

For Immediate Release
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PEAK PERFORMANCES AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES 2022–2023 SEASON, IN WHICH ARTISTS CONFRONT DARK TRUTHS OF THE PAST AND PRESENT AND HELP US IMAGINE A FUTURE BEYOND THEM

**Artists Invoke the Powers of Community as They Bring Audiences Into Fiery,
Mysterious, Illuminating Visions of Our World**

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Programming Includes:

- **nora chipaumire's *Nehanda*, an Opera Surrounding a Legendary Spirit and Offering a Legal and Philosophical Defense for the First Heroes of Zimbabwe's Liberation Struggle, September 15–18, 2022**
- **Why Not Theater's *Prince Hamlet*, a Visually Stunning and Seamlessly Bilingual Retelling of the Shakespeare Classic, with Actors Performing in English and ASL, Adapted and Directed by Ravi Jain, September 22–25, 2022**
- **Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças' *Fúria*, a Visceral Work from the Revolutionary Company, Assembling Nine Dancers in a Frenzied, Morphing Mass November 3–6, 2022**
- **Femmes Du Feu Creations' *In the Fire*, a Solo Dance/Aerial Performance Work Conceived, Created, and Performed by Holly Treddenick, Based on Her Father's Experiences as a Firefighter, November 10–13, 2022**
- **Mary Halvorson's *Amaryllis and Belladonna*, Two Interlocking Projects by the Brooklyn-Based Guitarist, Composer, and MacArthur Fellow, December 17 & 18, 2022**
- ***The Night Falls*, a New Myth for our Fractured Era, with a Book and Lyrics by *Swamplandia!* Author Karen Russell, Music and Lyrics by Ellis Ludwig-Leone, Choreographed and Directed by Troy Schumacher, February 9–12, 2023**
- **Cie L'Oublié(e)'s *Ombres Portées*, an Acrobatic Work Leaping into the Shadows of the Unsaid, Conceived and Directed by Raphaëlle Boitel, March 23-26, 2023**

- **Tzeni Argyriou’s *ANONYMO*, Bringing Audiences Back to a Pre-Technological Time When Art-Making Was a Collective Act, May 6–9, 2023**
- **Two Workshops: *Rhythm Bath*, a Performance-Installation Conceived and Choreographed by Susan Marshall and Designed by Mimi Lien, July 2022; and *Sentinel*, a Chamber Opera Created by Danielle Birrittella, Composed by Viet Cuong, with a Libretto by Claressinka Anderson, May 2023**

PEAK Performances at Montclair State University today announces its 2022-2023 season, a series of works confronting a world of chaotic imbalance, acknowledging that only by facing the past and present can we move into the future. With community as a bedrock theme of their works and a fundamental element of many of their practices, featured artists often call on the collective to unveil unseen truths and transformative possibilities—with vivid and radical vocabularies of movement, language, and artistic expression. The season speaks to the organization’s consistent introduction of audiences into the imaginations of some of the world’s boldest international and American artists. The insight, provocation, curiosity, and beauty they find within these visions can expand their understanding of their world.

Work this season hails from around the globe, with focuses as far-reaching as a tourist-trap grotto in Florida, 19th century Zimbabwe, contemporary Brazil under Bolsonaro, and pre-technology Greece. A current of darkness and fevered mystery connects them as they forge new, unpredictable relationships between countless artistic forms. Bridging contemporaneity and tradition, they often consider the elements of our past that perpetuate society’s ills, and those that can be summoned to understand and reimagine our society.



Prince Hamlet. Photo by Bronwen Sharp. Hi-res [here](#).

Jedediah Wheeler, PEAK Performances Artistic Director, says, “As this season has coalesced, a connective element of darkness, unknowns, and unresolved questions—and the potential light and fresh starts that can result from confronting them in community—has emerged. Across 2022-2023, we behold Hamlet’s unresolved despair, given new life by Why Not Theater; the gruesome Nehanda myth explored by nora chipaumire in direct, collective engagement with the audience; Lia Rodrigues’s and nine dancers’ furied response to poverty, inequity, and discrimination; the dystopian undercurrents and vivid world-building of Karen Russell, Ellis Ludwig-Leone, and Troy Schumacher’s collaborative work; Mary Halvorson’s eruptive musical collaborations with the Mivos Quartet and six spectacular improvisers; Holly Treddenick’s dive into her father’s fiery memory; Raphaëlle Boitel’s acrobatic excavation of a family’s unspoken truths; and Tzeni Argyriou’s choreographic revival of lost community. That theme, community, is the key that unlocks these works’ shared desire for something better for humankind, as they examine and transcend struggle and shadow. The season begins, incidentally, with a portrait of the destruction of a community—and ends with the blessing of a community reinvigorated.”



Furia. Photo by Sammi Landweer. Hi-res [here](#).

The season kicks off with the “defiantly charismatic...rock star of dance” (*The New Yorker*) **nora chipaumire**, examining issues of political governance and resistance in Zimbabwe, and the legacies of the colonial project in the global South in her new, immersive and participatory opera *Nehanda* (September 15–18). It continues with **Why Not Theater**, a company that makes “diverse, inclusive theatre the norm” (*CBC*) and reframes Shakespearean text in their bilingual *Prince Hamlet*, coalescing ASL and spoken English and featuring **Christine Horne** in the title role (September 22–25); **Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças’ Furia**, viscerally exploring collectivity and otherness against the fascist backdrop of contemporary Brazilian politics (November 3–6); **Femmes Du Feu Creations** artistic director **Holly Treddenick**’s solo

work, *In the Fire*, combining dance and aerial circus with a vocabulary of movement inspired by her firefighter father's stories (November 10–13); *Amaryllis and Belladonna* by **Mary Halvorson**, a jazz guitarist and composer whose combined influences result in music “like little else, in any genre” (*Pitchfork*) (December 17 & 18); acclaimed *Swamplandia!* Author **Karen Russell**, choreographer **Troy Schumacher**, and composer **Ellis Ludwig-Leone's** *The Night Falls*, a dance-driven blend of opera and music theater set within a kitschy Floridian roadside attraction (February 9–12); **Cie L'Oublié(e)s/Raphaëlle Boitel's** acrobatic excavation of the unspoken within a family, *Ombres Portées*, marking the artist's return to PEAK following her “stark and stunning...exquisitely designed and surprisingly moving” (*The New York Times*) *When Angels Fall* (March 23–26); and **Tzeni Argyriou's** *Anonymo*, addressing our social media age with a return to collectivized art-making tradition (May 6–9).

In July, 2022, choreographer **Susan Marshall** and scenic designer **Mimi Lien** will workshop *Rhythm Bath*, a performance installation offering a communal, meditative space, created with access for neurodiversity in mind, and marking Marshall's return to PEAK following her earlier performance installation *Frame Dances*. May, 2023 will feature another workshop, of *Sentinel*, a chamber opera created by **Danielle Birrittella**, composed by **Viet Cuong**, with libretto by **Claressinka Anderson**, tracing its heroine's journey through grief in a dystopian reality of mass shootings and environmental collapse.

PEAK PERFORMANCES 2022-2023 SEASON SCHEDULE AND DESCRIPTIONS

Nehanda

Artistic Directed, Conceived, Designed, and Performed by **nora chipaumire**

Shona Spiritual Dramaturgy by **Gwinyai Rutsito**

U.S. Premiere

(Opera, Zimbabwe)

September 15–18, 2022

nora chipaumire returns to PEAK Performances with an immersive, participatory, and durational opera surrounding the legend of *Nehanda*—venerated by the Shona people, native of Zimbabwe and central Mozambique—a powerful spirit who inhabits only women. In the late 19th century, *Nehanda's* medium was **Charwe Nyakasikana**, a heroic revolutionary leader, who orchestrated the first uprisings in British-occupied Southern Rhodesia in 1896-97. Together with four comrades, she was captured, and after getting an expedited and unjust trial, executed by the British colonizers. With a libretto based on the infamous court case “The Queen vs. *Nehanda*” (1898), and staged as a trial reenactment using dance, voice, and design crafting, *Nehanda* offers a legal and philosophical defense for the first heroes of Zimbabwe's liberation struggle.

Prince Hamlet

A Bilingual Why Not Theatre production

Adapted and Directed by **Ravi Jain**

ASL and Visual Translation by **Dawn Jani Birley**

Regional Premiere

(Theatre, Canada)

September 22–25, 2022

Ravi Jain's remixed, reimagined, and bilingual *Prince Hamlet* features a cross-cultural, gender-bent cast (with **Christine Horne** in the title role) – challenging traditional ideas of who can tell this story.

Interweaving Shakespeare’s spoken text with heightened and poetic American Sign Language, this physical theatre production creates a visually stunning retelling for both hearing and Deaf audiences. “Why Not’s *Prince Hamlet* has riches that reward multiple viewings,” writes *The Globe and Mail*, while the *Toronto Star* praised Jain’s vision as “breath[ing] fresh life into the characters...this is no ordinary *Hamlet*.”

Furia

Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças
a Piece for Nine Dancers
Regional Premiere
(Dance, Brazil)

November 3–6, 2022

With overflowing imagination, the radical Lia Rodrigues Companhia de Danças captures a world of fury. As nine diverse performers coalesce in a morphing, amoebic mass, they become a world, as Rodrigues describes, “overwhelmed by ghastly and luminous images, crossed by unanswered questions and torn by contrasts and paradoxes.” A corporeal, propulsive, visceral vision of collectivity from within the confines of marginalization and othering, *Furia* was conceived amidst the ascent of Bolsonaroism. Here, an assembly of bodies forms and contorts as a whole against the onslaught of authoritarian state violence, racism, staggering inequality, and environmental destruction.

In collaboration with The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota; The Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio; PEAK Performances at Montclair State University, Montclair, NJ; BAM, Brooklyn, NY.

In the Fire

Femmes du Feu Creations
Created and Performed by Holly Treddenick
Original Score by John Gzowski
Directed by Monica Dottor
U.S. Premiere
(Multidisciplinary/Aerial/Dance, Canada)

November 10–13 | 2022

Femmes du Feu Creations founder Holly Treddenick’s *In the Fire* entwines the worlds of circus and firefighting—her world, her father’s world, respectively—in a solo dance/aerial circus performance. Featuring an original choral work (commissioned by PEAK Performances) based on stories that Holly Treddenick’s father told about being a firefighter, the production uses rescue equipment as invented apparatuses—including boots, a rope loop, and an aerial ladder. *In the Fire* is also a show about Treddenick’s relationship with her father, herself, her memory, and an homage to firefighters and to those lost in fire.

In The Fire received preliminary support from the MICC Working Group on Circus Commissioning (TOHU, Montréal), an international consortium dedicated to advancing new circus globally.

Amaryllis & Belladonna

by Mary Halvorson
Stage Design by Aaron Copp

(Newly Staged Concert, USA)

December 17 & 18, 2022

Adam O’Farrill, trumpet; **Jacob Garchik**, trombone; **Patricia Brennan**, vibraphone; **Mary Halvorson**, guitar; **Nick Dunston**, bass; **Tomas Fujiwara**, drums
plus **The Mivos Quartet**: **Olivia De Prato**, violin; **Maya Bennardo**, violin; **Victor Lowrie Tafoya**, viola; **Tyler J. Borden**, cello

Brooklyn-based composer, MacArthur fellow and the “most forward thinking guitarist right now” (*NPR*) Mary Halvorson brings *Amaryllis* and *Belladonna*—two new, modular, and interlocking projects—to PEAK Performances. The six-song suite *Amaryllis* filters Halvorson’s compositional explorations of melody, harmony, and counterpoint and influences spanning jazz, experimental, new music and beyond through the lens of six master improvisers and, for three songs, The Mivos Quartet, opening into her largest project to date. *Belladonna* is a set of five compositions performed by Halvorson and The Mivos Quartet, whose parts are through-composed and augmented by Halvorson’s guitar improvisations.

The Night Falls

Book and Lyrics by Karen Russell

Music and Lyrics by Ellis Ludwig-Leone

Choreographed and Directed by Troy Schumacher

World premiere

(Dance, Music Theatre, Opera | USA)

February 9–12, 2023

A new myth for our fractured era, choreographed and directed by Troy Schumacher (NYC Ballet and BalletCollective), with book and lyrics by Karen Russell (*Swamplandia!*), music and lyrics by Ellis Ludwig-Leone (San Fermin), staged for nine dancers, eight singers, and a chamber music ensemble. All across America, people on the brink of despair begin to have the same nightmare. A song will not leave their heads. This dangerously beautiful music lures lost souls to a kitschy Floridian roadside attraction built around a sublime grotto, “home of the world’s eeriest echoes” and concert hall of The Sirenettes. With choreography that dramatizes the leap of empathy between bodies and music that channels the polarities of surrender and resistance, *The Night Falls* shows the visceral power of art to brace us against the abyss.

Developed and co-produced by BalletCollective, Inc.; The American Opera Project; and PEAK Performances at Montclair State University. *The Night Falls* was developed during a Project Springboard: Developing Dance Musicals 2018 residency.

Ombres Portées

Cie L’Oublié(e)

Direction and Choreography by Raphaëlle Boitel

Artistic Collaboration, Light, Scenography, Spider Design by Tristan Baudoin

Original Music by Arthur Bison

U.S. Premiere

(Acrobatic Theatre, France)

March 23–26 2023

A visually cinematic take on the ghosts hiding in the shadows of our families and selves, Raphaëlle Boitel's latest choreographic and acrobatic work plunges us into the heart of the unsaid. At the crossroads of circus, dance, and theatre, *Ombre Portées* surrounds K, an energetic but wounded young woman looking for answers, and on a Kafkaian quest for identity among numerous members of her family. A vivid physical exploration of trauma, courage, and the volatility of our senses of balance and self, *Ombre Portées* takes inspiration from film endings including those of *Requiem for a Dream*, *Brazil*, *Festen*, and *Parasite*, and the bodies of work of Fritz Lang, David Lynch, and Alfred Hitchcock.

U.S. Tour Partners: ArtsEmerson, Emerson College (MA), The Williams Center, Lafayette College (PA), and PEAK Performances @ Montclair State University (NJ).

The presentation of *Ombres Portées* by Cie L'Oublié(e)—Raphaëlle Boitel has been made possible with the support of FACE Contemporary Theatre, a program of Villa Albertine and FACE Foundation, in partnership with the French Embassy in the United States, with support from the Florence Gould Foundation, the Ford Foundation, Institut français, the French Ministry of Culture, and private donors.

ANONYMO

Amorphy

Concept and Choreography by Tzeni Argyriou

Dramaturgy by Miguel Angel Melgares

Original Music and Sound Design by Pepe Garcia Rodriguez

Set Design and Visual Concept by Vassilis Gerodimos

Commissioned & Produced by Onassis Stegi

Production & Touring by Delta Pi

U.S. Premiere

(Dance, Greece)

May 6–9, 2023

A journey back to a time when art was not something created by particular, named individuals, but a practice which brought people – and kept communities – together. A journey to the source of dance, *Anonymo* immerses itself in these societies' dances and modes of expression, rooted in human contact, holding, group cohesion and shared joy. *Anonymo* observes our lives through collective body memory, the experience of passing traditional dances on and their complete transformation into a contemporary movement idiom. It is the representation of a dance which, though it has creators, insists on defining itself as “anonymous” as it seeks its roots in rites of initiation and participation.

[Workshop]

Rhythm Bath

Concept and Choreography by Susan Marshall

Installation Design by Mimi Lien

July, 2022

An extended residency and performance installation, *Rhythm Bath* explores rhythmic entrainment and interpersonal synchrony—uniquely human traits neurologically connecting to external rhythms and others' rhythmic movements. As the parent of a man with apraxia, a neuromotor disorder that makes it difficult to control one's body and that is often present in autism, choreographer Susan Marshall had been

frustrated by the difficulty of sharing her own and others' stage performances with her son. Guided by an interdisciplinary working group, "Dancing with Neuromotor Diversity," the work is informed by responses from adults with apraxia to questions such as "How do you physically experience the architectures and sounds of different spaces?" "What helps you locate your body in space?"

[Workshop]

Sentinel

A Chamber Opera

Created by Danielle Birrittella

Composed by Viet Cuong

Libretto by Claressinka Anderson

May 2023

An agoraphobic woman constructs a virtual reality in an attempt to cope with life after her beloved is killed in a mass shooting. Through the use of a psychedelic drug discovered on the dark web she is able to reconstruct her memories and finds healing. Control and surrender are at the heart of this three-character (soprano, tenor, mezzo-soprano) opera. Will the heroine leave the lush world of her own construction and risk re-entry into a world she is unable to control? Invoking the timelessness of grief, *Sentinel* is set in a future outside of time, where the world from which the heroine hides is disappearing from humanity's abuse.

ABOUT PEAK PERFORMANCES

PEAK Performances (Jedediah Wheeler, Artistic Director) at Montclair State University and has been honored by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts with previous Arts Citation of Excellence and Designation of Major Impact. Programs in this season are made possible in part by the Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund, PEAK Patrons, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and the FACE Foundation.

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