
THE SHED Press Release

THE **BLOOMBERG** BUILDING
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Glendon 'Tyme' Charles, *Maze*, 2019. Photo: Issac Anthony. Courtesy The Shed.

***Maze*, The Shed's World Premiere Commission by Street Dance Pioneer Reggie 'Regg Roc' Gray and Co-Director Kaneza Schaal, Opens July 24 and runs through August 17**

Masters of Flexn Perform in a Labyrinth of Light with Live Music and Vocal Accompaniment

NEW YORK, JULY 11, 2019—On Wednesday, July 24, ***Maze***, an immersive dance-theater piece co-directed by choreographer **Reggie 'Regg Roc' Gray** (The D.R.E.A.M. Ring) and theater artist **Kaneza Schaal** (*Go Forth, Jack &*), will premiere at The Shed as a new commission. Performed by masters of flexn, a form of street dance created in Brooklyn, New York, with roots in Jamaican bruk up, this intimate and powerful 90-minute work explores the puzzles, poetry, and infinite challenges of human coexistence. *Maze* runs through August 17, with performances at 7:30 on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Sunday; at 7:00 and 9:30 pm on Saturdays; and 2 pm on Sundays.

In *Maze*, staged for The Shed's Griffin Theater, audiences come face-to-face with dancers during parts of the performance in an invitation to engage with their work. Moving in an architectural landscape created solely with light, designed by **Tobias G. Rylander** (The 1975, FKA Twigs, The xx), a troupe of 15 dancers will enact social issues that are central to their lives using a movement vocabulary they have worked on together—each one adding a signature style they have developed as established artists in the flexn community.

“Creating *Maze* has been a labyrinth of its own. From the beautiful architecture of lights and the harmonic sounds of live voices, we capture true emotion. We capture tradition with the sounds of taiko and djembe while keeping the integrity of flex dance music,” says Reggie Gray. “These amazing flexn artists are the true meaning of finding one’s self within the maze of our own bodies. These dancers paint stories of a bone-crushing society as they make way for hope of a better future.”

“The physical experimentation and intellectual rigor of The D.R.E.A.M. Ring is joyful creative material. Each section of *Maze* is a vignette, a poem, a story, an invitation to consider the interconnected nature of our collective flight and freedom,” says Kaneza Schaal. “As each of us on the project considered our personal experiences with the abuse of state power infiltrating our most intimate lives, we explored individual and collective mythologies that break open cycles of limited freedom.”

In a conscious effort to invert how The D.R.E.A.M. Ring has traditionally worked, in which dancers often choose existing pieces of music, *Maze* dancers are the originators of content, followed closely and supported by live and improvised vocals and drumming: **Rasaan-Elijah ‘Talu’ Green** on djembe drums; **Taiko Masala (Hiro Kurashima, Laiyona Nakahashi, and Ueno Russel)** on taiko drums; and vocalists **Kanita Miller Hicks** and **Justin Hicks**. **Epic B**, a pioneer of flex dance music (FDM), will be on deck each night as DJ.

The D.R.E.A.M. Ring cast includes: **Deidre ‘Dayntee’ Braz** (Rehearsal Director), **Rafael ‘Droid’ Burgos**, **Glendon ‘Tyme’ Charles**, **Quamaine ‘Virtuoso’ Daniels**, **Sean ‘Brixx’ Douglas**, **James ‘Banks Artiste’ Davis**, **Shelby ‘Shellz’ Felton**, **Aaron ‘Doc’ Frazier**, **Calvin ‘Cal’ Hunt**, **Derick ‘Spectacular Slick’ Murreld**, **Andre ‘Dre Don’ Redman**, **Joshua ‘Sage’ Morales**, **Giovanie ‘Geo Alexander’ McCullen**, **Risa ‘Risa’ Morales**, **Corey ‘Corey Ringmaster’ Batts**. For weekend performances, the cast will be joined by students in The Shed’s FlexNYC program, **Ebony Sexius** and **Emmanuel Hernandez**.

Completing the creative team are **Andrew Lulling**, Sound Designer; **Eisa Davis**, Literary Contributor; **Corey ‘Corey Ringmaster’ Batts**, Style Coordinator; and **Hazel Hernandez**, Assistant Director.

The new commission is Kaneza Schaal’s first collaboration with Gray. A 2018 Ford Foundation Art For Justice Bearing Witness Fellow, among other honors, Schaal’s projects have been presented in Rwanda, Cairo, and Abu Dhabi, in addition to New York City, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and major cities nationwide.

Maze marks a new chapter in The Shed’s association with Reggie Gray and his dance company, The D.R.E.A.M. Ring. Members of the company were featured last year in *A Prelude to The Shed*, the organization’s first public program presented in 2018. Since 2016, The Shed has been collaborating with Gray and flexn teaching

artists on FlexNYC, a free, after-school residency program in dance activism for young people. Today, FlexNYC operates in all five boroughs through partnerships with public schools, New York City Housing Authority community centers, and Beacon youth programs.

“The Shed strives to create a productive and democratic space for artists and audiences, where they can engage creatively with the evolving issues of our time,” says **Alex Poots**, The Shed’s artistic director and CEO. “The virtuosity and artistry The D.R.E.A.M. Ring has created over the years have been a constant source of inspiration. We are thrilled to continue this deeply rewarding experience with this new commission from the company.”

“With FlexNYC, The Shed set into action our commitment to emerging artists, socially engaged art, and youth programming that turns participants into co-creators,” says **Tamara McCaw**, The Shed’s Chief Civic Program Officer. “The pre-opening program now supports the creative expression of six hundred students annually as they use dance to surface the urgent and complex societal issues they face every day. Taking inspiration from this, the artists in *Maze* explore cycles of state-sponsored violence and challenge the institutional structures that shape our lives. We’re profoundly grateful to our amazing creative team, led by Regg Roc and Kaneza Schaal, for this collaborative work.”

The lead supporter of *Maze* is Wells Fargo. Civic Programs at The Shed are generously supported by Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF). The creation of new work at The Shed is generously supported by The Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch Commissioning Fund and The Shed Commissioners, a group of visionary philanthropists providing essential early support for The Shed’s mission of commissioning original works of art, across all disciplines, for all audiences.

Creative Team Biographies:

Brooklyn native **Reggie ‘Regg Roc’ Gray** is a dancer, choreographer, and pioneer of the multi-genre dance form, flexn. As a child, Gray became fascinated by Michael Jackson, and as a teenager, he turned to the hyper-expressive styles of dance that originated in the Jamaican street culture of Brooklyn, such as bruk up and dancehall. Flexn is a combination of various styles from the local scene, such as bone-breaking, pausing (the style Gray evolutionized), gliding, get-low, connecting, and hat tricks. Flexn was named after the regional television program *Flex-N-Brooklyn*, where local dance groups showcased their latest moves. Gray has traveled all over the world with his award-winning dance crew RingMasters, and in 2011, he founded The D.R.E.A.M. Ring. In 2015, Gray produced his first major work of choreography *Flexn* and followed it with *Flexn Evolution* in 2017. He has toured both productions around the world. Gray is a regular feature on American television, appearing in the third season of *America’s Best Dance Crew*, various advertisements, and in music videos for Wayne Wonder, Sean Paul, Nicki Minaj, and other artists. Currently, Gray serves as an artistic director for FlexNYC, a social

justice dance residency program that partners with schools and community centers around New York City (created by The Shed and The D.R.E.A.M. Ring).

Kaneza Schaal is a New York City-based theater artist. Her recent work *Jack &* showed in BAM's 2018 Next Wave Festival, at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and with its co-commissioners Walker Arts Center, REDCAT, On The Boards, Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, and Portland Institute for Contemporary Art. Schaal received a 2019 United States Artists Fellowship, 2018 Ford Foundation Art for Justice Bearing Witness Award, 2017 MAP Fund Award, 2016 Creative Capital Award, and was an Aetna New Voices Fellow at Hartford Stage. Her last project, *Go Forth*, premiered at Performance Space 122 and then showed at the Genocide Memorial Amphitheater in Kigali, Rwanda; Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans; Cairo International Contemporary Theater Festival in Egypt; and at her alma mater Wesleyan University. Schaal's piece *Cartography* premiered at the Kennedy Center in January 2019 and was workshopped through New Victory Theater Lab and NYU Abu Dhabi. Most recently, Schaal directed Bryce Dessner's *Triptych (Eyes of One on Another)*, which premiered at LA Philharmonic, the Power Center in Ann Arbor, MI, and will show at BAM Opera House and Holland Festival. Her work has also been supported by Baryshnikov Arts Center, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Theater Communications Group, and a Princess Grace George C. Wolfe Award. Her work with the Wooster Group, Elevator Repair Service, Richard Maxwell / New York City Players, Claude Wampler, Jim Findlay, and Dean Moss has brought her to venues including Centre Pompidou, Royal Lyceum Theater Edinburgh, the Whitney Museum, and MoMA.

Swedish-born, Los Angeles-based lighting designer **Tobias G. Rylander** began his career on the technical side of the industry for several years as a lighting technician at local lighting companies and at the Swedish Royal Opera. In 2007, he began to design and tour with European acts such as Lykke Li, Fever Ray, and Miike Snow. Within just a few years, he gained worldwide recognition as a highly innovative, daring, and accomplished lighting and live show conceptual designer, working with acts such as The xx, Mark Ronson, Phoenix, and The Strokes. Rylander has recently branched out into the fashion world, designing runway shows and events for clients like Balenciaga and Calvin Klein. He continues to create stage and lighting designs, most recently for acts such as The 1975, Robyn, FKA Twigs, London Grammar, Little Dragon, and Skepta. His most recent work is a multisensory art installation in collaboration with Karen O and Danger Mouse at the Marciano Art Foundation in Los Angeles. Rylander was awarded the prestigious Knights of Illumination 2016 award for his work with The 1975.

Experienced in a range of productions from intimate music arrangements to theater, dance, performance art, and their management, **Andrew Lulling's** credits for live audio engineering include Robert Wilson's *Zinnias: The Life of Clementine Hunter*, David Gordon's *Schlemiel the First, The Builders Association, The Elements of Oz*, and Robert Whitman's *Passport*. *Maze* is Lulling's debut as sound

designer, but not his first collaboration with Reggie Gray or The D.R.E.A.M Ring, as he tours actively with *Flexn Evolution* as production manager.

Born and raised in Brownsville, East New York, **Epic B** is a producer, DJ, vocalist, and visual artist. Initially known for his work as a hip hop producer—along with production for the likes of Vybz Kartel and Popcaan in 2009—he is now a fundamental member and pioneer of the flex dance music (FDM) scene. Epic is also the music director for *Flexn*, a show which *The New York Times* called “part protest, part dance party, part collective autobiography.” Epic’s debut EP, *Late Night FlexN*, arrived via Manchester-based label Swing Ting in late 2017 to a positive reception. Its lead single “One Time” landed on *FACT Magazine’s* Top 50 Tracks of 2017, and additional coverage of the project came from *Resident Advisor*, *Complex UK*, and *Mixmag*.

Justin Hicks is a multidisciplinary artist and Drama Desk-nominated composer who investigates themes of identity and American Dream aesthetics. Hicks has worked as a writer and performer with various artists including Steffani Jemison, Abigail DeVille, Charlotte Brathwaite, Hilton Als, Meshell Ndegeocello, Cauleen Smith, Helga Davis, Lynn Nottage, and Ayesha Jordan. His work has been featured at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, the Public Theater, Festival Steirischer Herbst, Western Front Society, the Whitney Museum of American Art, Nottingham Contemporary, and The Kennedy Center, among other institutions.

Kenita Miller Hicks is a Drama Desk Award-winning actor and vocalist who has performed in such notable Broadway productions as *The Color Purple* and *Xanadu*. She was most recently seen as Mama Euralie in the Tony Award-winning, Grammy-nominated *Once on This Island*. Her regional work includes an AUDELCO Award-winning portrayal of Zora Neale Hurston in Urban Stages’ *Langston in Harlem*. She is also a member of the band The Hawtplates. Upcoming work includes *Waterboy in a Mighty World*, a piece based on the work of Odetta and the story of Bass Reeves that will be in residency this summer at Bushwick Starr.

Taiko Masala, based in Brooklyn, has thrilled audiences throughout the United States with performances of taiko, Japan’s traditional drumming, combining the training and discipline of Japanese martial arts with the precision and power of complex drumming. Taiko Masala’s arsenal of instruments—all handmade by the ensemble—range from small eight-inch hand-held drums to five-foot barrel drums, and features the giant 250-pound O-daiko.

Percussionist and composer **Rasaan ‘Talu’ Green’s** performances include ones with *Fela!* on Broadway, the Brooklyn Nets, *Sousatzka the Musical*, and *Chop and Quench*, along with band collaborations with artists Patti LaBelle, Lauryn Hill, The Roots, Aloe Blacc, and Estelle. Green has performed globally in Africa, North America, Australia, and Europe. He is a resident musician with Resura Arkestra and provides musical arrangements for dance companies and master workshops throughout New York City. He holds a BFA in music from Long Island University.

Eisa Davis is a performer, composer, and writer working on stage and screen. A Herb Alpert Award recipient, Cave Canem fellow, and Obie Award winner for Sustained Excellence in Performance, Davis was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama for her play *Bulrusher*, and wrote and starred in the stage memoir *Angela's Mixtape*. Alongside her 12 full-length plays, she has served as a story editor for the Spike Lee Netflix series *She's Gotta Have It*, penned the narration for Cirque du Soleil's ice show *Crystal*, and released two albums of music. Performance work includes Carrie Mae Weems's *Grace Notes/Past Tense*, *The Looming Tower*, *House of Cards*, *The Wire*, *Passing Strange*, and the new musical adaptation of *The Secret Life of Bees*.

Corey 'Corey Ringmaster' Batts is a pioneer of the flexn dance style. He has taught this style for over 20 years around the world and is known for his hat tricks and unorthodox connect dance moves. He is the originator of Ringmasters. His credits include BET's *106 & Park*, MTV's *America's Best Dance Crew*, and music videos for Sean Paul, Wayne Wonder, Elephant Man, Bunji Garlin, Skrillex, and Justin Timberlake.

Hazel Hernandez is a Salvadoran immigrant based in Brooklyn, New York. Hernandez is a theater director, playwright, and performer. They have worked with DC Hip Hop Theatre Festival, Brooklyn College, The Public Theater, Access theatre, Tierra Narrative, and Sundance Institute: Theatre Program. Their main objective is to curate, create, and facilitate works that serve immigrants, women of color, and the LGBTQIA+ communities. They strive to bring underrepresented communities to the forefront of American theater.

Ryan A. Ross is a recent graduate from Syracuse University with a BFA in stage management. Ross has worked on The Shed's *Soundtrack of America* and with *The First Annual Trump Family Special*, *The Wrong Box*, *Lost in Yonkers*, *Tenth Man*, Red Bull Theater, Broadway Cares Equity Fights Aids, the York Theatre Company (*Desperate Measures* and *Unexpected Joy*), the Williamstown Theatre Festival, and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

The D.R.E.A.M. Ring (Dance Rules Everything Around Me):

Deidra 'Dayntee' Braz takes her stage name from a DJ she listened to on reggae CDs. Her styles are waving and grooving, with an early dancehall foundation. She is one of the first female flexers. As a teacher, she draws her energy from the people she teaches.

Rafael 'Droid' Burgos, or **King Droid**, is a born-and-bred Brooklyn native. At only 24 years old, he has been flexn since 2010. Before he became serious about dance, he pursued artwork animation, singing, and the performing arts. A master of gliding/connecting, get low, and pausing, he takes his stage name from his animated, mechanical style.

Glendon ‘Tyme’ Charles is a 27-year-old, East New York native. Since he started flexn, he has traveled around the world. Charles sees flexn as a way to escape personal trials and tribulations, and as an outlet to prevent self-destruction.

Quamaine ‘Q Virtuoso’ Daniels is a Brooklyn-based master of flexn. He started flexn in 2004 after seeing a flexn battle in his school lunchroom and has danced professionally since 2015. He has toured with the production *Flexn* (2015) in Australia, Italy, and Amsterdam. Virtuoso is also a teaching artist with The Shed’s FlexNYC program. He is currently working on paintings that fuse flexn and his unique drawing style as a part of The D.R.E.A.M. Ring.

James ‘Banks Artiste’ Davis grew up in Queens and Brooklyn, surrounded by creativity, spirituality, and discipline. As a teen, he met peers and mentors in dance and began to entertain people in the streets of Brooklyn. His specialty dance style is krump. Banks played the role of the angel Gabriel in the English National Opera’s *The Gospel According To Mary*. Banks recently toured Europe with the Park Avenue Armory’s *Flexn*.

Sean ‘Brixx’ Douglas started flexn at the age of 13 and has been influenced by his neighborhood and peers, many of whom were also flexn dancers. He gravitates toward flexn for its incorporation of many styles, and his personal style includes gliding and bone breaking.

Aaron ‘Doc’ Frazer is from Brooklyn. Doc started flexn when he was a teenager with a group of childhood friends. He is a part of the flexn dance team named Main EvenTT a.k.a. M90. He is also a music producer and pianist who creates in the new genre of flex dance music (FDM). In addition to his team, he tours with The D.R.E.A.M. Ring.

Shelby ‘Shellz’ Felton is from Brooklyn. She learned of flexn when she discovered the television show *Flex-N-Brooklyn* in high school. Through flexn, she found a way to remove the limits from her self-expression. She uses flexn to tell her own stories, confront her own fears, and heal from past trauma.

Abena Floyd is the executive director and producer of The D.R.E.A.M. Ring Inc. and the program associate for The Shed’s FlexNYC. Floyd has worked as the assistant producer and company manager for the Park Avenue Armory production *Flexn*, which toured in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Romania, England, and parts of the United States. She recently produced a multimedia exhibition, *Beyond the Yellow Tape*, alongside photographer Carol Dragon. She will produce *Flex Ave*, a new production with Cami Music, which will tour in 2020.

Calvin ‘Cal’ Hunt has danced since the ballet and jazz lessons his mother enrolled him in as an elementary school student. He learned of flexn at 15, and his specialty styles include gliding, get low, and movement. After six years in the military

following high school, Cal began to dance full time and tell his many stories through his body's movements.

For Brooklyn native **Giovanie 'Geo Alexzander' McCullen**, dancing was an outlet growing up amidst police brutality, gang violence, and broken homes. As an adolescent, Geo was inspired by the television show *Flex-N-Brooklyn*. He used flexn as an outlet for his pain after his mother passed away, leading him to battle in flexn tournaments in San Francisco and Atlanta. Geo is a teaching artist for children and adults in Montreal and New York and he is the originator of the gliders technique.

Sage is a concept of movement by artist **Joshua Morales** that utilizes the mechanics of the flexn dance style. He merges emotion, character, sound, and imagery to create and tell stories through his motion. He has performed and taught in Southeast Asia, Norway, and France. He has appeared in movies, music videos, and ads in storefronts, including ads for Converse.

Risa 'Risa' Morales is an artist who moved to New York from Japan. She learned the flexn dance style in Brooklyn. She blends multiple styles and inspirations to express her personality through the language of the body. Along with other techniques, Risa creates a unique form of movement for the eyes and hearts of her audience to follow.

As a flexn dancer, **Derick 'Spectacular Slicc' Murreld** has traveled to 11 countries, appeared in a Monster Sound advertisement during the Super Bowl, a Tribeca Films campaign, Rihanna's VMA performance, and music videos including Skrillex's "Red Lips," David Guetta's "Say My Name," Davido's "All Of You," and others.

Andre 'Dre Don' Redman is from Flatbush, Brooklyn. He has been involved with flexn for 12 years and feels connected to the style of dancing through his family's Jamaican background. He is a member of the group MainEventT and has won dance tournaments, performed on well-known stages, and toured the world.

FlexNYC Dancers:

Dominican and Harlem-raised, **Emmanuel Hernandez** expresses himself through dance and finds therapeutic qualities within the art form of flexn. Of the flexn styles, Hernandez specializes in bruk up, waving, and foundation. Beginning his senior year at Landmark High School, he has studied the flexn style over the last three years with the FlexNYC program. Hernandez's talent was recognized by his flexn mentors Deidra Braz and Jason Cust. Hernandez finds inspiration in New York City's annual Pride March and Brazilian artists who have taught him that good music transcends a language barrier.

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Ebony Sexius is a Bronx-born artist who has been dancing since she was a little girl. While she saw herself as a lawyer even in her first year at Landmark High School, she always imagined becoming a dance teacher, as well. Concentrating in the flexn styles of bone breaking, foundation, and waving, Sexius considers artists Shelby Felton, Deidra Braz, and Jason Cust as mentors who have inspired her and recognized her talent. R&B recording artist Aaliyah is deeply influential to Sexius's artistic practice.

Production Credits:

Ryan A. Ross, Stage Manager
Seth Huling, Head Audio
Maytte Martinez, Head Electrician
Stephen Sury, Lead Carpenter
4 Wall Lighting, Additional Lighting
Sound Associates, Additional Audio
Special thanks to Nike

Shed Program Team:

Alex Poots, Artistic Director and CEO
Tamara McCaw, Chief Civic Program Officer
Solana Chehtman, Director of Civic Programs
María Fernanda Snellings, Assistant Producer, Civic Programs
Maggie MacTiernan, Director of Artist Services
Marc Warren, Director of Production
Neal Wilkinson, Production Manager
Isaac Katzanek, Production Manager
Pope Jackson, Production Supervisor

About The Shed:

Located on Manhattan's west side, where the High Line meets Hudson Yards, The Shed commissions original works of art, across all disciplines, for all audiences. From hip hop to classical music, painting and sculpture to literature, film to theater and dance, The Shed brings together leading and emerging artists and thinkers from all disciplines under one roof. The building—a remarkable movable structure designed by Diller Scofidio + Renfro, Lead Architect, and Rockwell Group, Collaborating Architect—physically transforms to support artists' most ambitious ideas. Committed to nurturing artistic invention and bringing creative experiences to the broadest possible audiences, The Shed, led by Artistic Director and CEO Alex Poots, is a 21st-century space of and for New York City.