



*Dance,  
Salome!  
Dance!*



# Dance, Salome! Dance!

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Not so long ago, on the front page of the Arts section of the New York Times was a full-length photograph of a principal dancer from the Pacific Northwest Ballet. The image was startling, a bit obscene: the dancer was in attitude, and hanging from her ankle was a price tag—printed on it \$100,000. The caption read, “For the art patron who has everything, ballet companies are offering something novel: the dancers themselves.” To raise funds, premier American ballet companies were auctioning off their principal dancers to the highest bidder for exorbitant sums. Works of art are often auctioned, but a person?

*Dance, Salome! Dance!* is set in the rehearsal studio of a premier ballet company. It plays off of Oscar Wilde’s decadent reinterpretation of the biblical story of Salome, the original text of dance and patronage. Like Wilde’s play, this piece is a full-length work in one act where the question that propels it is: “Salome, will you dance for me?” This points to the ethical limits of what it means to desire and collect. We know the price of the dance: the head of John the Baptist on a silver platter.

*Dance, Salome! Dance!* examines the perplexing entanglement of patronage, commodification, and desire. There is a twist to the play. In this meditation on the arts and society, the principal dancer is a Black ballerina.

Through text and dance, this play explores questions of patronage, politics, and race to ultimately ask: Why do we create art? What is its meaning?

Video:

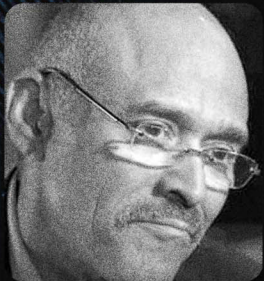
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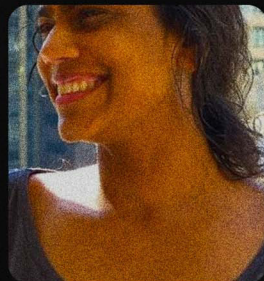
# Dance, Salome! Dance!

## Creative Team



Lou Bellamy  
Director

Lou Bellamy is the founder and Co-Artistic Director of Penumbra Theatre Company in Saint Paul, Minnesota. During his thirty-nine-year tenure, Penumbra has evolved into one of America's premier theaters dedicated to dramatic exploration of the African-American experience. Under his leadership, Penumbra has grown to be the largest theater of its kind in America and has produced thirty-nine world premieres, including August Wilson's first professional production. Mr. Bellamy is an OBIE Award-winning director, an accomplished actor, and for thirty-eight years was appointed as Associate Professor at the University of Minnesota in the Department of Theatre Arts and Dance. Directing credits include plays at the Guthrie Theater, Arizona Theatre Company, Denver Center for the Performing Arts, Signature Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, the Cleveland Play House, Hartford Stage Company, and the Kennedy Center.



Tanya Jayani Fernando  
Writer

Tanya Jayani Fernando received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Chicago as the Andrew W. Mellon Fellow. In her scholarship, she works on modernism and the avant-garde across the literary, visual, and performing arts. She founded the Performance department of the literary journal, the *Massachusetts Review*. She is now focusing on playwriting. Fernando views writing as fluid: her scholarship and creative work each inform the other. She is spearheading a project between artists and scholars, called the Arts and Politics Project. It is a cycle of three experimental plays being created collaboratively by visionary artists/intellectuals that asks the question: what is, or ought to be, the relationship between aesthetics and politics? The plays, including *Dance, Salome! Dance!*, offer beauty to take us to the just.



Kevin Iega Jeff  
Choreographer

Kevin Iega Jeff is the co-founder of Deeply Rooted Dance Theater in Chicago. Jeff trained in New York City at the Bernice Johnson Cultural Arts Center, the High School of the Performing Arts, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, and the Juilliard School. At twenty-one, Jeff founded his first company, Jubilation! Dance Company. Jubilation! was created out of a need to provide a forum for African-American artists to be nurtured holistically through the arts. In 1995, he co-founded Deeply Rooted Productions in Chicago. The company aims to diversify the aesthetics of contemporary dance by bringing together modern, classical, and African-American traditions in dance. Jeff has received numerous awards, including in 2005, he was named as one of the Juilliard School's 100 Most Outstanding Alumni for the school's centenary anniversary.



# *Dance, Salome! Dance!*



*Dance, Salome! Dance!* has had workshops in Amherst, Massachusetts and St. Paul, MN. It was invited to be part of Penumbra Theatre Word(s)Play! Series and the Smith College New Play Reading Series.

It has received support from the Five Colleges in Amherst, the University of Massachusetts Creative Economy Grant, and Deeply Rooted Dance Theater.

June 2025: A residency at the Ragdale Foundation (Lake Forest, IL).

*Dance, Salome! Dance!* is under the fiscal sponsorship of the National Performance Network.

Your interest means the world to us as we work to bring *Dance, Salome! Dance!* to the stage and beyond. Together, we can share this message of beauty and understanding.



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