

For Immediate Release: October 20, 2023

[Cal Performances Press Room](#)



Images of Urban Bush Women are available for download from the Cal Performances [Press Room](#).
A video trailer for Urban Bush Women's *Hair & Other Stories* can be viewed [on YouTube](#).

**CAL PERFORMANCES AT UC BERKELEY PRESENTS
A FEATURED PERFORMANCE OF THE 2023–24 SEASON
ILLUMINATIONS: “INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNITY” SERIES**

**URBAN BUSH WOMEN: *HAIR & OTHER STORIES*
DECEMBER 1–3 AT ZELLERBACH PLAYHOUSE**

Post-performance discussions follow each event

Berkeley, October 20, 2023— Urban Bush Women: *Hair & Other Stories* comes to Cal Performances for three performances December 1–3 at Zellerbach Playhouse. In this engagement, the Brooklyn-based ensemble will perform the Bay Area premiere of its full-length dance-theater work exploring race, identity, and concepts of beauty through the lens of Black women’s hair. Inspired by founder and 2021 MacArthur Fellow Jawole Willa Jo Zollar’s *HairStories* (2001), the participatory performance is a work of activism, awakening, and engagement, asking the audience to move, to comment, to reflect, and to bear witness.

Choreographed and directed by co-artistic directors Chanon Judson and Mame Diarra Speis, *Hair & Other Stories* was developed from personal narratives gathered from participants at “Hair Party”

sessions the company held with community members across the country, as well as through the group's ongoing collaboration with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's "Undoing Racism" workshops. Performers will bring their personal stories and experiences into this performance, inviting audience members to examine their own lives and the complexity of systemic racism. Of this process, Speis explains, "In order for us to be in a dialogue, that means everyone in the room has to participate. And so essentially, what we are doing is breaking the fourth wall with the audience and saying, 'Hey, you are a part of this as well. If I'm examining and if I'm unpacking, then let's ask these questions of you,' because at the end of the day, we're trying to lift up everyone's humanity inside of this work. Courtney J. Cook, the associate artistic director of Urban Bush Women, further elucidates that "*Hair & Other Stories* intentionally bridges both performance and community engagement."

Urban Bush Women was founded in 1984 with the purpose of using dance to tell stories from an unrepresented women-centered, African Diaspora-based perspective. Urban Bush Women has received the New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Awards (1992, 2006), the Capezio Award for Outstanding Achievement in Dance (1994), the Dance/USA Honor Award (2016), and the Bessie Lifetime Achievement in Dance Award (2017). Urban Bush Women's productions, including *Hair & Other Stories*, have received critical acclaim for exploring complex themes of race, identity, and beauty through the lens of Black women's experiences.

ABOUT *ILLUMINATIONS*

Illuminations programming connects groundbreaking UC Berkeley scholarship to themes addressed by the world-class music, dance, and theater presented by Cal Performances. The series includes performances, panel discussions, lecture demonstrations, Q&As, and more, shedding light on pressing topics that have the power to transform our understanding of the world and shape the future. This season's theme, "Individual & Community," explores the tensions that come into play while balancing the interests of the individual with the interest of the group. For the 2023–24 season, UC Berkeley's [Othering & Belonging Institute](#) serves as *Illuminations*' lead partner. A list of the main stage *Illuminations* performances for the 2023–24 season can be found at calperformances.org/illuminations and more information about related community events and campus partners is available on [Beyond the Stage](#).

Conversations will follow each performance and are free to all ticket holders. For more detailed information visit the *Hair & Other Stories* [event detail page](#) on Cal Performances' website.

Lead support for *Illuminations* is provided by the Koret Foundation

CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

Friday, December 1, 8pm Zellerbach Playhouse

Saturday, December 2, 8pm

Sunday, December 3, 3pm

**2413 Bancroft Way,
Berkeley, CA 94704**

Dance

Urban Bush Women: *Hair & Other Stories*

Program:

The Brooklyn-based performance ensemble Urban Bush Women performs the Bay Area premiere of *Hair & Other Stories*, the company's full-length dance-theater work exploring race, identity, and concepts of beauty through the lens of Black women's hair. Inspired by founder and 2021 MacArthur Fellow Jawole Willa Jo Zollar's *HairStories* (2001), the participatory performance is a work of activism, awakening, and engagement, asking the audience to move, to comment, to reflect, and to bear witness. Choreographed and directed by co-artistic directors Chanon Judson and Mame Diarra Speis, *Hair & Other Stories* was developed from personal narratives gathered from participants at "Hair Party" sessions the company held with community members across the country, as well as through the group's ongoing collaboration with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond's "Undoing Racism" workshops.

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These performances are part of Cal Performances' *Illuminations*: "Individual & Community" series this season. More information can be found at calperformances.org/illuminations.

Tickets: \$72 (prices subject to change). Half-price for UC Berkeley students. Tickets are available at calperformances.org, by phone at (510) 642-9988, or in person at the Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall, Tuesday–Friday, 12–5:30pm and Saturday–Sunday, 1–5pm. More information about student tickets and discounts is available at calperformances.org/ucb-students. For information about other discounts, visit calperformances.org/discounts.

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