



HEART OF BRICK

serpentwithfeet, Wu Tsang, Raja Feather Kelly

UC San Diego
ARTPOWER



Dear ArtPower Friends,

For two decades, ArtPower at UC San Diego has been a leader in arts and culture, enriching the lives of countless individuals through diverse and captivating programming. ArtPower's 20th anniversary season provides us with the opportunity to reflect on the organization's remarkable journey and its enduring commitment to bringing world-class performing arts to our community.

Founded in 2003, ArtPower was conceived with a simple yet profound mission: to engage, energize, and transform the diverse cultural life of the University and San Diego through the performing and media arts. Over the years, ArtPower has consistently delivered a diverse array of performances that span the genres with the goal of developing more empathetic students and community members who are better prepared to engage in the world around them.

Our 20th anniversary season promises to be a testament to ArtPower's unwavering dedication to this mission. With a carefully curated lineup of performances and events, this season is set to captivate, challenge, entertain, and inspire audiences in ways that only ArtPower can.

ArtPower's commitment to education and community engagement remains as strong as ever. Throughout the season, there will be a range of programs that connect artists with students, community members and art enthusiasts of all ages and backgrounds. These initiatives not only enhance our understanding of the arts, but also for one another.

As we embark on this milestone season, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to those who have invested their time, talent, and treasure into ArtPower at UC San Diego. Looking forward to the next twenty years, let us revel in the beauty of artistic expression and reflect on the impact ArtPower has had on our community. Thank you for being part of the ArtPower legacy.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Colleen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

Colleen Kollar Smith

Dance/U.S.A.

HEART OF BRICK

Oct 25, 2023 at 7:30 pm
Epstein Family
Amphitheater

Program

A Joyce Theater Production

Heart of Brick

Create by serpentwithfeet

Music & Concept

serpentwithfeet

Director

Wu Tsang

Choreographer + Dramaturg

Raja Feather Kelly

Set Designer

Carlos Soto

Lighting Designer

Luke Rolls

Costume Designer

Julio Cesar Delgado w/ support from Telfar

Text

Donte Collins & serpentwithfeet in collaboration
with Performers

Music Director

Sensei Bueno

Sound Designer

Asma Maroof

Performers

Shaquelle Charles, Dylan M. Contreras, Justin
Daniels, Matthew Deloch, Chrystion Dudley,
Brandon Gray, Nelson "Nellie" Enrique Mejia Jr.

Production Manager/Stage Manager

Olivia Brown

Lighting Supervisor

Dan Stearns

Sound Engineer

Stephanie Loza

Producers

Ross LeClair, Joyce Theater Productions
Barbara Frum, outer/most

Associate Producer/Company Manager

Bridget Caston, Joyce Theater Productions

serpentwithfeet Manager

Kazz Laidlaw, EQT

Funding Credits

Produced: The Joyce Theater Foundation

Co-Produced: Kampnagel International Summer Festival

Co-Commissioned by: The Joyce Theater Foundation, Kampnagel International Summer Festival, The LA Phil - with generous support from Linda and David Shaheen, Seattle Theatre Group, Hancher Auditorium at the University of Iowa

Cast of Characters

serpent serpentwithfeet

Brick Dylan M. Contreras

Redwood Chrystion Dudley

Amir/Darius Justin Daniels

Jamar Brandon Gray

Saige Nelson "Nellie" Enrique Mejia Jr.

Dorian Shaquelle Charles

Quan Matthew Deloch

Heart of Brick Synopsis

Heart of Brick tells the story of a nightclub from an intimate and tender Black gay perspective. Surreal and film aesthetic elements are used to blur the lines between fiction and reality: spoken word, poisoned plants and mysterious riddles from a familiar elder weave together a magical telling of serpentwithfeet's new album GRIP. The piece reverently nods to Isaac Julien's 1989 film *Looking for Langston*, which explores the life of the poet Langston Hughes and Black queer nightlife during the Harlem Renaissance. *Heart of Brick* also takes inspiration from an array of clubs in New York, Atlanta, DC, and Miami. For serpentwithfeet, these spaces "transformed me and I often say these venues raised me a second time. The dance floor has been a medium for Black queer people to decompress and build community." This community is also evident on stage. The group of performers represent the creators and patrons of the club, through their conversational dynamics and movements. A romantic relationship that evolves between serpent and club owner/bouncer Brick touchingly demonstrates tenderness and closeness between two men, as well as the tensions that emerge when an outsider enters the community.

ACT I

We first meet serpentwithfeet, who is a first time visitor at the club and is hopelessly romantic. At the same time, a group of friends are excitedly preparing for a wild night out. They all come together at the legendary Back Yard - a Black gay club owned by Brick and his ex-lover Redwood. When Serpent meets Brick sparks fly.

ACT II

A few days later, Brick and Redwood are boasting about their successful party when Darius, an elderly man, wanders by with a mysterious warning. Later on, Serpent and Brick's relationship grows deeper, but Brick fears intimacy. He leaves to go back to the bar, where Darius reveals that someone has poisoned the plants on the patio.

ACT III

Brick has been poisoned and is rushed to the hospital. Serpent visits Brick. Darius reappears offering another riddle to save Brick's life with a mystical flower. With this new knowledge, Serpent rushes to the club, to ask for help to save Brick – nobody wants to help. Serpent returns to Brick whose condition is getting worse. Brick has a fever dream, where malevolent spirits confront him with his issues of intimacy. Serpent sets off to find the mystical flower. The others find and help him. Together, they find what they're looking for.

About the Artists/Program Notes

Josiah Wise savors romantic moments under his alias serpentwithfeet. The 35-year-old Los Angeles-based artist with a background in R&B and classical music expresses desire and pleasure in songs so beguilingly gentle that he has become one of the most exciting alternative R&B voices. Now he is developing his first stage work with award-winning visual artist Wu Tsang, who expresses queer identity in films and is resident director at Schauspielhaus Zurich. Completing the team is Raja Feather Kelly, one of New York's most luminous choreographers, with both Pulitzer Prize-winning Broadway works and his own experimental dance works; as well as Solange and Bob Wilson designer Carlos Soto, star stylist Julio Delgado, and poet Donte Collins. Together with seven dancers, the team tells the story of a Black gay nightclub. This is where the utopian potential of a safe space and a great love story between the club security guard Brick and serpentwithfeet unfold. The latter is on stage himself – with songs from his new album *Grip*.

Music from the album *GRIP*:

Spades

Hummin'

Damn Gloves

Black Air Force

Safe Word

Rum

1 to 10

Deep End

Lucky Me

serpentwithfeet is simply letting the pendulum swing nowadays. The Los Angeles-based singer is taking the natural steps that a singer as talented and as versatile as he is would take from chapter to chapter in his career. Throughout his career, serpent has exhibited this versatility through experimental R&B music. Two years removed from his second album *DEACON*, serpentwithfeet is gearing up to return with his third album *GRIP*.

GRIP finds its home on the dance floor of Black gay clubs and the intimate moments that happen there and afterward, no matter the location. For serpentwithfeet, Black gay nightlife spaces "raised him a second time." These clubs provided a sense of welcoming that nurtured him in a new way.

GRIP explores the intimate forms of physical touch and how they occur. Whether it be a grip around the waist or the face, serpentwithfeet managed to explore all

angles thanks to the second lens he looked through.

"While working on the album, I had lots of questions when I was out. How do certain people stand at the bar when ordering a drink; Are they on their phone trying to disappear from the scene? Are they flirting with the bartender? Are they writhing slowly to the music? What does it look like when a guy runs into his ex and that ex is with someone new? I'm curious about all of this."

GRIP begins with the lively dance record "Damn Gloves" with Ty Dolla \$ign. The record kicks off the album for an unusual jarring yet exciting start to the project, one that goes against his track record of gentle and smooth album intros. "Safe Word" squeezes itself into the tightly interlocked relationship of partners who know each other very well. And "Spades" places monumental value on a loved one's desire and patience to teach them how to play the card game that is so tethered to the Black community.

Serpent set his attention on the world that he called home in the important adult years of his life, and with this, we see a study of community on GRIP. This community had a huge impact on the Baltimore-born singer, and through ten songs, he gives it its flowers with a body of work that highlights the moments that are most close to the heart.

Wu Tsang (Director) is an award-winning filmmaker and visual artist. Tsang's work crosses genres and disciplines, from narrative and documentary films to live performance and video installations. Tsang is a MacArthur 'Genius' Fellow, and her projects have been presented at museums, biennials, and film festivals internationally. Awards include 2016 Guggenheim Fellow (Film/Video), Creative Capital, Rockefeller Foundation, and Warhol Foundation. She has collaborated with brands including Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Marni, Saint Heron x Woolmark, and Swarovski. Tsang received her BFA (2004) from the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) and an MFA (2010) from University of California Los Angeles (UCLA). Currently Tsang works in residence at Schauspielhaus Zurich, as a director of theater with the collective Moved by the Motion.

Raja Feather Kelly (Choreographer, Dramaturg) is a choreographer and director, and the Artistic Director of the feath3r theory (TF3T), a dance-theatre-media company. Kelly has created 18 evening-length premieres with the feath3r theory, most recently *UGLY Part 3: BLUE* at Chelsea Factory. The company's latest work, *The Absolute Future*, premieres in 2024. His choreography can currently be seen in *White Girl in Danger* at the Second Stage Kiser Theater, written by Michael R. Jackson and directed by Lileana Blain-Cruz. He choreographed the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical *A Strange Loop* (Lyceum Theatre, premiered off-

Broadway at Playwrights Horizon), and is also a choreographer for Off-Broadway theater with frequent collaborators like Jackson, Blain-Cruz, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins, and Sarah Benson. Recent works include *Bunny Bunny* (UC San Diego), *We're Gonna Die* (Second Stage Theater), *SUFFS* (The Public Theater), *Lempicka* (La Jolla Playhouse), and *Scenes for an Ending* for the Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company. He has received numerous accolades, including a Princeton Arts Fellowship (2023–25), three Princess Grace Awards, an Obie Award, an Outer Critics Circle honor for choreography for the Pulitzer Prize-winning and Tony Award-winning musical *A Strange Loop*, a Randjelović/Stryker Resident Commissioned Artist at New York Live Arts, a Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship, a Creative Capital award, a Breakout Award for choreography from the Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SCDF), the Solange MacArthur Award for New Choreography, Dance Magazine's Harkness Promise Award, and the SDCF Joe A. Callaway Award finalist for outstanding choreography of *Fairview* (Soho Rep, Berkeley Rep, TFANA, and winner of the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama).

Luke Rolls (Lighting Designer) is a British Lighting Designer working mainly in the UK and US. He recently designed the 2022 Rex Orange County Who Cares Tour and is the Lighting Director for Lil Nas X since his first tour Long Live Montero last year. At the start of 2022, Luke designed the We Will Rock You 2022 UK Tour with Rob Sinclair as well as Spanish Entry Chanel's song "SloMo" for the Eurovision Song Contest 2022. We Will Rock You made a return to the London Coliseum in the summer of 2023 for a three month run, which Luke designed with Rob Sinclair again. In 2021, he designed the UK and Festival tour Californian Soil for London Grammar, along with the album release stream at Alexandra Palace. Beyond lighting design, Luke has worked as a design associate for Rob Sinclair on Greta Van Fleet's *Dreams in Gold*, System of a Down's 2022 Tour, MØ - *The Motordrome Experience*, Kylie Minogue's *Infinite Disco*, and Jessie Ware's *What's Your Pleasure Tour*. Other theater credits include Lighting Design for We Will Rock You German Tour 2021/2022 and Associate Lighting Designer for *Starlight Express* in Bochum.

Carlos Soto (Scenic Designer) is a New York-based designer and creative director's credits include *Orfeo* (Santa Fe Opera, dir. Yuval Sharon); *Proximity* (Lyric Opera of Chicago with Yuval Sharon); *The Valkyries* (Detroit Opera, dir. Yuval Sharon); *Tristan und Isolde* (Santa Fe Opera, dir. Zack Winokur); *Only An Octave Apart* with Justin Vivian Bond and Anthony Roth Costanzo (St. Ann's Warehouse, Wilton's Music Hall, Spoleto Festival); *The No One's Rose* by composer Matthew Aucoin and choreographer Bobbi Jene Smith (Stanford Live); *The Black Clown* with Davóne Tines (ART, Lincoln Center, 2018–19). Other recent highlights include *Eldorado Ballroom* (BAM, designed and co-curated with Solange Knowles); *Passage* with Solange Knowles & Wu Tsang (International Woolmark Prize 2021), *In Past Pupils*

and *Smiles* with Knowles (Venice Biennale, 2019), *Witness!* (Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg and Sydney Opera House, 2019/20), and *When I Get Home* (film and concert tour 2019). Soto has collaborated closely with Robert Wilson since 1997, most recently on *Bach 6 Solo*, *Der Messias*, and *I was sitting on my patio this guy appeared I thought I was hallucinating*.

Julio Delgado (Costume Designer) is a stylist and costume designer based in New York City. A fashion enthusiast at heart, Julio has managed to interweave his love of storytelling through clothing and costume design to create imagery using various visual outlets including, music videos, editorials and live performances. Some recent career highlights of his have been working with Solange Knowles' *Bridge-S* (2019) for the Getty Museum, and *We Might Appear as Forest Fires* (2023) for the Berggruen Institute with director George Miller in Los Angeles, California. He has also been working with American opera singer Davóne Tines, most recently in collaboration with the Louisville Kentucky Orchestra to celebrate and honor the late and beautiful, Breonna Taylor. His editorial work has been featured amongst various media publications, including *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Interview Magazine* and *WSJ Magazine*. His work was recently on display in the exhibit, *Fool of the Month* (2022) for the Art Basel fair in both Switzerland and Miami in collaboration with Swiss photographer, James Bantone—where they built a series of grotesque portraits referencing the infamous Employee of the Month program—Delgado and Bantone examined the smile as a narrative of racialized terror.

Shaquelle Charles (Dorian, dancer) is a Afro-Caribbean solo artist-choreographer who obtained his B.F.A in dance at Marymount Manhattan College with a concentration in ballet. With an aptitude in numerous forms of art; photography, film, and choreography—Shaquelle orchestrates intimate moments drawn on human connection and the external factors of the world which connects us all. Hailing from Atlanta, Georgia, Shaquelle focuses his efforts on utilizing the physicality of his ballet technique, incorporated with the body's individual history to extend a sui generis experience for the audience. He gives credence to the body as a source of history and proceeds to pull from these histories and experiences to connect the audience with his movements. Based in New York, Shaquelle has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, gone onto choreograph and performed at La Biennale de Venezia 15th international dance festival under the direction of Wayne McGregor. Shaquelle continues to freelance and return as a guest artist for NY based companies like Mark Morris Dance project and Dianne McIntyre's Sounds in Motion, all while continuing his choreographic endeavors.

Dylan Contreras (Brick, dancer) is a Brooklyn-based dancer and interdisciplinary creator. As a graduate of The Boston Conservatory, he has been featured in works by Doug Varone, Juel D. Lane, and Dam Van Hyunh. Professionally, Dylan's worked with Jon Batiste, Tiesto, David Dorfman, Cherice Barton, Hivewild, as well as Kampnagel Hamburg, and Fire island dance Festival. Currently, Dylan is a performer and dramaturg for both Haus of Pvmnt, and Motlee party. Centralizing the work he creates and performs around the Black queer experience, Dylan dances for every little Black boy, who longs to see someone who looks like them, doing the thing they love most in the world.

Native of Atlanta, Ga, **Justin Daniels (Darius/Amir, dancer)** began his artistic career while attending Tri-Cities High School Visual & Performing Arts Program in Eastpoint, Ga. From there furthering his studies and training earned a B.F.A. in contemporary dance performance with a minor in psychology from Boston Conservatory and abroad at The Central Academy of Drama in Beijing. Now as a New York based dance artist, choreographer, and photographer represented by BLOC NY. Justin has been Featured in *Dancelitalia!* (Spring, 2021) and *VoyageATL Magazine* (Spring, 22')—Justin has had the opportunities to explore and expand the collectiveness of concert, commercial, and digital dance spaces.

Matthew Deloch (Quan, dancer) is originally from Gonzales, Louisiana, where he started dancing at the age of two. Although he didn't enjoy it just yet, he would soon fall in love with dancing around the age of seven. When he was 15, he attended his first dance convention ever which was Tremaine, and couldn't stop talking about how much he loved it for months. After seeing the closing show and all of the assistants and fun vibrant dances, he knew his next goal was to be one of those assistants! The following summer he auditioned and became a part of the Tremaine Performance Company and then the following year was given the title of Tremaine Senior Male Dancer of the Year. During these years with Tremaine, Matthew decided he wanted to make a career out of dancing and do it professionally. In the fall of 2017, Matthew moved to New York City to attend Pace University where he worked toward his Bachelor of Fine Arts in commercial dance. After the pandemic, Matthew received his B.F.A. in commercial dance from Pace University in 2021. Since then Matthew has been living full-time in New York City chasing his dreams of performing and fulfilling his love for dance. Following Matthew's graduation, he was lucky enough to land his first movie (Blue's Big City Adventure) and his first professional theater job being a part of the ensemble in the Radio City Christmas Spectacular. Matthew has gotten to check off some of his other dream jobs such as performing in the Super Bowl Halftime Show, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the Mariah Carey Christmas Show. Matthew has worked with choreographers such as JaQuel Knight, Sonya Tayeh, Bryan Tanaka and so many more.

Chrystion Dudley (Redwood, dancer) is from Indianapolis, Indiana. He has been performing for 16 years. Training in genres such as ballet, modern, musical theatre, hip hop, aerial, tap, and contemporary. Chrystion received his B.F.A. in dance performance from the University of the Arts where he collaborated with artists such as Sidra Bell, Tommie Waheed, and Gary Dennis Jeter. Now he tours with Royal Caribbean Cruise Line as a dancer/aerialist and hopes to continue his journey connecting and collaborating with performing artists all around the world.

Brandon Gray (Jamar, dancer) was born in Maryland and began dancing at age 13. He graduated from Duke Ellington School of the Arts in Washington D.C. and attended Towson University. He then studied at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater on scholarship. Brandon is a brand ambassador and has modeled for GAP, MCM Worldwide, Patrick Church, Nihl and has been in Vogue as well. Gray is also signed to the talent agency MSA. With his love for acting as well he has been on Netflix, CBS and is currently in a documentary called *Black As U R*. He loves hosting and being a part of podcasts on topics of racial and gender equality, acting as a voice and example for others to continue his goal of representation for all young men to be exactly who they want to be, no matter what. Gray was recently a part of Taraji P. Henson's 1,000 men shoot celebrating men of color finding therapy through activities where he represented dance. Brandon performed and toured the world with Complexions Contemporary Ballet from 2017–22. Gray has also dove into immersive shows as he's performed at The McKittrick Hotel (home of *Sleep No More*).

Originally from Virginia, **Nelson "Nellie" Enrique Mejia Jr. (Saige, dancer)** is a freelance artist based in Brooklyn, New York. A 2022 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University's Dance and Choreography department, he received awards for Outstanding Creative Work and The Carpenter Scholarship. Additional training includes Arts Umbrella, Gagabalab, and Springboard Danse Montreal. Upon graduation, Nelson performed repertory by Gaspard Louis regionally and internationally with Gaspard&Dancers. He is currently with Pony Box Dance Theatre and Brian Brooks Moving Company. Nelson has also danced works by Kyle Abraham, Rena Butler, Alanna Morris, Yoshito Sakuraba, and The Urban Bush Women, among others.

Joyce Theater Productions (JTP) is the in-house producing entity for The Joyce Theater Foundation, Inc., formed to create original work for The Joyce's stage and for worldwide touring. This initiative provides dance artists who have little or no formal management or infrastructure the means to create productions of the highest standards of excellence. The program also includes the Associate Company model, offering sustained producing, fiscal, and/or administrative management to companies that may require short or longer term support.

Olivia Brown (Production/Stage Manager) is a production stage manager and theater technician who specializes in dance production, originally from New Hampshire and now living in New York City. She has worked at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in multiple capacities, most recently serving as the Production Manager for the Henry J. Leir Stage during the 2022 festival season. In between production jobs, Olivia spends her time as a freelance personal trainer, lighting technician, and an avid cyclist.

Dan Stearns (Lighting Supervisor) is a lighting designer for theater and dance. He has spent much of the past decade touring globally with companies including A.I.M by Kyle Abraham, Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble, LeeSaar The Company, and Pavel Zuštiak/Palissimo, among others. Other collaborations include Bebe Miller, Bill Young/Colleen Thomas & Co., Jane Comfort & Company, Tami Stronach, Paul Bedard/Theater in Asylum, Scott Ebersold, Tara Ahmadinejad/Piehole, and Sanaz Ghajar/Built for Collapse. He is a graduate of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. dan-stearns.com.

Stephanie Loza (Audio Engineer)

Bridget Caston (Company Manager/Associate Producer) is the associate producer for Joyce Theater Productions and acting company manager for SWING OUT. An alum of The University of Texas at Austin (2021) with a B.F.A. in Dance Performance and Choreography and B.B.A. in Consulting and Change Management, Caston was born in New Orleans, raised in Fort Worth, and grew up dancing at local studios and summer dance programs across the country. Since graduation, Caston has worked with Gesel Mason Performance Projects, K.DMC (a corporate events agency), and at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Company Management. At Jacob's Pillow she worked with acclaimed dance companies such as Ronald K. Brown/Evidence, A.I.M. by Kyle Abraham, and Miami City Ballet among others. Caston is also the Company Manager for Malpaso Dance Company, an associate company of Joyce Theater Productions.

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A portion of funding for ArtPower is provided by the UC San Diego Student Services Fee Committee.

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DANCE/USA

Thur, Apr. 11 at 8 pm

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Tickets: \$20–45

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