

Black Futures Series Capstone Performance  
**Homage: What was, Is, To Come**



*Photograph by A. Burdon*

A journey through the African American lineage, *Homage* pays tribute to all that was, all that exists, and the dream of what can become for Black Lives in America, acknowledging that hopes for our Black Future cannot exist without ALL knowing where we've come from.

### **Credits**

Choreographer and Creative Director  
Music Composer  
Spoken Word Artist  
Dancers

Costume Designer  
"To Come" Videos

Countess V. Winfrey  
Wesley Winfrey III  
Vanae Ilesha (Pate)  
Alexis Diggs, Nicolay Dorsett,  
Courtney Draper, Aaron Frisby,  
and Niarra Gooden-Clarke  
L'Amour Ameer  
Lungs Project

## Synopsis

Exhibit #1: What was

Front Plaza and Main Entrance. In this space, we begin our journey through African American history, paying homage to the legacies begun in the Past.

Exhibit #2: Is

Alice Bimel Courtyard. In this exhibit, we experience the Present, bearing witness to the outrage and anxiety surrounding those who have lost their lives because they were “outside while being Black.”

Exhibit #3: To Come

Great Hall. We step into the Black Future. This space imagines what free and unapologetic Black people look like, sound like, dress like, act like when we are unshackled by mental, physical, hierarchical, financial, and systemic enslavement. We experience the regality of our infinite beauty as we elevate the perseverance, endurance, and sacrifices of our ancestors.

## Artist biographies



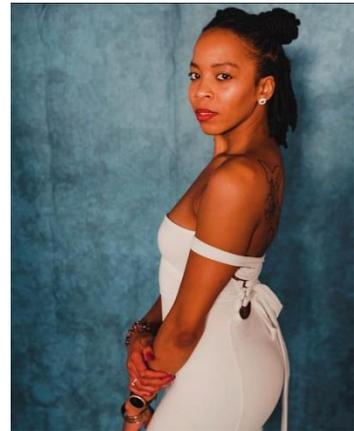
**Countess V. Winfrey** Choreographer and Creative Director

Countess V. Winfrey, a native of Nashville, TN, began her dance training at the age of eleven at Wharton Arts Magnet Middle School and continued her training at Nashville School of the Arts. She studied Health and Human Performance at the University of Memphis, minoring in Dance. Winfrey joined Dayton Contemporary Dance Company's (DCDC) pre-professional ensemble in 2012, which then led to her professional dance career with the company. Now moving into her seventh season with DCDC, she currently serves as a performer, teaching artist, choreographer, and rehearsal director.

Winfrey has performed works by Ulysses Dove, Donald McKayle, Ray Mercer, Dwight Rhoden, Ronald K. Brown, Abby Zbikowski, Dianne McIntyre, and Donald Byrd. She has choreographed for DCDC, DCDC2, the University of Dayton Dance Ensemble, Oyo Dance Company (Columbus, OH), the Ohio State University's 2021 Spring Repertory Showcase, and Miami University (Oxford, OH). Nationally, she has set work for Clancy Works Dance Company (Washington, DC, 2015), and internationally she has collaboratively choreographed for Kazyna Dance Company (Shymkent, Kazakhstan, 2018). Her commissioned works to date include her first evening-length production, *Memories of Walking in Memphis*, created for University of Memphis's Black History Month (February 2019), and the world premiere of *huMAN/NAture* (February 2022), commissioned by the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company.

### **Vanae Ilesha (Pate) Spoken Word Artist**

Vanae Ilesha (Pate) is based in Dayton Ohio, her hometown, where she has spent the most time developing as an artist. She has been training and performing since her childhood. Vanae's artistry began with her love for dance as a student at Jerldynne's School of Dance, which led her to Stivers School for the Arts where she continued her dance training and found a passion for theater. Vanae has had the opportunity to perform as a member of Dayton Contemporary Dance Company pre-professional ensemble (DCDC2), and in 2012 she had the pleasure to dance with the DCDC first company during their biannual "In the Spirit Of" performance.



Dance will forever have a huge impact on Vanae Ilesha, however she has also expanded her performance and writing skills through her one woman show *Miss Understood*, at Antioch College where she studies performing arts and African American studies, and in the studio with her first single *This Breath Saves*. Vanae Ilesha is truly honored to have been asked to collaborate and create around such a powerful and much needed conversation piece with not only a "sister friend" but an amazing artist and teacher, Countess Winfrey.

### **Alexis Diggs Dancer**

Alexis Diggs is a 22-year-old independent artist from Dayton, Ohio. While dance is her primary artistic medium, she is also classically trained in piano and voice, and deeply enjoys acting and writing. Her dance experience encompasses modern, jazz, contemporary, ballet, and African training, and her creative voice is influenced by all of these styles. Her artistic mission is to create and be a part of work that provokes thought, feeds soul, and ignites a desire to learn, love, and share with the collective. To do this to her fullest potential, Diggs removes the limitations of working only within a certain artistic field. She is deeply grateful for her artistic experiences up to this point and looks forward to what is to come.

### **Nicolay Dorsett Dancer**

Born and raised in Sunrise, Florida, Nicolay Dorsett began her dance training at the young age of seven at Elegant School of Modern Dance. She graduated from the University of South Florida (USF) in the spring of 2020 with a BA in health sciences and a BFA in modern dance performance. During Dorsett's time at USF, she studied under teachers Bliss Kolmyer, Michael Foley, Andrew Carrol, Andee Scott, and John Parks, and performed works by renowned choreographers, including Ulysses Dove's *Vespers* and Claudia Lavista's *Prowl*. In October of 2019, Dorsett was selected to participate in the USF/China Exchange Program and International Creative Dance Seminar at Beijing Normal University. She hopes to continue performing and growing in the beautiful art of dance and is in her first season with the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company!

### **Courtney Draper** Dancer

Courtney 'Taz' Draper is from Toledo, Ohio and is a graduate of the Toledo School for the Arts. She recently completed her BFA in Dance and Arts Management Certificate at Wright State University. Draper was a DCDC2 member for the 2018-2019 season. She has had the opportunity to work with choreographers including Gina Walther, Teressa Wylie McWilliams, Alvin Rangel, Anthony Burrell, Christian Denice, Trezon Dancy, Crystal Michelle and Broadway's *Lion King* performer Ray Mercer. Draper is excited to be completing her first season at DCDC as a Jeraldnye Blunden Fellow and tackling this next chapter in her life.

### **Aaron Frisby** Dancer

Frisby comes from Philadelphia, where he started out dancing in only Hip-Hop and Acrobatics at the tender age of seven. By the age of twelve he was training in Ballet, Jazz and Modern at The POINTE! Dance Studio. In 2010 he was accepted as a student at the Philadelphia Creative and Performing Arts High School (CAPA). Frisby attended The Ailey School Summer Intensive and was accepted into the Scholarship program at The Ailey School. He spent two years as a scholarship student there and was also a part of the student performance group (ASPG), learning and performing works choreographed by Alvin Ailey. Now in his second season with DCDC, Frisby has worked with choreographers including Kirven Boyd, Ray Mercer, and Ronald K. Brown.

### **Niarra Gooden-Clarke** Dancer

Niarra Gooden-Clarke was born in Toronto, Ontario, and raised in Kent, Ohio. She began her dance training at competition studios in her area. She has continued her training at Kent State University, where she will graduate with BAs in Dance and Sociology in Spring 2022. Gooden-Clarke has had the opportunity to work with and perform pieces by esteemed choreographers including Ray Mercer, Yoshito Sakuraba, Tiffany Rae-Fisher, Gary Abbott, Catherine Meredith, Gregory King, and Avree Walker. She is extremely excited to begin her first season with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company as a Jeraldnye Blunden Fellow.



## **Wesley Winfrey III** Music Composer

Instrumentalist, composer, producer, DJ and emcee Wesley Winfrey III hails from Nashville, TN. He started playing saxophone in the middle school band. Upon graduating high school, he attended Belmont University and received his BA in Commercial Music with an emphasis in Music Technology. While at Belmont University, Winfrey honed his craft in woodwind studies, playing saxophone, flute and clarinet and composing music for media. Seeking further education, he took his talents to Seattle, WA, and earning a certificate in Audio Production for film from University of Washington.

Winfrey has shared the stage with artists including John Legend and Kanye West. He has performed all around the world, touring with the S.O.S Band and working closely with international entertainment groups, including the Tel Aviv-based Caliente. Most recently, Winfrey has assumed the role of Music Director onboard Holland America Line (HAL) cruise ships – a role contracted by Beale Street Blues Company, creators of the famous B.B. King Blues Club. His commissioned works include an extensive composition for the opening of DCDC's 2022 spring season. Winfrey is currently based in Atlanta, GA.

## **L'Amour Ameer** Costume and Prop Designer

Turn down the lights... pump up the music. It's show time! Commanding the stage is fashion icon L'Amour Ameer—at 6'4 he's built with power and grace (thanks to his early life as a professional dancer). His hometown is Dayton, Ohio, but every city wants to claim him – especially Chicago and New York, where he has lived periodically. His reputation as a first-class designer is spreading around the world too. His recent whirlwind visit to Liberia only solidifies L'Amour's reputation. At Dayton Fashion Week, *Inside Couture* labeled L'Amour Ameer the "hidden jewel of fashion."

L'Amour Ameer's line, under his new "custom cut couture" label, is available to anyone who wants to look good—they can now afford it because he makes his fashion accessible to those who work for a living. Celebrities have clamored for his designs as well: the string of esteemed names wearing an original L'Amour couture outfit includes Vivica Fox, Bill Cosby, comedian Eddie Griffin, legendary jazz great Miles Davis, and international beauty queens, including Miss St. Croix and Miss Virgin Islands. L'Amour is a father, a man of strong faith, and he is humbled by his God-given talent to bring beauty to the world. Life is worth living, and—Dahling!—you are not truly living unless you are draped in L'Amour couture.

## **Lungs Project** Video and Photography

Lungs Project is a curatorial collective and independent publishing press founded in 2016. Operating between the US and the UK, Lungs Project is established as a transnational platform to promote the work of early career artists and writers from chronically underrepresented backgrounds. The project focuses on building a nourishing, collaborative community of artists and writers by merging contemporary art, design, and literature to prompt cross-disciplinary dialogue.



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