

Lincoln Center's

October 16–November 18, 2018

# white light festival

Friday–Saturday, November 16–17, 2018 at 7:30 pm

## Blak Whyte Gray (U.S. premiere)

Boy Blue

Michael "Mikey J" Asante, *Creative Direction and Music*

Kenrick "H2O" Sandy, *Choreography*

Lee Curran, *Lighting Design*

Ryan Dawson Laight, *Costume Design*

With additional choreographic contributions from the cast

*Performers:* Ricardo Da Silva, Jordan Franklin, Natasha Gooden, Gemma Kay Hoddy, Dickson Mbi, Nicole McDowall, Theophilus "Godson" Oloyade, Kenrick "H2O" Sandy

*This performance is approximately 90 minutes long, including intermission.*

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*Blak Whyte Gray* is made possible in part by The Joelson Foundation and The Harkness Foundation for Dance.

Major endowment support for contemporary dance and theater is provided by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

Endowment support for the White Light Festival presentation of *Blak Whyte Gray* is provided by Blavatnik Family Foundation Fund for Dance.

**This performance is made possible in part by the Josie Robertson Fund for Lincoln Center.**

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Gerald W. Lynch Theater  
at John Jay College

*Please make certain all your electronic devices  
are switched off.*

The White Light Festival 2018 is made possible by The Shubert Foundation, The Katzenberger Foundation, Inc., Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater, The Joelson Foundation, The Harkness Foundation for Dance, Great Performers Circle, Chairman's Council, and Friends of Lincoln Center

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*Blak Whyte Gray* is produced by Boy Blue

Co-commissioned and co-produced by the Barbican

*Blak Whyte Gray* was created using public funding by Arts Council England

Boy Blue is an associate artist of the Barbican, London, and a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council, England

#### **UPCOMING WHITE LIGHT FESTIVAL EVENT:**

*Saturday, November 17 at 7:30 pm in the Rose Theater; Sunday, November 18 at 5:00 pm*

#### **Only the Sound Remains (U.S. premiere)**

An opera by **Kaija Saariaho**

Directed by **Peter Sellars**

**Philippe Jaroussky**, countertenor

**Davóné Tines**, bass-baritone

**Nora Kimball-Mentzos**, dancer and choreographer

*Pre-performance discussion with Kaija Saariaho,*

*Peter Sellars, and Ara Guzelimian on Sunday,*

*November 18 at 3:45 pm in the Agnes Varis and*

*Karl Leichtman Studio*

For tickets, call (212) 721-6500 or visit [WhiteLightFestival.org](http://WhiteLightFestival.org). Call the Lincoln Center Info Request Line at (212) 875-5766 to learn about program cancellations or to request a White Light Festival brochure.

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*We would like to remind you that the sound of coughing and rustling paper might distract the performers and your fellow audience members.*

*In consideration of the performing artists and members of the audience, those who must leave before the end of the performance are asked to do so between pieces. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not allowed in the building.*

# Blak Whyte Gray (U.S. premiere)

## Part I **WHYTE**

*Performed by*

Ricardo Da Silva, Gemma Kay Hoddy, Dickson Mbi

## **GRAY**

*Performed by*

Theophillus "Godson" Oloyade

Natasha Gooden, Jordan Franklin

Nicole McDowall, Kenrick "H2O" Sandy

Ricardo Da Silva, Gemma Kay Hoddy, Dickson Mbi

*Intermission*

## Part II **BLAK**

*Performed by*

Ricardo Da Silva, Natasha Gooden, Jordan Franklin,

Gemma Kay Hoddy, Dickson Mbi, Nicole McDowall,

Theophillus "Godson" Oloyade, Kenrick "H2O" Sandy

# Discovering the World of *Blak Whyte Gray*

Michael "Mikey J" Asante speaks with Angie Smith, theater producer at London's Barbican Centre, about the ideas and motivation behind the work.

***Boy Blue has said that Blak Whyte Gray will reveal "a different side to the company's personality." How will the piece do that?***

Increasingly Ken ["H2O" Sandy] and I have had loads of conversations about issues that affect us personally and the world at large. Our work has always responded to the issues of our young people and the climate we live in—but this is the first time we have expressed these thoughts artistically on such a large scale.

It feels like an appropriate time to be talking about things that are important to us and our community: the Black Lives Matter situation, the current political climate in the U.K. post-Brexit, the backlash against capitalism, the narcissistic role of social media....

There is so much tension in the world. You can see people are not happy with what they've been given, what they've been told they need to do. They're starting to question.

***Will this work appeal to your loyal audiences and those who've never seen a Boy Blue show before—what can they expect?***

The majority of our regular audiences are very loyal but are also of a similar age to us so we know they're having the same sorts of thoughts and feelings about the world today. We/they are the parents now, and all of these issues affect both us and our children.

But also, we aim to blur the worlds of hip-hop with all styles of dance ranging from contemporary to African (basically whatever expresses the emotion or vibe we are trying to convey at that moment), and hopefully in a more sophisticated, unique, and abstract way we will bring something fresh and different to people who just enjoy dance as an art form.

***Specifically how do you think your work will resonate with the current issues you mention?***

Although the work is very personal to us, the issues are common to us all in different ways and we hope the audience will make their own comparisons with it.

*Whyte* looks at the idea of being stuck or held down, of not getting opportunities, and the numbness, the submission this can create in us. Whether this results in us not reaching our goals, or feeling depressed, these are universal themes which box people in.

Then we have *Gray*, which is about an awakening from the slumber, the numbness presented in *Whyte*. It's about taking the courage to question things and the tension between apathy and action.

*Blak* is about the death of ego and the birth of freedom. It's an opening up, a celebration, transcendence. A space we're meant to be in—you could definitely call it spiritual.

***Kenrick (co-artistic director of Boy Blue) has said that the work has an “emotional” aspect. Could you explain this?***

I cannot hide my frustration and my anger about events in the United States right now surrounding police brutality, which first came to light with the Rodney King situation in the '90s. As Ken and I delve deeper into our own personal journeys, something as significant as that is inevitably going to affect our work.

But as I said, we want to take people on their own personal journey. Everyone has their own “asylum,” their own angers and frustrations, so we hope people will relate to the three “spaces”—the three sections—in their own way. It is essentially about the human experience! We are all in this together!

***Why does it feel important to return to your roots in this work and what does that mean to you?***

Returning to my roots has been a big thing for me in the past five or six years. Perhaps it's getting older and thinking about who you really are—I'm not saying I'm making a blatant U-turn, as the African rhythms have always been there and I love that sound and that earthy energy. However, I've never made an explicit reference to my heritage in my work before, but it feels like the time is right on this project.

***Do you feel hip-hop is in a time of change and evolution?***

We're really trying to push forward the idea that hip-hop is not just about dancing to a track that is verse and chorus, it's about self-expression. In the sense that we celebrate the freestyler, we celebrate the battler. Hip-hop has no boundaries and no limits; it embraces every other style and does not discriminate. It will go where the creator, the choreographer, the dancer takes it. I think it's in a beautiful space right now.

# Blak Whyte Gray

By Michael "Mikey J" Asante

Super Heroes  
misunderstood  
outcasts  
held in place, we cannot tell anyone the TRUTH  
they are heroes too  
they would rather stay as part of the tribe  
belong  
calling those ready to leap MAD  
do we crack and break the system made for us?  
rules give people purpose  
can you tell them what they know is a lie?  
inner tension  
who are we without purpose?  
Nothing?  
Something?  
BEGIN  
this amniotic gyration  
is primordial  
creating an inflationary universe  
the unknown  
it's intoxicating  
Take that first breath your FIRST Breath  
Inhale, Exhale.  
You're ALIVE  
Wake Up  
It's REVOLUTION

*For poetry comments and suggestions, please write  
to [programming@LincolnCenter.org](mailto:programming@LincolnCenter.org).*

# Meet the Artists



**Michael "Mikey J"  
Asante**

Born in East London, Michael "Mikey J" Asante is a renowned producer, composer, singer, dancer, and DJ whose 20-year career history is firmly etched in the U.K. urban music industry. As co-founder and co-artistic director of Boy Blue, founded in 2001 with Kenrick "H2O" Sandy, Mr. Asante is credited with the conception and composition of *Outliers* (2018), *Blak Whyte Gray* (2017), *The Five & the Prophecy of Prana* (2013), *Touch* (2011), *Pied Piper: A Hip-Hop Dance Revolution* (2007), and *Legacy*.

As a music producer, he has a diverse catalogue within his discography, from creating music for the films *StreetDance 3D* and *All Stars*, to enjoying session work and production for such artists as Delilah, Raleigh Ritchie, Estelle, and George the Poet (for whose sold-out *Search Party* tour he also provided musical direction). But it is his work with Kano, a Mercury Prize and Brit Award nominee and winner of the MOBO Best Album Award, that put Mr. Asante on the map in 2005. Outside the studio, Mr. Asante mentors and delivers master classes in directing, choreography, and music. He is also a professor of electronic music at the Guildhall School of Music.



**Kenrick "H2O"  
Sandy**

Kenrick "H2O" Sandy, co-founder and co-artistic director of Boy Blue, an associate artist at the Barbican in London, is a

renowned choreographer and performer on the U.K. urban, commercial, and theatrical scenes. Since beginning his dance career at age 19, his choreography credits have included *Outliers* (2018), the Olivier Award-nominated *Blak Whyte Gray* (2017), *The Five & the Prophecy of Prana* (2013), *A Night with Boy Blue* (2018, 2016, 2015, 2013), and the Olivier Award-winning *Pied Piper: A Hip-Hop Dance Revolution* (2007). He also co-directed and choreographed *Unleashed* for the Barbican (2012).

Off the main stage, Mr. Sandy collaborated with director Danny Boyle for the London 2012 Olympic Opening Ceremony, winning the *Evening Standard's* Beyond Theatre award. On screen, his work includes choreography for the BAFTA Awards, *All Stars*, and *T2 Trainspotting*, plus appearances on *StreetDance 3D* and the BBC's *So You Think You Can Dance*. As a performer, his repertoire includes *Legacy Re:Loaded* at the Jerwood Dancehouse and Jonzi D's *Lyrikal Fearta Redux* at Sadler's Wells. Mr. Sandy has also created choreography for an array of artists (FKA twigs, Rita Ora) and brands (Nike, Adidas, ASOS). In 2012 he was awarded an MBE for services to dance and the community in the Queen's New Year Honours list.



**Ricardo Da Silva**

Born in Angola and raised in East London, Mr. Da Silva started dancing in secondary school and went on to join East London Youth Dance Company. He developed an interest in contemporary dance and trained at NewVlc Sixth Form College and Lewisham Southwark College before completing his degree at London Contemporary Dance

School. A member of Boy Blue, he is also co-founder of Just Us Dance Theatre and has choreographed for Street Stories at the Royal Opera House. Mr. Da Silva has performed nationally and internationally with Jonzi D and Alesha Dixon, and has worked with Wayne McGregor, Robert Hylton, Hofesh Shechter, and Tony Adigun (*Romeo and Juliet* for Round House Theatre). He is also an actor and spoken-word artist, and aims to create work that challenges perceptions involving the community. He has presented work at danceaid, Live Vibe, and Theatre Royal Stratford East.



**Jordan "J-Funk"  
Franklin**

Jordan "J-Funk" Franklin is 22 years old and has been dancing since the age of 11. A Middlesex University dance graduate, he has been a member of Boy Blue for more than ten years, performing in *Pied Piper: A Hip-Hop Dance Revolution*, *Legacy*, *A Night with Boy Blue*, and *Unleashed* at the Barbican, among other venues. Mr. Franklin's other credits include work for Jess Glynne, Jax Jones, *The Voice U.K.*, and the Queen's 92nd Birthday Show. He is a choreographer for New Movementz Dance Company, which provides dancers under the age of 18 with performance opportunities by hosting battles and events.



**Natasha Gooden**

Natasha Gooden was born in London and is now based in Merseyside, England. She trained at The City of Liverpool College,

where she was awarded a national diploma in dance with distinctions in ballet, tap, contemporary, jazz, street dance, and physical theater. She went on to train at the Shockout Academy in Manchester, where she specialized in drama, ballet, hip-hop, acting, and singing. Ms. Gooden appeared with ZooNation in *Some Like it Hip-Hop* and *Into the Hoods-Remixed* on the West End and on tour, and reached the finals with Boadicea on Sky 1's *Got to Dance*. In 2012 she was a performer in the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics. Her other credits include Misha B's music video "Home Run," the music video for "It's My Time" for RnD Creatives, performances on *Strictly Come Dancing*, *The X Factor* with JLS and One Direction, and commercials for the Ministry of Sound. She was a dancer in season two of *The Lodge* on the Disney Channel. She also choreographs and teaches innovative work at venues across the U.K.



**Gemma Kay  
Hoddy**

Gemma Kay Hoddy trained in performing arts and contemporary dance at Orpington College and Middlesex University London, and began training in street dance styles at Professional Performing Arts School before joining Boy Blue as a company member and teacher. Ms. Hoddy's theater credits include *Global Village* in Dubai; *The Red Show* for Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi; and *Legacy: The Return* and *Over the Edge* for Boy Blue. She has performed with artists including Rihanna and Drake, Rita Ora, Stooshe, Alexandra Burke, Lemar, Dizzee Rascal, Giggs, and Big Shaq, and worked on various feature films and commercials including *StreetDance 3D*, McDonald's, Adidas, ASOS, and *Love Ratri*. She is a



passionate teacher and travels the world teaching dance. In 2012 she worked alongside Kenrick "H2O" Sandy as a dance captain and performer for the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics.



**Dickson Mbi**

Dickson Mbi studied dance at Lewisham College and London Contemporary Dance School. His key style is popping, for which he is world-renowned in the hip-hop dance community. Mr. Mbi has worked with Russell Maliphant and Boy Blue, and his award nominations include Emerging Artist and Outstanding Male Performer (Modern) at the National Dance Awards Critics' Circle 2017 and the Best Achievement in Dance in the U.K. Theatre Awards. He won the REVERBdance Festival 2016 Award for Best Choreography and the Audience Award for Best Choreography at MASDANZA 2016. He has danced with music artists including Madonna, Basement Jaxx, Shalamar, and Robbie Williams. As a choreographer, he has worked with the Sadler's Wells Company of Elders and on the "Leave A Trace" music video for CHVRCHES in 2016. Mr. Mbi also supports the next generation of dancers with his dance partner Brooke Milliner and their battle crews Prototype and Fiya House.



**Nicole McDowall**

Nicole McDowall is a freelance movement artist from London. She began training in hip-hop and contemporary dance at the age of 15. In addition to a degree in dance studies,

she holds a level five sports and remedial massage therapy qualification. Ms. McDowall has worked with many dance companies including Avant Garde, Myself U.K. Dance Company, Spoken Movement, EIC Dance Theatre, and with Mourad Merzouki of Compagnie Käfig on the *7Steps* European tour. Her professional dance experience varies from hip-hop theater to commercial dance work. Dance credits include *Breakin' Convention* at Sadler's Wells, *The Black Album* U.K. tour, Ladies of Hip-Hop Festival in New York, the Sub Urban Dance Festival in Copenhagen, and the ASOS X Adidas Campaign.



**Theophillus  
"Godson"  
Oloyade**

Theophillus "Godson" Oloyade is a hip-hop dancer and choreographer who is a pioneer of Krump in the U.K. A proud member of Boy Blue and a *Got to Dance* finalist for Sky 1, he has also danced and choreographed for FKA twigs, Fergie, Giggs, Swizz Beatz, and Rita Ora, among others. He was movement director for *Boy Better Know* and continues to choreograph work, including *Krump Macbeth*, which is currently in development. He also worked with Kenrick "H2O" Sandy as an assistant dance captain and performer for the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics.

### **Lee Curran**

Lee Curran's (lighting design) credits for dance include *Sun*, *Political Mother*, *In Your Rooms*, *The Art of Not Looking Back*, and *Uprising* (Hofesh Shechter); *Untouchable* (Royal Ballet); *Clowns* (Nederlands Dans Theater); *Tomorrow*, *Frames*, and *Curious Conscience* (Rambert); *Rosalind* and *Within Her Eyes* (James Cousins Company); *The Letter* and *Lyrikal Fearta-Redux* (Jonzi D); *Bastard Amber* and *Interloper* (Liz Roche)

Company); *The Measures Taken* and *The Grit in the Oyster* (Alexander Whitley); *Reverie* and *M.E.T.H. (Media Eats the Human)* (Ivan Blackstock); *Omi* (Avant Garde Dance/Tony Adigun); *A Thread* (Jean Abreu Dance); and *Wide Awakening* (Joss Arnott Dance).

His theater credits include *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre/Lyric Opera of Chicago); *As You Like It* (Regent's Park); *Summer and Smoke* and *Dance Nation* (Almeida); *Constellations* (Royal Court/Duke of York's Theatre, New York/U.K. tour); *Gundog, Road, Nuclear War, A Profoundly Affectionate, Passionate Devotion to Someone (-Noun), X*, and *Linda* (Royal Court); *Jubilee* (Royal Exchange Theatre/Lyric Hammersmith); *The Lady from the Sea* and *Splendour* (Donmar Warehouse); *Hamlet, Much Ado About Nothing*, and *Blindsided* (Royal Exchange Theatre); *Woyzeck* (Birmingham Repertory Theatre); *Black Men Walking* (Eclipse Theater/tour); *Cover My Tracks* (Old Vic); *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Weir* (English Touring Theatre); *Doctor Faustus, Love's Sacrifice, The Two Noble Kinsmen*, and *Arden of Faversham* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *The Winter's Tale* (Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh); *Imogen* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Depart* and *Turfed* (LIFT); and *Kissing the Shotgun Goodnight* (Christopher Brett Bailey).

Mr. Curran's opera credits include *Orphée et Eurydice* (Royal Opera House/Teatro Alla Scala), *Tosca* (Opera North), and *Nabucco* (Opéra National De Lorraine/Opéra Berlioz).

## Ryan Dawson Laight

Ryan Dawson Laight's (costume design) dance credits include *Reckonings* (Botis Seva, Sadler's Wells); *Coal* (winner of the U.K. Theatre Award for Achievement in Dance) and *Wasteland* (Gary Clarke Company); *Toro, Mariposa, Ham*, and *Passion* (DeNada Dance Theatre); *Drunk* (Curve Theatre/Bridewell Theatre) and *Good Morning*

*Midnight* (Jermyn Street Theatre) for Drew McOnie; *Genius* for Anjali; *New Ways of Living* for Pink Fringe, Brighton; *Je Suis* (Sadler's Wells) for the Aakash Odedra Company; *Ruffle* (Rambert at The Lowry) for Carlos Pons Guerra; and *Hear Hear* (Sadler's Wells) for Deaf Men Dancing.

Mr. Laight's theater credits include *Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, Peter Pan, Christmas Carol*, and *Grimm Tales* for Chichester Festival Theatre; *Peter Pan, Brave New World, Swallows & Amazons, Dracula, A Christmas Carol, Alice in Wonderland, Hamlet, Macbeth, As You Like It, Henry IV, King Lear*, and *Treasure Island* for Creation Theatre Company; national tours of *HMS Pinafore* and *The Mikado* as well as productions of *Chess* and *Blondel* for Union Theatre; collaborations with solo artist Le Gateau Chocolat on *Duckie* (Royal Festival Hall), *Icons* (Edinburgh Festival Fringe), *Black* (Unity Theatre Liverpool/Soho Theatre), and *Le Gateau Chocolat* (Menier Chocolate Factory); and several pieces for the BRIT School: *Landmines* (Ovalhouse), *Sticky* and *Infinite Joy* (Southwark Playhouse); *Chip Shop The Musical* for Octagon Theatre Bolton; and *Ice Cream Opera* for the Freedom Art Studio.

## Boy Blue

Founded in London circa 2001, Boy Blue, the award-winning brainchild of producer Michael "Mikey J" Asante and choreographer Kenrick "H2O" Sandy MBE, encapsulates the pulse of the city it was born in. Weaving their frontline stage and screen work around the elevation of hip-hop culture, artistic directors Asante and Sandy have created works that challenge common perception while delivering a new voice from the streets and clubs that have long inspired a generation.

It was just over a decade ago, in 2007, that *Pied Piper* propelled Boy Blue to new heights in the world of U.K. theater; from performances at Theatre Royal Stratford

East to the Barbican in London and on to a U.K. tour, Boy Blue won a Laurence Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in an Affiliate Theatre. By 2009 Boy Blue had joined the Barbican as an associate artist, where the company is still based and has gone on to present *Touch* (2011), *The Five & The Prophecy of Prana* (2013), *A Night with Boy Blue* (2013, 2015, 2016, 2018), the critically acclaimed *Blak Whyte Gray* (2017), and *Outliers* (2018).

Outside of the theater, Boy Blue has collaborated with Danny Boyle and contributed to the opening ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics, with Sandy leading hundreds of young dancers before staging the handover of the Olympic torch and the lighting of the Cauldron.

With a company ethos befitting of the founders' roots, and a long-term commitment to education, Boy Blue can be found running a highly respected dance education program in East London. Using a typically unique approach, it enables more than 100 young dancers to train weekly alongside professionals. In addition, the company's work *Emancipation of Expressionism* is now part of the U.K. AQA GCSE Dance syllabus—the first hip-hop dance theater piece to be included.

## **Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College**

John Jay College of Criminal Justice of the City University of New York, an international leader in educating for justice, offers a rich liberal arts and professional studies curriculum to upwards of 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 135 nations. In teaching, scholarship and research, the college approaches justice as an applied art and science in service to society and as an ongoing conversation about fundamental human desires for fairness, equality, and the rule of law.

Since opening its doors in 1988, the Gerald W. Lynch Theater has been an invaluable cultural resource. The theater is a member of CUNY Stages, a consortium of 16 performing arts centers located on CUNY campuses across New York City, and the CUNY Dance Initiative.

The theater has hosted events in Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart and White Light Festivals, as well as the New York City Opera, Mummenschanz, and the World Science Festival. It has also been the site of live and recorded events including *Inside the Actor's Studio*, Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts, Comedy Central Presents, the American Justice Summit, and the NYC Mayoral Democratic Debates. The theater hosts premiere galas, conferences, international competitions, and graduations.

## **White Light Festival**

*I could compare my music to white light, which contains all colors. Only a prism can divide the colors and make them appear; this prism could be the spirit of the listener.*  
—Arvo Pärt. Now in its ninth year, the White Light Festival is Lincoln Center's annual exploration of music and art's power to reveal the many dimensions of our interior lives. International in scope, the multidisciplinary festival offers a broad spectrum of the world's leading instrumentalists, vocalists, ensembles, choreographers, dance companies, and directors complemented by conversations with artists and scholars and post-performance White Light Lounges.

## **Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc.**

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts (LCPA) serves three primary roles: presenter of artistic programming, national leader in arts and education and community relations, and manager of the Lincoln Center campus. A presenter of more than 3,000 free and ticketed events, performances, tours, and

educational activities annually, LCPA offers 15 programs, series, and festivals including American Songbook, Great Performers, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, Midsummer Night Swing, the Mostly Mozart Festival, and the White Light Festival, as well as the Emmy Award-winning *Live From Lincoln*

*Center*, which airs nationally on PBS. As manager of the Lincoln Center campus, LCPA provides support and services for the Lincoln Center complex and the 11 resident organizations. In addition, LCPA led a \$1.2 billion campus renovation, completed in October 2012.

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