produced by Joseph Papp at The Public Theater in NYC.

Rodgers staged and directed several productions for Voices, Inc., including *Journey into Blackness* and a touring production of a musical tribute to Martin Luther King Jr., which was also presented as a CBS-TV special. His works were included in the first Dance Black America festival, BAM's 1983 retrospective of Black dance.

Some of the fellowships and commissions that he received included ones from the New York State Council on the Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, Creative Artists in Public Service, the Beard Fund, and the John Hay Whitney Foundation. Rodgers was the recipient of the Spirit of Detroit Creative Award in Michigan, and, in NYC, an Audelco Award for his work in innovative audience development programs.

Alex Harsley has curated The 4th Street Photo Gallery and The Minority Photographers non-profit since the early 1970's. His own reportage style of photography started in 1958 as the first black photographer for the New York City District Attorney. Since that time he has continued to capture the true intimate moments and personality of New York City. His collection contains the historical lineage of musicians, politicians, street folk, landscapes and neighbors from the 1950s through present day. His documentary medium consists of film, digital photography and digital sound and video.

Jason Rodgers was born in Michigan, but raised in NYC. He's a library technician / generalist working in collaboration with the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion, and the Higher Education Opportunity Program to train and manage Pratt Institute's College Work-Study students. At present, he's been shanghaied into an active role at the Middle States Commission on Higher Education Ethics and Integrity Work Group; contributing ideas and research as a part of Pratt's self-study to achieve accreditation. He is a forever member of the creative family at RRDC.

Noel Nantambu Hall dancer, dance educator, choreographer, poet, singer, visual artist and lover of life, began his career in the arts at age five, in Jamaica, W.I., singing on the radio. He began his dance studies as a teenager, studying creative dance, ballet and modern. A former student of Monica McGowan, Ivy Baxter, Madam May Soohih, Rex Nettleford and Lavinia Williams-Yarborough, he went on to perform with the National Dance Theatre Company of Jamaica, The Little Theatre Movement's Pantomime Musicals and several theater groups in productions such as: *Finian's Rainbow*; *Morgan's Dream of Old Port Royal*; *Queenie's Daughter*; *The Tempest*; *Once Upon a Mattress*; and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. In the U.S. he continued his studies at the Martha Graham School, in part, on full scholarship; Clark Center; The New Dance Group Studio with Jaimé Rodgers, Muriel Manning and Jean Leon Destiné; and at the Dance Theatre of Harlem with Karel Shook, Arthur Mitchell and Tanaquel Le Clerq. He debuted Off Broadway with The Negro Ensemble Company in *The Dream on Monkey Mountain*, and has performed extensively nationally and internationally with the Rod Rodgers Dance Company, Choreo-Mutation (which he co-founded), Saeko Ichinoe & Co., Yuriko & Friends, ALLNATIONS Dance Company, and the East-West Contemporary Dance Company spanning the U.S., Africa, Syria, Portugal, Taiwan, and Iceland. As a visual artist his work is in many private collections and has been exhibited at The Studio Museum in Harlem; Pratt Institute; Denison University, Ohio; Dance Space Inc., Empire State College; Cultural Crossroads Inc., Clinton Hill Simply Art Gallery; Berkeley College, Brooklyn Campus; and in three exhibitions at the Resnick Gallery, Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus. He has performed his written work in several venues including the West Side Y, for The Writers Voice, and has been published by The National Library of Poetry, and in two volumes of LIU's Downtown Brooklyn. He co-produced his play *SNAPSHOTS IN TRANSIT*, at the Broadway Comedy Club in 2017. His recent interview with Stephanie Lynn Wilson, "Confessions of the Creative Soul," can be view on demand on MNN,

Manhattan Neighborhood Network's Channel 2. A graduate of Empire State College and New York University, where he earned an M.A. on a Teaching Fellowship, he has also taught at Connecticut College, Stephens College, New York University, Denison University, Kutztown University, Manhattanville College, Rockland Community College, Steps Dance Studio, the Charles Moore Dance Studio and the 92nd Street Y. He has been a guest teacher and choreographer for the Ko-Thi Dance Company in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and in 2000 for the Jean M. Wong School of Ballet International Summer Dance School in Hong Kong. In 1996 he was the recipient of an Ethnic Dance Award for Teaching from Dance Giant Steps Inc. He has served as an Adjunct Full Professor of Dance at Long Island University; the department's Administrative Assistant, the Associate Director of Afternoons at LIU (presenting established and emerging N.Y. dance companies), and the Chair and Project Coordinator of LIU's bi-annual Diaspora Connection Project conferences. A music lover, he has been a member of the voice and hand bell choirs at Queen of All Saints RC Church in Brooklyn, has sung with the LAPC's Lafayette Inspirational Ensemble and currently sings with The Brooklyn Contemporary Chorus.

E. Laura Hausmann is internationally known as a versatile dancer, teacher, and choreographer. Performing throughout the United States and on every continent, except Australia, she originated roles across disciplines in companies including Boston Ballet, Radio City Music Hall Ballet Company, Kathryn Posin, Rod Rodgers, Anna Sokolow Repertoire, Billy Wilson, and other multi-cultural New York City and international touring modern dance companies. Laura performed seasons at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Kennedy Center, New York Public Theatre, Apollo Theatre, and on Broadway, in addition to appearances on television and commercial venues. As a guest of the US State Department Cultural Exchange Program, Laura performed in countries throughout Africa including Senegal, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Congo, Zambia, Kenya, and Egypt; and throughout Europe and the Mid-East. She danced and taught master classes and workshops to professionals and students in Taiwan, Russia, Panama, and at over 20 colleges and universities. The International Music Festival in cooperation with the General Confederation of Trade Unions-Russian Independent Trade Unions sponsored Laura, along with 40 of her pre-teen and teen students, for a month-long tour of Russia to study at Perm Choreographic Institute and other important academies. Laura earned her MA from The Graduate Center, City University of New York in Liberal Studies/Studies in Contemporary Dance and BFA from Boston Conservatory in Dance, as a Jan Veen Scholar. Additional certifications include Progressing Ballet Technique, Inclusive Education in Teaching, CRP for Children/Infants/Adults, and National Council for Mental Wellbeing: Adult Mental Health First Aid USA. Laura received President's Certificate of Merit multiple times as Assistant Professor at New York University, Dance Major Program, Steinhardt School of Education for over 20 years, teaching all levels of classical ballet, modern dance, and pedagogy. Additional awards include: New York University Distinguished Teaching Award, Graduate Student Organization Faculty Recognition Award, and Recognition for Teaching Undergraduate and Graduate Students. As Assistant Professor in Dance at Lehigh University (Adj.), teaching all levels of classical ballet, modern dance, and jazz dance, Laura also produced and choreographed Dance for Haiti, a diverse

genre dance concert. This provided students from 8 different countries and multi-cultural dance community with a dance process and performance opportunity, which contributed to international fundraising. Laura twice received The Actors Fund Encore Award in 2020 and 2021 and New York City Arts Educator Grant in 2021 and 2022, President's Lifetime Achievement Award 2020-AmeriCorps, and ArtsLehigh Grant. In July, Laura was awarded Dance Masters of America Annual Award, the organization's highest honor. As a teacher of teachers, Laura served as a master teacher and pedagogue for all major dance education organizations, studio workshops, and conventions. Performed Off-Broadway and in Greece, Laura choreographed a production of Jean Cocteau's, *The Human Voice*. Laura is Founder and Artistic Director of New York Dance Spectrum, Inc. a nonprofit dance company dedicated to dance performances, education, and scholarship programs. Laura received a commission to choreograph *I Just Want It To Be A Sound and Forest Cover* for performances throughout the United States. Laura authored Teaching Guide for Ballet, Modern, and Pointe, used at colleges and studios; recently produced the film documentary, EARLY BALLET in the United States, 1930s-1950s: Radio City Music Hall Ballet Company and Florence Rogge, Choreographer; and produced 11 Music for Dance Class CD titles ranked "Best" by Kimbo Educational.

Ellen Robbins met Rod Rodgers in 1964. She was part of the original RRDC from its very beginning. Ms. Robbins is the teacher/director of Dances By Very Young Choreographers. She is the recipient of a 1986 Bessie Award for her work with children. In 2015, she was the honoree of the La MaMa Moves Gala. She has been on the faculties of the 92nd St. Y, Sarah Lawrence, the Bennington College July Program, and ArtsConnection. She has directed the Young Dancers School at the American Dance Festival in Durham, North Carolina. Her workshop "Growing a Dancer" has often been included in the Dance Education Laboratory's intensive courses. Since 1980, Dances By Very Young Choreographers (students ages 8-18) has been produced annually by New York Live Arts (formerly DTW), and, in the summer of 2000, was produced the by the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in their Doris Duke Theater - a first for young dancers. This year there will be another first when the American Dance Guild Festival will include 3 teenage solos from Very Young Choreographers on December 4th at the Joan Weil Theater at the Alvin Ailey Dance Center.

Nami Kagami is a native of Japan and trained under Masako Kaji since age of three until her enrollment into Hofstra University. Nami graduated with BA in Dance with honors and minor in Sociology. She continued to study dance at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center and Peridance Center. Ms. Kagami joined Rod Rodgers Dance Company soon after graduating from Hofstra University. She is one of the last generations to have had the opportunity to work with Rod until his passing in 2002. She is currently a principal dancer and Assistant Director of the company, managing to preserve a vast collection of the company's archival materials. She has also helped developing its Youth Program from the inception in 2002 and currently teaching ballet and modern classes. Ms. Kagami has also been a teaching artist in ArtsConnection for over 20 years and have been committed to providing excellence to NYC public schools students.

Jendaya Dash is a freelance dancer and choreographer based in Brooklyn, NY. She has been a company member with Rod Rodgers Dance Company since 2014 under the artistic direction of Kim Grier-Martinez. She has worked with various choreographers such as Nathan Trice, Stephen Agisilaou of Vertical Lines, and Mee Jung of iKada Contemporary Dance Company, and Eryc Taylor of Eryc Taylor Dance Company to name a few. She's also worked for fashion brands such as a model/dancer for Totokaelo x Issey Miyake, Puma, and Adidas. Jendaya has appeared in music videos for Roxiny, Dana Levinson, DEC3, Mazzi & S.O.U.L. Purpose, and Kashaka. In addition to her performance career Jendaya works as a freelance photographer.

Tiona Nekkia McClodden [she/her] is a visual artist, filmmaker, and curator whose work explores and critiques issues at the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and social commentary. McClodden's interdisciplinary approach traverses documentary film, experimental video, sculpture, and sound installations. Most recently, her work has explored the themes of re-memory and narrative biomythography. Her works have shown at the Institute of Contemporary Art-Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Museum of Art; the Museum of Modern Art (New York); the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York); the New Museum (New York); Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW) - Berlin; MOCA LA; MCA Chicago, and MoMA PS1. Most recently she is the recipient of the 2021-2023 Princeton Arts Fellowship, a Bucksbaum Award for her work in the 2019 Whitney Biennial, a Guggenheim Fellowship in Fine Arts (2019), among others. She has had solo exhibitions at 52 Walker, NYC and COMPANY Gallery, NYC. In 2017-18 she curated *A Recollection. + Predicated.* as a part of the multi-artist retrospective *Julius Eastman: That Which is Fundamental* at both the Slought Foundation in Philadelphia and The Kitchen in New York. Her writing has been featured on the Triple Canopy platform, in *Artforum*, *Cultured Magazine*, *ART 21 Magazine*, and many other publications. She is the recipient of a 2021 Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant. Tiona lives and works in North Philadelphia, PA, and is the Founder + Director of Philadelphia-based, *Conceptual Fade*, a micro-gallery and library space centering Black thought + artistic production.

Yasmin Venable (Harlem, New York City) began her dance training in the Rod Rodgers Dance Company Youth Program under the direction of Kim Grier-Martinez. Shortly after she attended the Talent Unlimited High School while also attending The School at Steps, Dance Theatre of Harlem and Manhattan Youth Ballet. After graduating Ms. Venable attended The Ailey School for two years on a level two scholarship. She has worked with choreographers such as Earl Mosely, Kevin Iga Jeff, and Deborah Wingert. Ms. Venable performed at The Joyce Theater in the premier cast of the All-City Panorama with The Martha Graham Dance Company. As well as performed with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater as a Revelations 50 Cast Member. As a freelance performer she has had the pleasure of working with PERFORMA, Rod Rodgers Dance Company and VashtiDance Theater.

Jamal Green is the 2021 Broadway World's Regional Award Winner for Best Supporting Actor in a Play for the role of Bernard in Madison Lyric Theatre's anniversary production of *The Boys in the Band* and the Leading Player in their production of *Pippin*. He has also performed in productions of *Ragtime* (Papermill Playhouse), *Dreamgirls* (Gateway), *Twelfth Night* (McCarter Theatre) working with Tony Award and Olivier Award-winning directors. Since 2005 he has been a member of and lead dancer with the Rod Rodgers Dance Company helping to create the iconic and influential works in the modern dance community. He has travelled to Japan and Bermuda with the Company. He was a member of the original National Touring Company with Chorale Le Chateau of Wynton Marsalis's Abyssinia Mass which included concerts at Lincoln Center with Mr. Marsalis and his jazz band. Jamal is a German-born military kid that calls Augusta, Georgia home.

Dancing since the age of four, **Lauren Sion** has been performing, choreographing, and teaching throughout the tri-state area for over ten years. She received her BA in Dance from Muhlenberg College in 2008 with Magna Cum Laude Honors, having trained in various styles and techniques such as ballet, pointe, jazz, lyrical, modern, contemporary, hip hop, and tap. She has danced and performed professionally with DanceLink, coEXISTdance Company, FireRock Productions, Eng and Friends Dance Company, hersouldances modern dance project, Serendipity Dance Ensemble, Annex Dance Company, Morgan Chambers (Pink Hair Affair), REXDANCE, Jenkintown Dance Company, danceETHOS Performance Company, Underground DanceWorks, and ContempraDance Theatre Company. She was also chosen to participate and perform repertoire in dance residencies with San Francisco-based choreographer Alyce Finwall (Alyce Finwall Dance Theater) and NYC-based choreographer Keith Thompson (danceTactics Performance Group). In 2015, she followed her dream and permanently moved to Manhattan where she currently teaches and choreographs extensively in NJ & NYC. She is extremely excited to be dancing with Rod Rodgers Dance Company!

**A full program with information on this
production can be found on the
*Coffeehouse Chronicles #167: 55th
Anniversary of Rod Rodgers Dance Company*
page of the La MaMa website.**

**In addition you can scan the
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Dance Company
Nov 19, 2022
Ellen Stewart Theatre

Underneath the Skin

Dec 1 - 18, 2022
Ellen Stewart Theatre

Jump Start: A Presentation of Puppet Works in Progress

Dec 1 -4 , 2022
The Downstairs

COMING SOON

The Weak and The Strong

Dec 8 - 18, 2022
The Downstairs

Coffeehouse Chronicles #168: Bread and Puppet Theatre

Dec 10, 2022
Ellen Stewart Theatre

Poerty Electric: Romeo & Juliet Tribal

Dec 13, 2022
The Downstairs

The Indigo Room

Jan 6 - 22, 2022
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King Gilgamesh & the Man of the Wild

Jan 12 - 22, 2022
The Downstairs