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## Washington Ensemble Theatre Presents Raja Feather Kelly's *UGLY (Black Queer Zoo)*, the Second Show in its GUSH Series

**Limited Engagement: March 5 - 16, 2020**

*Written, Directed and Performed by Raja Feather Kelly*

(February 4, 2020—SEATTLE) **Washington Ensemble Theatre** (WET) will present a limited engagement of ***UGLY (Black Queer Zoo)***, a dynamic solo piece from internationally recognized choreographer **Raja Feather Kelly**. *UGLY (Black Queer Zoo)* is the second installment in **The GUSH Series**, WET's latest program that presents theatrical works from outside Seattle that are curated by the Ensemble and performed on its mainstage. Our inaugural show *Singlet* by Erin Markey was performed in spring 2019 to critical success and received a rare Seattle Art Alert from The Stranger. This production of *UGLY (Black Queer Zoo)* is the West Coast premiere after having its world premiere in 2018 at the Bushwick Starr in Brooklyn.

*UGLY (Black Queer Zoo)* plays **March 5 - 16, 2020** at **12th Avenue Arts** (1620 12th Avenue in Capitol Hill). Tickets are on sale now [www.washingtonensemble.org](http://www.washingtonensemble.org).

Part dance-theatre and part pop-culture collage, Raja Feather Kelly's *UGLY* is a dynamic solo about the lack of black queer subjectivity in the mainstream. Anointed in mustard yellow from head to toe and contained inside a clear box, *UGLY* is unsettlingly intimate and shockingly beautiful.

"I am blown away to be presenting the work of modern genius-extraordinaire, Raja Feather Kelly," said WET's Artistic Director **Samie Spring Detzer**. "Raja's form-bending work has been featured in some of the most exciting contemporary performances of the last few years, including *Fairview*, *A Strange Loop*, and the upcoming *We're Gonna Die* by Young Jean Lee. To be able to work with a multi-talented artist who has already had so much exposure is a true thrill and it reminds me that WET has uniquely positioned itself to be a nationally recognized small theater like none other in Seattle "

With GUSH, WET will continue to seek vibrant new artists, fearless contemporary performance, and form-breaking theatrical experiences once a year as part of its mainstage season. WET is thrilled to be able to expand its yearly offerings, to invest in internationally acclaimed artists, and to give Seattle audiences the chance to experience new kinds of creative perspective.

### **About Raja Feather Kelly**

Choreographer/Director Raja Feather Kelly is the artistic director of New Brooklyn Theatre. In 2009, he founded the dance-theatre-media company the feath3r theory. The two companies merged in 2018. Raja is a Creative Associate at The Juilliard School, and has been awarded a Creative Capital Award (2019), a National Dance Project Production Grant (2019), a Breakout Award from the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (2018), Dance Magazine's inaugural Harkness Promise Award (2018), the Solange MacArthur Award for New Choreography (2016), and is a three-time Princess Grace Award winner (2017, 2018, 2019). He was born in Fort Hood, Texas and holds a B.A. in Dance and English from Connecticut College.

Raja has been named as the 2019–2020 Randjelović/Stryker Resident Commissioned Artist at New York Live Arts and is an inaugural Jerome Hill Artist Fellow. Raja has also been awarded a New York Dance Performance "Bessie" Award, a Bessie Schonberg Fellowship at The Yard, a DanceWEB Scholarship, a New York Foundation for the Arts Choreography Fellowship, a HERE Arts Fellowship, 2018 Creator-in-Residence at Kickstarter, and a Choreography Fellowship at the Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU.

Over the past decade he has created fifteen evening-length works with his company the feath3r theory to critical acclaim. Most recently, *UGLY (Black Queer Zoo)* at The Bushwick Starr, and *We May Never Dance Again*® at The Invisible Dog in Brooklyn. Professionally, Raja has performed with Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group, David Dorfman Dance, Kyle Abraham|Abraham.In.Motion, and zoe | juniper. He has also managed a number of dance companies: Race Dance, Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion, zoe | juniper, and Reggie Wilson/Fist and Heel Performance Group.

Since 2016, Raja has choreographed extensively for Off-Broadway theatre in New York City, most notably for Signature Theatre, Soho Rep, and New York Theatre Workshop and Playwrights Horizons. Kelly is the 2019 SDCF Joe Callaway Award Finalist for outstanding choreography of *A Strange Loop* (Playwrights Horizons) and *Fairview* (Soho Rep, Berkeley Rep, TFANA and winner of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama). Frequent collaborators include: Lileana Blain-Cruz, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, Sarah Benson, and Lila Neugebauer. Other theatre credits include choreography for *Skittles Commercial: The Musical* (Town Hall), *The Chronicles of Cardigan and Khente* (Soho Rep), *Everyday Afroplay* (JACK), *GURLS* (Princeton University, Yale Repertory Theatre), *Electric Lucifer* (The Kitchen), *Lempicka* (Williamstown Theatre Festival), *The House That Will Not Stand* (New York Theatre Workshop), *Fireflies* (Atlantic Theatre Company), *If Pretty Hurts Ugly Must Be a Muhfucka* (Playwrights Horizons, nominated for the 2019 Lucille Lortel Award and the 2019 Chita Rivera Award for Outstanding Choreography), *The Good Swimmer* (BAM), and *Faust* (Opera Omaha).

### **About Washington Ensemble Theatre**

Through collaborative artistic leadership, Washington Ensemble Theatre fearlessly creates audacious stories for adventurous Seattle audiences. A resident company at 12th Avenue Arts in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, WET is committed to maintaining an environment wherein its members, as well as artists from the community, are challenged to grow through its work as an ensemble. For more information about Washington Ensemble Theatre, please visit [www.washingtonensemble.org](http://www.washingtonensemble.org).

**The GUSH Series: *UGLY (Black Queer Zoo)* | Washington Ensemble Theatre**

**The 2019/20 Ensemble** is Samie Spring Detzer, Jeffrey Azevedo, Maria Manness, Bobbin Ramsey, Tristan Roberson, Joceline Wynn, Jenn Oaster, Ryan Dunn, Maggie L. Rogers, Sophie Franco, Rachel Guyer-Mafune, Erin Bednarz, Kiki Abba, Minna Lee, Sienna Mendez, Ben Swenson-Klatt, and Brian Dang.

Thanks to our 2019/20 season sponsors 4Culture, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, The Raynier Foundation, Portage Bay Cafe, and media sponsor *The Stranger*.

**FOR CALENDAR EDITORS**

**WHEN**            Opening Night: Thursday, March 5, 2020 (press opening)  
Closing Day: Monday, March 16, 2020

**SHOW TIMES**    Thursdays - Mondays at 7:30 PM

**WHERE**            12th Avenue Arts (1620 12th Avenue in Capitol Hill)

**TICKETS**          Please visit [www.washingtonensemble.org](http://www.washingtonensemble.org) to purchase tickets.

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