

Margaret Jenkins Dance Company

Other Suns

Project Description

Under the artistic direction of choreographer Margaret Jenkins, a cross-cultural trilogy entitled *Other Suns* is being developed in San Francisco and China, in collaboration with the Guangdong Modern Dance Company (GMDC) of Guangzhou. *Other Suns* will premiere at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) in San Francisco in the fall of 2009, prior to embarking on a US tour.

Other Suns extends the explorations Jenkins initiated while teaching choreographic workshops to the Guangdong dancers in China in 2004. “The abundant use of symmetry in their choreography was curiously powerful, yet restrictive. They were eager to push past these symmetrical responses, to expand their understanding of how a choreographic language might reflect their individual observations or feelings,” Jenkins writes.

The stimuli, methods and goals for the *Other Suns* project stem both from the 2004 workshops in China as well as from the experiences of creating *A Slipping Glimpse* in India and in the US with the Tanusree Shankar Dance Company from 2003 – 2007. The process of dance-making on two continents will always be filled with challenging and stimulating unknowns. Nonetheless, with the India project completed and wonderfully successful for all participants, the MJDC now has a template to follow for these challenging exchanges among multiple collaborators and ideas.

Conceived as a trilogy, the MJDC has previewed the first section of *Other Suns* in December 2007 at Project Artaud Theater in San Francisco. In September 2008, Margaret Jenkins and her Company spent five-weeks with the GMDC in China, developing and previewing the next segment of the work. GMDC Executive Artistic Director Liu Qi, will create the final section with assistance from Margaret Jenkins, in the spring of 2009. This two year creative journey culminates in September of 2009, when the Guangdong dancers work in residence with the MJDC in San Francisco to assemble and complete the trilogy, prior to the world premiere at YBCA.

Margaret Jenkins is known for the innovative collaborative process by which her work is made, and *Other Suns* will be infused with the new creations of the Guangdong dancers. The dancers create movement material based on her directions, and contribute to the overall fabric of the piece. With the MJDC and the GMDC, Jenkins is exploring how their physical languages affect each other, and creating a kind of hybrid or third language unique to everyone. “It is in the conversation—both through movement investigation and the more quotidian daily interactions—that the most profound impact of cultural exchange takes place,” Jenkins writes. “We strive to stay ready for the surprises, to be able to surrender to what a new place, culture and people can offer us and how we might strengthen the dialogue among each other and by extension our countries.”

In addition to the dancers of the GMDC and the MJDC performing together, *Other Suns* will feature music from the Chinese composer Bun-Ching Lam and composer Paul Drescher, a Guggenheim Fellow whose music has been performed throughout North America, in Asia and Europe. Alexander V. Nichols, whose design work includes lighting, video, projections, scenery, costumes and spans from dance, theater, and opera to architectural lighting and art installations, will create the visual design.

Other Suns has been co-commissioned by Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, CA, Peak Performances at Montclair State University in New Jersey, and The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center at the University of Maryland. There is mounting anecdotal evidence that dance audiences are increasingly inquisitive about international work, about Americans who make work internationally, and about processes which engage the world outside our borders. The multi-national participants in this project offer the potential to engage new dance audiences, including Chinese and Chinese-American communities.

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Jul 2008: Jenkins and assistant teach workshops in Guangzhou;

Aug – Sep 2008: MJDC rehearsals in San Francisco;

Sep – Oct 2008: MJDC in residence with GMDC in China; previews of parts one and two;

Feb 2009: Margaret Jenkins works in China with Liu Qi and GMDC on final section;

Jun – Aug 2009: “Tele-collaborations” via DVD continue throughout this period;

Sep 2009: GMDC in residence with MJDC in San Francisco; World premiere trilogy at YBCA;

Oct – Nov 2009: US touring;

Nov 2009 – Aug 2010: *Other Suns* remains in the MJDC repertory for touring.