

ABRONS
ARTS HENRY STREET
CENTER SETTLEMENT

APR 15 - 17, 2021

Whale Fall
mayfield brooks

MAYFIELD BROOKS **WHALE FALL**

CAST & CREW

MAYFIELD BROOKS

DIRECTOR, CHOREOGRAPHER,
VOCALIST

VIOLET ASMARA TAFARI

PRODUCTION MANAGER

SIMONE JOHNSON

ASSISTANT PRODUCTION
MANAGER

SUPPORTING CAST

MARÍA WETHERS

JULES RENCHER

SIMONE JOHNSON

SUZI SADLER

CINEMATOGRAPHER + EDITOR

ADDITIONAL CAMERA

OPERATORS

DIANA MOLINA &

VIOLET ASMARA TAFARI

ATHENA KOKORONIS

COSTUME DESIGNER

EVERETT SAUNDERS

MUSIC COMPOSER

JAMES KOGAN

POST PRODUCTION MIXER +

SOUND DESIGN & RECORDING

LAWRENCE SCHOBBER

SOUND DESIGN ASSISTANT

TEXT CREDITS

WHALE FALL POEM BY

MAYFIELD BROOKS

THE BOOK OF JONAH

FROM **THE KING JAMES BIBLE**

MOBY DICK

BY **HERMAN MELVILLE**

SONG CREDITS

STRANGE FRUIT WRITTEN BY

ABEL MEEROPOL AND SUNG

BY **MAYFIELD BROOKS**

SUNDER BY **NICOLAS JAAR**

THE PSYCHOLOGICALLY

ULTIMATE SEASHORE BY

IRV TEIBEL

A virtual premiere of a video work by mayfield brooks that considers how a whale's life of darkness, codas, echolocations, and vertical slumbering can choreograph a time of grief.

No theater lights. No sets. No performance. No narrative. This is an encounter. What can a barren theater teach me? How does a Black artist dance in the abyss? How can the sperm whale's life of darkness, codas and echolocations choreograph this time of grief? How can I decompose this show? *Whale Fall* is an opera somewhere in the void, an echo into darkness, an orgiastic silence. A "whale fall" describes the process of a whale's decomposition after it dies and falls to the ocean floor, where it provides vital nutrients for deep sea creatures.

Whale Fall is dedicated to my great grandmother and family matriarch Betty Gertrude (Riley) Chambers also known as Bigmama.

Artist's Note

Dear audience.

I wish I could be with you right now.

I wish I could share the feeling of being underwater with whales and the spirits of ancestors, but maybe you already know that feeling.

This project was born out of a desire to sit with grief and rage in a world that discards too much and consumes too much. As a result, the bodies of whales and the bodies of Black folk seem to have a kinship in how they have been both targeted and consumed since the transatlantic slave trade. I have also come to know that some slave ships were later used as whaling vessels.

So, I look to the whale to teach me how to live and die. How they breathe, sing, listen, echolocate, communicate, take care of their matriarchal families, and enrich the oceans is the material for some of the dances and songs that I have created for *Whale Fall* in collaboration with composer, Everett Saunders. There are whales of lore and there are whales living in our oceans today. I do not know how they suffer but I do know that they are routinely poisoned, caught in nets, and subject to myriad abuses unbeknownst to the humans that cause their demise.

The *Whale Fall* is the whale's way of teaching us how to decompose ourselves beyond just rotting in our graveyards of excess. It is a phenomena that regenerates the ocean as the whale's body decomposes and falls to the ocean floor--sometimes over decades--and creates special deep sea ecosystems. So the question becomes how can my life as a Black artist emulate the *Whale Fall* in order to regenerate my own past, present and future and how does this process replenish the earth? I invite you to join me in this process. The work of *Whale Fall* continues at the Center for Performance Research's storefront gallery space, as an immersive installation and extension of Abrons' online presentation of *Whale Fall*. For more info go to: <https://www.cprnyc.org/events/mayfield-brooks-whale-fall-installation>

Whale Fall with me,

xo

~mayfield brooks

ABOUT **Whale Fall**

mayfield brooks (Director, Choreographer, Vocalist) improvises while black, and is currently based in brooklyn, new york on lenapehoking land, the homeland of the lenape people. mayfield is a movement-based performance artist, vocalist, urban farmer, writer, and wanderer. they are currently an artist in residence at the center for performance research (cpr) and abrons arts center in new york city/ lenapehoking, is faculty at movement research nyc and the editor-in-chief of the movement research performance journal. mayfield teaches and performs practices that arise from their life/art/movement work, improvising while black (iwb).

Simone Johnson (Performer and Assistant Production Manager) is an interdisciplinary artist, researcher and cultural worker based in Lenapehoking (New York City). She mostly makes work about and with water. Simone has shown work at Snug Harbor Cultural Center, Panoply Performance Lab, New Women Space, Martin E. Segal Theatre Center, Chinatown Soup and Oxbow Gallery.

Athena Kokoronis (Costume Designer) is an artist living and working in New York since 2005. Domestic Performance Agency (DPA) is the name and space of Kokoronis' current choreographic process that gives attention to aspects of performance production, curation, food, cloth, and searches for the creative economy within these realms that begins and extends out of domestic scale with hospitality. Choreographic problem-solving with time, sensitivity, and intimacy are at the core of the DPA vision.

James Kogan (Production Audio and Mixing) is an audio engineer and field recordist raised on Canarsie and Munsee Lenape land in Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn. Previous work includes production audio for Erica Schmidt's Mac Beth, Paul Desveaux's Pollock, Sharon Ann Fogarty's Faust 2.0, and Larissa Velez-Jackson's Zapatografía, as well as mixes and recordings for saxophonist Aakash Mittal's Awaz Trio, the Ukrainian Village Voices, The Knights, and the Brooklyn Telemann Chamber Orchestra. His interests span folk and creative music, knafeh, sludge metal, and sonic ethnography of the natural and built environments.

ABOUT **Whale Fall**

Julienne Rencher or Jules (Performer) is a dance based performance artist currently residing in the Lenape Land colonially known as Ridgewood Queens NY. Jules is honored and deeply appreciative to play, communicate and explore the possibility and ancestral webs of sea beings. Thank you mayfield for revealing this deep ever revealing connection.

Suzi Sadler (Cinematographer) is a Brooklyn based cinematographer. Their focus is building non-hierarchical film sets and finding more ethical and sustainable ways to make films. Suzi's recent work includes: Performance: Eiko Atake's A Body in a Cemetery, Luan Joy Sherman's Intricate Rituals, Music videos: Feel Like Shit The Weekend Ladies, Highway 9 the Visual EP Sarah M., Belief Lou Tides (dir. Lorelei Ramirez), Lips 2 Lips Ziemba (dir Colleen Marie Foley), Documentary: MigrantScape dir. Thanushka Yakupitiyage, Narrative: Bad at Birthdays dir. Jesse Thurston (feature, 2021), Low Road dir. Eleanor Wilson (MoMA), Work in Progress dir. Dan Pfau (LA Shorts Fest).

Everett Saunders (Composer) is an accomplished composer, sound designer, and producer. With an expertise in audio post-production and multi track board operation, he is the founder and creative director of Flux Innovations. Notable clients include PBS, Sony Music, and Columbia Records. As a film and theatrical composer he's a two time awardee of the New Music USA Project Grant, a 2018 New York Dance & Performance Bessie Award winner, and a recipient of coveted residencies at the Baryshnikov Arts Center and the Petronio Residency Center. Saunders has composed original works for revered theatrical and contemporary artists including Urban Bush Women, Edgar Arceneaux, and Jaamil Kosoko.

Lawrence Schober (Assistant Sound Designer) is a theatre sound designer. NYC: Indoor Person (Normal Ave), The Conversationalists (Bushwick Starr); American Morning (Prospect Theater); On This Side of the World (Access Theater); Eh Da? (NYTW Next Door). Regional: Pillowtalk (Victory Gardens, Chicago); SeaWife (White Heron Theater, Nantucket MA). Associate Design: Sanctuary City (NYTW); Passage (Soho Rep); Ain't No Mo (Public Theater); SeaWall / A Life (Public Theater); Jomama Jones' Black Light (Greenwich House).

www.lawrenceschober.com

ABOUT **Whale Fall**

Violet Asmara Tafari (she/her) (Production Manager, Additional Camera) is a West Indian, Production Manager and Stage Manager, using the lens of African teachings and a griot to inform her management style. Allowing storytelling and creativity to lead the way Violet assists and supports artists of various calibers and mediums as they unfold their work on stage.

María Wethers (she/her) (Performer) has lived and worked in Lenapehoking (NYC) since 1997. She is a Black, queer, woman dance artist and independent creative producer & curator. María received a 2017 NY Dance & Performance ("Bessie") Award for Outstanding Performance with the Skeleton Architecture collective.

Whale Fall FUNDING

Whale Fall is commissioned by the Abrons Arts Center through the Performance AIRspace Residency, which is supported by the Jerome Foundation.

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Whale Fall SPECIAL THANKS

Carolyn M. A’Hearn, Maria Baranova, George and Jo Ann Brooks, Brett Douglas Davis, Gia Kourlas, Eric Phillips-Horst, Alexandra Rosenberg, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Works on Water Residency at the Climate Museum Governors Island, Cape Cod Modern House Trust Residency, Access/Axis residency through A.P.E and SCDT, Shane Gero of The Dominica Sperm Whale Project

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Whale Fall PRESS

Be sure to read mayfield's interview with Gia Kourlas in [The New York Times](#).

Whale Fall SOCIAL

Join us as mayfield brooks takes over the Abrons Arts Center Instagram for an *IG Live Artist Talk* to discuss *Whale Fall's* conception and development with various collaborators. Be sure to tune in on **Saturday, April 17 at 12 PM ET**.

#improvisingwhileblack #whalefall

[@mayfieldbrookz](#) [@whalefallopera](#)

<http://www.improvisingwhileblack.com>

ABOUT ABRONS

Abrons Arts Center is a home for contemporary interdisciplinary arts in Manhattan's Lower East Side neighborhood. A core program of the Henry Street Settlement, Abrons believes that access to the arts is essential to a free and healthy society. Through performance presentations, exhibitions, education programs and residencies, Abrons mobilizes communities with the transformative power of art.

Abrons Arts Center values freedom of expression and creativity, ever striving to provide creative communities with a space that celebrates diversity of thought and experience. Abrons aims to be an anti-oppressive home to people from all backgrounds and does not discriminate on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, citizen status, ancestry, age, housing status, religion, disability, sex or gender identity. As definitions of expression and inclusion evolve, Abrons is committed to continually revising this statement in collaboration with our communities.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgment

Abrons Arts Center is situated on the Lenape island of Manhahtaan (Mannahatta). We pay respect to Lenape peoples and ancestors past, present, and future, and acknowledge our reliance on the land and waters of Lenapehoking, the Lenape homeland. We offer our care and gratitude to Lenapehoking, and are committed to resisting colonialism through the support of Indigenous-led programming and Indigenous artistic practices.

You are welcome here.

Support neighborhood businesses! As a thank you for supporting our programming, we're offering discounts to some of our favorite Lower East Side hangouts. For more information, click on abronsartscenter.org/plan-your-trip/dining-and-attractions. And get a discount when you bring this program!



Abrons Arts Center at Henry Street Settlement

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