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Washington Ensemble Theatre Produces an Online Presentation of Raja Feather Kelly's new *Vote Art Vote, A Queer Instigation*

Streaming online at washingtonensemble.org: October 15 - November 3, 2020

Conceived and Directed by Raja Feather Kelly

Curated by Dani Tirrell and Raja Feather Kelly

(Friday, September 18, 2020—SEATTLE) Washington Ensemble Theatre (WET) will produce a limited presentation of *Vote Art Vote, A Queer Instigation*, a collection of newly conceived performances from Seattle artists in response to the 2020 election season. Directed by **Raja Feather Kelly**, and co-curated by **Dani Tirrell**, each artist will create an unabashed piece of new work defending their artistic expression and urging audiences to remember the power a single voice (and vote) can hold. The pieces will explore the often forgotten, often underserved, and most important part of our city—the art in the heart of Seattle.

Vote Art Vote, A Queen Instigation will stream online from **October 15 - November 3, 2020** at www.washingtonensemble.org. Tickets go on sale **October 1, 2020**.

This is the first online presentation produced by WET during the COVID-19 pandemic. In March, the public health crisis prompted us to abruptly end our limited engagement run of Raja Feather Kelly's *UGLY* as the second installment of our GUSH Series. *UGLY* was a dynamic solo piece about the lack of black queer subjectivity in the mainstream that was unsettlingly intimate and shockingly beautiful.

"Getting a second chance to collaborate with Raja Feather Kelly is the silver lining to this truly hellish year," said WET's new Artistic Director **Maggie L. Rogers**. "The global pandemic ended *Ugly* early, cancelled our spring production of *The Strange Case of Dr. Cher and Mr. Donna*, and left us wondering when we'd be able to make theatre again. The Ensemble has taken this opportunity of a collective pause to flex our technological muscles and explore new ways to create content. I cannot think of a more exciting artist than Raja to collaborate with and explore what performance means in this new era of art-making. *Vote Art Vote* will simultaneously be an excavation and a call to action to address the very real threats that exist for artists."

Vote Art Vote continues WET's commitment to working with vibrant new artists, producing fearless contemporary performance, and delivering form-breaking theatrical experiences. WET is thrilled to be able to expand its production offerings onto a digital platform, to invest in local artists, and to give audiences the chance to experience new kinds of creative perspectives.

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 Dani Tirrell

Dani Tirrell, Seattle's Mayor Arts Award recipient 2019, is a Black, Queer choreographer, dancer, and movement guide. Dani has guided people in Detroit and Seattle as well as sharing movement practices in other cities in the United States. Currently Dani is the curator for Central District Forum for Arts and Ideas. Dani is the host and co-creator of several online talk programs including Sunday Dinner, The Living Room, and Intimate Conversations.

Dani is the founder and current artistic director of The Congregation, a movement/art group. Dani is currently teaching at Northwest Tap Connection and University of Washington Seattle and Bothell campuses. Dani has created work for *Dance This* (Northwest Tap Connection), *Strictly Seattle* (advance/professional track), and Seattle Repertory Theater's *Nina Simone: Four Women* (Directed by Valerie Curtis-Newton).

Dani is an Arts Matter Fellow, Artists Trust Fellow, and 4Culture Arc Fellow. Dani is the Artist in Residence at Velocity Dance Center (2020/2021) and one of six Artists in Residence at On the Boards.

Dani's production of *Black Bois* (On the Boards and Seattle Theater Group) was a locally critically acclaimed work that produced sold out shows in Seattle and is in development for a documentary film. In 2019 Dani was the recipient of an Artist Trust Fellowship Award and a Dance Crush Award for *Black Bois* (performance). Dani's current work *FagGod* in collaboration with Anastasia Renee and Naa Akua was presented in Central District Forum for Arts and Ideas 2019/2020 season. Dani's new work 46, is a photo exhibit styled, staged, and photographed by Dani. This work can be found online under Dani's Instagram profile.

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.

The 2020/21 Ensemble is Maggie L. Rogers, Erin Bednarz, Maria Manness, Joceline Wynn, Tristan Roberson, Jenn Oaster, Ryan Dunn, Sophie Franco, Rachel Guyer-Mafune, Kiki Abba, Minna Lee, Sien Mendez, Ben Swenson-Klatt, and Brian Dang.

Thanks to our 2020/21 season sponsors ArtsWA, National Endowment for the Arts, 4Culture, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture, The Raynier Foundation, and media sponsor *The Stranger*.

FOR CALENDAR EDITORS

WHEN October 15, 2020 until November 3, 2020

SHOW TIMES Available on-demand.

Vote Art Vote, A Queer Instigation | Washington Ensemble Theatre

WHERE Streaming online at www.washingtonensemble.org.

TICKETS Please visit www.washingtonensemble.org to purchase tickets starting Oct 1, 2020.
Tickets range from \$0 - \$15.

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