

arvada  center



# LIVING THE LUSH LIFE

AUG 4, 2023 | 7:30pm



Program selections, casting, and order are subject to change without prior notice. The use of audio/video equipment during this performance is not permitted without prior written permission from Cleo Parker Robinson Dance and/or The Arvada Center for the Performing Arts.



## **CLEO PARKER ROBINSON DANCE** **INSPIRING MOVEMENT!**

Currently celebrating its 53rd Anniversary Season, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance is an international performing arts and educational institution rooted in African- American traditions, dedicated to excellence in providing cross-cultural performances, and enrichment programs - empowering all our communities by cultivating healthy mind, body, and spirit development for inter-generational students, artists, and audiences.

Viewing dance as a universal language of movement that transcends boundaries of culture, class, and age, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance is committed to honoring diversity and inclusiveness throughout the global community.

**CLEO PARKER ROBINSON DANCE**  
[www.cleoparkerdance.org](http://www.cleoparkerdance.org)

Located in Denver's Historic Five Points District  
119 Park Avenue West, Denver, Colorado 80205

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# THE PERFORMANCE

## SPRINGTIME IN MOURNING

Cleo II World Premiere, 2021

Inspired by the resilience of dancers during COVID, finding new ways to adapt their art and survive, this work reminds us of what we were all missing - the springtime we hoped would return.

Choreographer.. Cedric Dewayne Hall  
 Music.....“Appalachian Spring”  
 Aaron Copland

Dancers..... Cleo II and  
 Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Project

Excerpts from

## THE LUSH LIFE

CPRD Ensemble World Premiere, 1983

Special Thanks to Dr. Maya Angelou  
 and Schyleen Qualls

Choreographer..Cleo Parker Robinson  
 Music..... Max Roach, Billy Wallace  
 Poetry.....Dr. Maya Angelou  
 Trio . . . . . Devrae Jefferson,  
 Sadie Sandoval, Melvin Sutton  
 Dancers..... Cleo II and  
 Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Project

*Creation of The Lush Life*

(Video)

Dr. Maya Angelou and Cleo Parker  
 Robinson

Excerpts from

## CHECK CASHING DAY

World Premiere UMKC, 2019

Cleo II World Premiere, 2021

“Jazz speaks for life. The Blues tell the story of life’s difficulties, and if you think for a moment, you will realize that they take the hardest realities of life and put them into music, only to come out with some new hope or sense of triumph.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Choreographer.. Cleo Parker Robinson  
 Choreographic Assistants. . . . .  
 Chloe-Grant Abel, Chris Page-Sanders  
 Dancers..... Cleo II and  
 Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Project

*Everything Must Change*  
 Bettye Miller & Milt Abel

*MLK on Jazz*  
 Bobby Watson & the I Have A Dream  
 Project (featuring Curtis Lundy)

*I Have A Dream*  
 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

*Let Freedom Ring*

Remarks from Ms. Cleo Parker  
 Robinson



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## THE PERFORMANCE

### SPEAK YOUR HEART

Excerpt from TIMBER World Premiere  
2015

This work focuses on the beauty of the natural rhythms evident in both the simplicity and the complexity of falling in and out of relationships.

Choreographer. . . . Winifred R. Harris  
Music . . . . . Hildur Gudnadottir,  
Jonatha Brooke, Lizz Wright  
Costume Design. . . . Winifred R. Harris  
Duet . . . . . Lauren Slaughter and  
Devrae Jefferson

### YEMANJA

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance World  
Premiere 2008

This work was created by Cleo Parker Robinson in celebration of Katherine Dunham's never-ending passion for life, in all its facets and complexities, its sensual and spiritual synchronicity.

Choreographer. . Cleo Parker Robinson  
Music . . . . . Babatunde Olatunji  
Costume Design. . . . . Joey Santos  
Dancers. . . . . Cleo II and  
Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Project



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## CLEO PARKER ROBINSON

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CLEO PARKER ROBINSON is founder and artistic director of the 52-year-old Denver-based Cleo Parker Robinson Dance (CPRD), encompassing the renowned Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble (CPRDE), Cleo II (her 2nd company), a Youth Ensemble, an Academy of Dance, an International Summer Dance Institute, a 240-seat theatre, and multiple community engagement programs nationally and internationally. A master teacher/choreographer and cultural ambassador, she and CPRDE have performed nationwide, throughout Europe, the Caribbean, Asia,

and the African continent, with recent international tours in 2019 to Bogota, Colombia, and Mexico.

Ms. Parker Robinson's numerous accolades include the Colorado Governor's Award for Excellence (1974), Denver Mayor's Award (1979), induction into the Colorado Women's Hall of Fame (1989) and the Blacks in Colorado Hall of Fame (1994). She holds Honorary Doctorates from Denver University (1991), Colorado College (2003), Regis University in Denver (2008), an Alumni Award from University of Denver (2021), CU Boulder (2021), and is an Honorary Member of the International Association of Dance Medicine and Science (2021). In 2011, she was voted an Honorary Lifetime Trustee of the Denver Center for the Performing Arts, in recognition of her lasting impact on the Center. She is also an honoree of the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation. In June 2017, she received the prestigious DanceUSA Honor Award and in September 2017, the Randy Weeks Arts Leadership Award from the Denver School of the Arts.

Ms. Robinson has served on NEA panels on Dance, Expansion Arts, Arts America, and Inter-Arts panels for the USIS, and for the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts as well as other national task forces, boards, and committees. In April 1999, she was appointed by then-President William Jefferson Clinton, with Senate confirmation, to serve for four years on the National Council on the Arts, a 14-member panel advising the Chairman of the NEA on agency policy and programs, reviewing and making recommendations on grant applications. Since 2011, Ms. Parker Robinson has returned to her greatest passion as a choreographer, creating *Dreamcatchers: The Untold Stories of the Americas* and the world premiere of *Romeo and Juliet*,



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## CLEO PARKER ROBINSON

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in collaboration with the Colorado Symphony Orchestra. *On the Edge... Reaching to Higher Ground* (October of 2014) addressed resurging racial and human rights infractions world-wide. She re-staged two works (Spring 2017), melding classical and jazz composition with modern dance – *Romeo and Juliet* and *Porgy and Bess*. *Copacetic: A Tribute to Jonathon “JP” Parker* (Fall 2017) honored her late father. *Lark Ascending* (Spring 2018) was a collaboration with the Boulder Philharmonic. *Rhapsody in Black*, a collaboration with CPRD Associate Artistic Director, Winifred R. Harris, premiered at the Newman Center for the Performing Arts, University of Denver.

In January 2019, in collaboration with the Denver Brass, she choreographed an innovative interpretation of Bernstein’s *On the Town* and Spring 2019 saw a collaboration with the Colorado Ballet entitled *The MOVE/ment* as part of the Tour de Force series at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, Denver Center for the Performing Arts. In 2019, she set a work on CPRDE alum Gary Abbot’s UMKC students, entitled *Check Cashing Day* in tribute to the jazz genius of Bobby Watson and Milt Abel. In August 2021, she premiered *Standing On the Shoulders*, a work commissioned by the Vail Dance Festival. September 2021 saw the debut of *Freedom Dance*, created with jazz icon Dianne Reeves and CPRD co-founder and poet, Schyleen Qualls and in October 2021, she premiered *R.I. Power*, commissioned by the Colorado College Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs. Her newest work, *Sacred Spaces?*, set to an original score by Adonis Rose, Director of the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, premiered in September 2022 at the Denver Center for the Performing Arts. Her highly innovative interpretation of *Firebird* will be seen in September 2023 at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, Denver Center for the Performing Arts.

As part of its mission and vision to preserve the legacy of Black Dance in America, the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble also proudly holds within its extensive repertoire the works of many of the icons of American dance, including those of Katherine Dunham, Donald McKayle, Alvin Ailey, and Eleo Pomare.

Cleo Parker Robinson continues to be dedicated to celebrating the human experience and potential through the Arts and Education. Her life-long vision of “One Spirit, Many Voices” remains strong and steadfast, expanding to welcome, embrace, and sustain all people.



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## WINIFRED R. HARRIS

ASSOCIATE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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WINIFRED R. HARRIS, choreographer, artist, teacher, and community activist has created a significant body of work with a strong balance of technical prowess and gestural expression. Having trained under Cleo Parker Robinson, she danced professionally for ten years with Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble before moving on to Dallas Black Dance Theater and a solo stint in New York and abroad. In October 1991, she relocated to Los Angeles, CA, founding her own award-nominated contemporary modern dance company.

In recognition of her dedication and commitment to underprivileged youth, Ms. Harris received several awards from the Mayor of the City of Los Angeles for her teaching efforts within that community.

Having served on faculty at various universities and studios nationwide, including Cal Arts (her alma mater), Cal State Los Angeles and Spelman College, she returned to Cleo Parker Robinson Dance in 2010 as Ensemble Rehearsal Director and became Associate Artistic Director in 2014. Many of her innovative works are part of the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble's repertoire.



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## CEDRIC D. HALL

CHOREOGRAPHER

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CEDRIC D. HALL - First dancing with the Cleveland Contemporary Dance Theatre's CONSORT Youth Dance Training and Development Program, Mr. Hall later became a full company member. He was featured in numerous musicals including *The Wiz*, *West Side Story* and *Footloose*, and has worked with renowned choreographers Terrance Greene, Dianne McIntyre, Gary Abbott, and Kevin "Iega" Jeff.

After twelve seasons with the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, Mr. Hall is Cleo II Rehearsal Director, an integral member of the CPRD Education Outreach program, and a senior faculty member with the Cleo Parker Robinson Academy of Dance. For six seasons he has performed the pivotal role of "Griot / Preacher" in the Cleo Parker Robinson holiday production "Granny Dances to a Holiday Drum", following in the footsteps of 25-year "Granny" veteran, Vincent C. Robinson.





## CLEO II



DEVRAE "DJ" JEFFERSON

A native of Atlanta, GA., Devrae "DJ" Jefferson is now in his second season as a member of Cleo II and his first season as an Apprentice to the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble. He began his training in the Magnet Program for Visual and Performing arts at Tri-Cities HS where he focused on all genres of dance. With a special affinity for ballet, he attended summer programs including Metropolitan Ballet Theater and Lines Contemporary Ballet. Having furthered his training, he subsequently received a BFA from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem NC.

Mr. Jefferson has performed with BalletHnic Dance Company and Dallas Black Dance Theater Encore. With extensive experience in coaching gymnastics and teaching a variety of dance techniques, he first joined Cleo Parker Robinson Dance as a guest artist for the holiday production "Granny Dances to a Holiday Drum" before becoming a member of Cleo II.



SADIE SANDOVAL

A California native and graduate of the University of California, Irvine, where she received her BFA in Dance Performance, Ms. Sandoval is currently in her second season as a member of Cleo II and her first season as an Apprentice to the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble. During her time at UC Irvine, she was fortunate enough to dance for Donald McKayle in his final Etude Ensemble, and in 2019 received the Donald McKayle Endowment for Modern Dance. She also performed as a soloist in Lar Lubovitch's "North Star" and worked directly with Dante Puleio, Artistic Director of the Limon Dance Company.

Ms. Sandoval has traveled to Israel and worked with several Israeli modern dance companies including Batsheva Dance Company, Vertigo Dance Company, and Kolben Dance Company. Prior to becoming a member of Cleo II, she had attended the Alvin Ailey Professional Division Program and the Abraham in Motion Summer Intensive in New York City.



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## CLEO II

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LAUREN SLAUGHTER

A Colorado native, Ms. Slaughter is now in her second season with Cleo II and her first season as an Apprentice to the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble. She began dancing at a local competitive studio before moving to St. Louis to attend Washington University where she expanded her dance training and received a Minor in Dance. Ms. Slaughter performed for three years with the Washington University Dance Collective and worked with multiple MFA candidates on their thesis projects.

During her time at the university, she performed works by Ting-Ting Chang, Diadie Bathily, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, and Dana Tai Soon Burgess. Following graduation, she returned to Colorado to join Cleo Parker Robinson Dance.



MELVIN SUTTON

Born in Raleigh NC, Mr. Sutton is currently in his second season as a member of Cleo II. He began his pre-professional dance career under the direction of Lisa Wilder at Southeast Raleigh Magnet High School, studying modern and jazz techniques. An alumnus of Winston-Salem State University, he was a member of the Powerhouse of Red & White cheerleading program for four years. Mr. Sutton is a 2021 graduate of the MFA in Dance program at the University of The Arts, and has worked with many notable choreographers including Debbie Allen, Baba Chuck Davis, Duane Cyrus, Milton Myers, Tommie Waheed Evans, and Kim Bears-Bailey.

Having performed with Stevie Wonder, Becky G and J'Balvin at the 2015 Special Olympic World Games, he also holds the distinction of being one of the first men to dance with the Carolina Panthers Cheerleaders "Top Cats" for the 2021-2022 season. Mr. Sutton was a guest artist in the Cleo Parker Robinson Dance production "Granny Dances to a Holiday Drum", before becoming a member of Cleo II.



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## CLEO PARKER ROBINSON DANCE PROJECT

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Katie Carothers  
William Davis  
Kietraille Sutton



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