

Deneane Richburg



Contact

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2023 McKnight Choreography Fellow

Bio

Deneane Richburg is the founder and Artistic Director of Brownbody, a St. Paul, MN-based performing arts organization whose work is a blend of dance, theater, and figure skating. Brownbody is the creative home for Richburg's choreographic work which tells honest and nuanced stories rooted in Blackness. As a modern dance choreographer and former competitive figure skater, Richburg is interested in pushing the boundaries of creative expression on the ice via engaging these narratives as a framework in which somatic based movement exploration occurs. Richburg blends different movement worlds; and is fortunate to work with a company of professional Black movement and skating artists. A sought-after artist, Richburg recently toured her latest evening length work, *Tracing Sacred Steps to the Yard on Martha's Vineyard*. While Richburg specializes in original works, she also has had the privilege of translating the works by Black artists from the stage onto the ice.



What are you working on in the next two years?

Richburg is working on a project with Lela Aisha Jones, Philadelphia-based movement artist and choreographer. This multi-sensory, multi-site, interdisciplinary movement-based dance work is entitled *Infinite Slow Drive/Obsidians in the Wild*. The work is an ode to the community runway, park stroll covered in adornment from people to vehicles, porch culture that breeds honest banter that turns into swaying nodding dancing, the church aisle awakened in shout by embodied freedom and spiritual release, the house underground juke joint that combines the blues with revival freestyle and—visual and sonic rejuvenation as experienced in global diasporic Blackness and particularly rooted in the Black southeastern United States. With a multi-site aim, this work is choreographed to move fluidly between ice and stage venues with performers drawing from the idioms of figure skating, contemporary dance, and a rich continuum of movements derived from personal histories and shared social spaces.

Repertoire available for touring

Tracing Sacred Steps (TSS)

Tracing Sacred Steps (TSS) is an evening-length work that blends dance, theater, figure skating and Ring Shout. It features an all-Black cast of 4-5 professional skating artists from around the US and 1 MN-based actor/vocalist. TSS is influenced by Ring Shout, it engages elements of this sacred practice to illustrate how the practice's lineage continues to serve as a pathway to release and restoration within so many sacred Black spaces.

Tech:

- An indoor ice rink with ice arena permission to place flooring on the ice for an audience seating area
- A lobby or other corridor connected to or in close proximity to the ice surface (please note, this work can be modified if such a space is unavailable)
- As projection is a part of this work, the ability to hang a 80ft curtain on the ice (can be hung from the ceiling depending on ceiling height)

Give Your Hands to Struggle

(on ice translation of Urban Bush Women's famed solo): *Give Your Hands to Struggle*, choreographed by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar, was originally a solo piece within *Hands Singing Song* (1998). Set to music by Bernice Johnson Reagon, the piece begins with a recitation of key figures in African-American history, including Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, Katherine Dunham, Ossie Davis, and the three civil rights workers killed in 1964 — James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner.

Tech:

- An indoor ice rink with ice arena permission to place flooring on the ice for an audience seating area
- Theatrical lighting
- Per Brownbody's agreement with UBW, rehearsal time with UBW representatives must be made available prior to the performance of this work

AnyBody Here (on ice translation)

AnyBody Here is excerpted from an evening-length work *Walking with Pearl... Southern Diaries* (2005) choreographed by Jawole Willa Jo Zollar and performed by Urban Bush Women. A highly-awarded work, this moving emotional piece was based on research into the noted choreographer Pearl Primus and her time in the American south visiting sharecroppers to investigate history and receive artistic illumination. The on ice translation features 4-5 skating artists.

Tech:

- An indoor ice rink with ice arena permission to place flooring on the ice for an audience seating area
- Theatrical lighting
- Per Brownbody's agreement with UBW, rehearsal time with UBW representatives must be made available prior to the performance of this work

