

Photo by David Fitt

GARRIE MAE WEEMS - DIANA OH - OKWUI OKPOKWASILI -  
**ARDEN**  
- PETER BORN - NIEGEL SMITH -

BUT, NOT WITHOUT YOU

Co-Directed by  
Niegel Smith and Nia Witherspoon

February 6 - March 6, 2022





**The Flea**

presents

# **ARDEN**

## **But, Not Without You**

**Conceived of and Devised by**

**Peter Born, Diana Oh, Okwui Okpokwasili, Nigel Smith & Carrie Mae Weems**

**Composer & Co-Music Director**

**Diana Oh**

**“Do Not Let Go” Lyrics by Okwui Okpokwasili, Music by Okwui Okpokwasili & Peter Born**

**Commissioning Support Provided By**

**Theater for a New Audience**

### **Featuring**

**Peter Born, Diana Oh, Okwui Okpokwasili, Nigel Smith, Jack Fuller,**

**Viva Deconcini, Bernice “Boom Boom” Brooks, Serena Ebony Miller & Carrie Mae Weems**

**MARTIN MECCOURI** DIRECTOR OF PRODUCING & PARTNERSHIPS

**ANDREA WIETHORN** DIRECTOR OF PRODUCTION & FACILITIES

**NIGEL SMITH & NIA WITHERSPOON** CO-DIRECTORS

**PETER BORN** ENVIRONMENT DESIGNER

**LINDA CHO & RAPHAEL REGAN** CO-COSTUME DESIGNERS

**HAO BAI** SOUND, LIGHTING & PROJECTION DESIGNER

**DIANA OH** COMPOSER & CO-MUSIC DIRECTOR

**JACK FULLER** MUSIC PRODUCER & CO-MUSIC DIRECTOR

**BRYSON EZELL** ASSOCIATE SOUND DESIGNER

**CAREN CELINE MORRIS** PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

**ILONA CALATAYUD** ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

**SIOBHAN PETERSEN** COVID SAFETY MANAGER

# FEATURING

Initiating Artist/Environment Designer/Performer ..... Peter Born  
Initiating Artist/Composer/Performer ..... Diana Oh  
Initiating Artist/Performer ..... Okwui Okpokwasili  
Initiating Artist/Performer ..... Niegel Smith  
Music Producer/Co-Music Director/Performer..... Jack Fuller  
Guitar..... Viva Deconcini  
Percussion..... Bernice “Boom Boom” Brooks  
Bass/Cello.....Serena Ebony Miller

## ABOUT ARDEN: BUT, NOT WITHOUT YOU

*Arden: But, Not Without You is a genre-bending new work, commissioned by The Flea and led by Peter Born, Diana Oh, Okwui Okpokwasili, Niegel Smith, Carrie Mae Weems and Nia Witherspoon.*

*Diana Oh describes Arden as “Four Generations of Deeply Intimately Bound All-Kinds-of-Doing-Shit Artists sharing of themselves in a Tender-Ass Room full of Queer Femme Shamanic Energy who Genuinely and Gently Welcome You: Social Anxieties, Yummy Freakiness, and All.”*

*Okwui adds: “We assume nothing. We know nothing, other than a shared desire to reach out and learn about how little we have known and how much we assume. We bring each other offerings and practices and we ask people to come and join us in these offerings. Can we come together in this spirit? There will be music, there will be dance, there might be a party. You bring what you can, we will hold a space for it.”*

*And Diana brings it all back, “When the world be moving so fast, and I be so gentle, this is the room I wanna be in.”*

*Come as you are.*

## SPECIAL THANKS

*Stephanie Morimoto, Michael Sternberg, Katie Dixon, Miss Lily’s SoHo, Ross Monroe, Five OHM, Bill Kennedy, Neil Wilkinson*

**Development Support Provided By**  
JoAnn Chase and Gabby Palitz

**2021 Development Partners**  
Brooklyn Bridge Park Conservancy  
Brotherhood Sister Sol

This program is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

# CREATIVE TEAM

Co-Directors .....	Niegel Smith & Nia Witherspoon
Environment Designer .....	Peter Born
Costume Designer .....	Linda Cho
Sound, Lighting, & Projection Designer .....	Hao Bai
Composer & Co-Music Director .....	Diana Oh
Music Producer & Co-Music Director .....	Jack Fuller
Costume Co-Designer.....	Raphael Regan
Associate Sound Designer .....	Bryson Ezell
Production Stage Manager .....	Caren Celine Morris
Assistant Stage Manager .....	Ilona Calatayud
Covid Safety Manager .....	Siobhan Petersen
Director of Producing & Partnerships.....	Martin Meccouri
Director of Production & Facilities.....	Andrea Wiethorn
Production Management .....	Beacon Theatrical Services

# FLEA STAFF

Artistic Director .....	Niegel Smith
Director of Producing & Partnerships.....	Martin Meccouri
Director of Production & Facilities.....	Andrea Wiethorn

# FLEA CONSULTANTS

Consulting General Manager.....	Erica Laird
Box Office Coordinator.....	Annika Roseninge
Development Consultant.....	Morgan Tacho
Rental Supervisor.....	Kyra Davis
Marketing Consultant.....	Victoria Preis
Social Media Marketing.....	Chanée Holmes
Audience Development Consultant.....	Donna Walker-Kuhne
Graphic Design.....	Elijah Bean & The Incredible Sauce
Press Representative.....	DKC/O&M
Production Manager .....	Jameson Croasdale

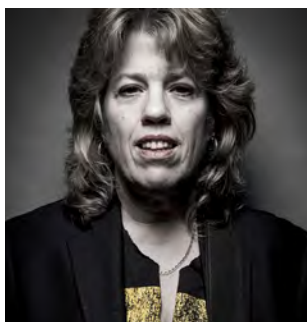
# COMPANY



**PETER BORN** (Initiating Artist/Environment Designer/Performer) Peter Born is a director, designer and filmmaker. In addition to his work with Okwui Okpokwasili, he collaborated with David Thomson on a cycle of installation/ performances revolving around a post-sexual incarnation of Venus. He created the set for nora chipaumire's *rite/riot*, and he has created performance videos with chipaumire, including *El Capitan Kinglady*. He is a former New York public high school teacher, an itinerant floral designer, corporate actor-facilitator and furniture designer. His collaborations with Okpokwasili and others have garnered four New York Dance Performance "Bessie" Awards.



**BERNICE "BOOM BOOM" BROOKS** (Percussion) is a Drummer, Producer and Teaching Artist. One of the foremost and versatile drummers, Local, National and International. Her longevity comes from being able to play any style of music. Bernice Brooks has performed at Lincoln Center, Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall, Town Hall, Radio City Music Hall and the list goes on. She has opened for such greats as Ray Charles, Tito Puente, Gregory Hines, Bill Withers, and the Staples Singers just to name a few. She has performed with Laura Nyro, Toshi Reagon, Patti LaBelle, Weather Girls, Taylor Mac, Elvis Costello, Joanne Brackeen, Sarah McLawler, Ann Duquesnay and a lot of Jazz Greats. Shout out to all the singers, musicians, bands, students that I have had the honor to work with or for. Bernice Brooks continues to develop her style with each new experience that happens to cross her path and is very thankful for all of my work, performances and to be able to see the world.



**VIVA DECONCINI** (Guitar) plays guitar like a flaming sword, screaming train, ringing bell and a scratching chicken. She sings like if Freddy Mercury had been a woman and a river of honey. Viva has played all over the world, from holes in the wall to Bonnaroo, Monterey Jazz Fest and The Barbican, with her own band as well as artists ranging from Cyro Baptista to Taylor Mac. She has written and produced 4 full length rock albums, 4 original music videos, a 10 episode podcast and a poetry video for the Guggenheim's Works and Process. She musically directed works at the Guggenheim Theater and The WP. Her work has charted on CMJ, been featured in No Depression Magazine and she is one of the few females to be profiled in Guitar Player Magazine. She is currently working on an original webseries queer feminist spaghetti western operetta with sock puppets. "Crushable." - Art Forum; "Virtuosic guitar shredding." - The New York Times; "A beautiful voice." - KUNM

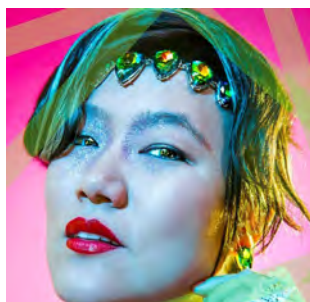


**JACK FULLER** (Music Producer/Co-Music Director/Performer) is an artist born and raised in Harlem NYC's Sugar Hill. They studied at Harlem School of the Arts and LaGuardia High School as a vocalist, instrumentalist, actor, arranger, & songwriter. As a queer child in Harlem, adversity was no stranger. Always misunderstood, always different they reach for communication through their work- to understand their art is to understand them. The two spirited/two headed creative force has 2 albums out the latest of which is "The Build". They look forward to releasing their current work "The Treatment" in 2023.



**SERENA MILLER** (Bass/Cello) is an actor, string player, composer and teacher originally from Baltimore, Maryland. Recent appearances: *Sancocho Severance* (Cellist), *The Diaries of Romeo & Juliet* (Ms. Montague), *Priestess of Twerk* (Cellist), *Romeo & Juliet* (Friar Laurence), *The Sisters* (Composer/Cellist). Additionally, she has performed at The New Ohio, The Cutting Room, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, Joe's Pub, Town Hall, The Bushwick Starr, and Lincoln Center; to name a few. She is grateful to the cast, crew and staff at The Flea; her fiancé and family; Group C and

the Neighborhood Playhouse; and the NYC artistic community for supporting her all these years. Serena would like to dedicate this performance to the memory of her bestest companion, Nameless Jones Cat, who loved music so.



**DIANA OH** (Initiating Artist/Composer/Performer/ Co-Music Director) (they) is an open channel to the art that feels good to their body and is driven most by mutual care, pleasure, and keeping things heart-centered. They are a Creator of Performance, Installation, Music, Concert, Documentary Film, Gatherings, Ritual, Party, and New Mediums. Oh also identifies as an Actor, Singer, Songwriter, and Clairvoyant (passed onto them by their political revolutionist and persecuted South Korean father). Passionate about healing and queering processes, Oh is a Refinery29 Top LGBTQ In-

fluencer, and the First Queer Korean-American interviewed on Korean Broadcast Radio. They are the Creator and Co-Director of *The Infinite Love Party* (an intentional barefoot, potluck dinner, dance party, and sleepover for QTPOC and Their Allies, Bushwick Starr. NYTimes), *{my lingerie play}* (ten underground national performance installations in my lingerie staged in an effort to provide a safer, more courageous world for women, queer, trans, and non-binary humans to live in culminating into a concert of Oh's music: Rattlestick Playwrights Theater, TOW and Creative Capital Fellowship Recipient, NYTimes), *CLAIRVOYANCE* (an installation, concert, and tree-planting series centering Queer Magic in Harvard Yard, the Boston Public Library, The Institute of Contemporary Art, The Harvard Arboretum produced by A.R.T.), *Asian People Are Not Magicians* (mic.com), *My H8 Letter to*

*the Gr8 American Theatre* (The Public Theater), and *The Dope North Star Workshop*. Their work has been featured on The National, Huffington Post, People, Upworthy, MTV, npr, VICE and they have been interviewed on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange about why Catcalling Sucks. They are a Sundance Institute Fellow, a TOW Fellow, NY Community Trust Helen Merrill Award Recipient, Art Equity Fellow, and a Steinberg Award Recipient. Oh is off social media and looks forward to being your friend in real life. Oh's Rescue Dogs, however, are on social media @ProfessionalLapDog.

UPCOMING: *The Gift Project* (a Documentary Film and Culminating Live Concert centering Elders of Marginalized Experience or Identity with songs written for them as Gifts: April 9 and 10 at Symphony Space with All For One).



**OKWUI OKPOKWASILI** (Initiating Artist/Performer) is a Brooklyn based performer, choreographer, and writer creating multidisciplinary performance pieces. The child of immigrants from Nigeria, Okpokwasili was born and raised in the Bronx, and the histories of these places and the girls and women who inhabit them feature prominently in much of her work. Her productions are highly experimental in form, bringing together elements of dance, theater, and the visual arts (with distinctive environments and objects designed by her frequent collaborator, director/designer Peter Born).

Okwui Okpokwasili's performance work has been commissioned by the Crossing the Line at FIAF, Jacob's Pillow, the Walker Art Center, Danspace Project, The Highline, Performance Space New York, The Luminary, the Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA, and the 10th Annual Berlin Biennale, among other institutions. She has held residencies at the Maggie Allesee National Choreographic Center, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, the Rauschenberg Foundation Captiva Residency, and New York Live Arts, where she was a Randjelovic/Stryker Resident Commissioned Artist. Recent installations designed with Peter Born have been seen at the New Museum, the Hammer Museum, and Kunsthall Trondheim. She has received awards and fellowships from The Bessies (New York Dance and Performance Awards), the Antony Awards, Creative Capital, United States Artists, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Doris Duke, Mellon and the MacArthur Foundation.



**NIEGEL SMITH** (Initiating Artist/Co-Director/Performer) Niegel Smith is a Bessie Award winning theater director and performance artist. He is the Artistic Director of The Flea and a board member of A.R.T./New York.

His theater work has been produced by The Alley, The Barbican, Goodman Theatre, HERE Arts Center, Hip Hop Theatre Festival, Magic Theatre, The Melbourne Festival, Mixed Blood, New York Fringe Festival, New York Live Arts, Phoenix Theatre Ensemble, Playwrights Horizons, Pomegranate Arts, The Public Theater, St. Ann's Warehouse, Summer Play Festival and Under the Radar, and his par-

ticipatory walks and performances have been produced by Abrons Arts Center, American Realness, The Brooklyn Museum, Dartmouth College, Elastic City, The Invisible Dog, Jack, The New Museum, Prelude Festival, PS 122, the Van Alen Institute and Visual AIDS. He often collaborates with playwright, director and performer Taylor Mac. Smith was co-director of the critically acclaimed 'A 24-Decade History of Popular Music', winner of the Kennedy Prize in Drama, the Edwin Booth Award and a Pulitzer Prize finalist. [www.niegelsmith.com](http://www.niegelsmith.com)



**CARRIE MAE WEEMS** (Initiating Artist: Through image and text, film and performance, and her many convenings with individuals across a multitude of disciplines, Carrie Mae Weems has created a complex body of art that investigates family relationships, gender roles, racism, and the consequences of power. Weems addresses a wide array of issues, but her overarching commitment is to help us better understand our present moment by examining our collective past.

Weems is represented by Jack Shainman Gallery and is currently Artist in Residence at Syracuse University. She lives in Syracuse, New York with her husband Jeffrey Hoone who directed *Light Work* for almost four decades.”



**NIA WITHERSPOON** (Co-Director) is a Black Queer theatre maker, vocalist and composer, and cultural worker investigating the metaphysics of Black liberation, desire, and diaspora, in the context of sacred ecologies. Described as “especially fascinating” by *Backstage Magazine*, and featured by NPR for her curation of *BlackARTSMatter*, Witherspoon is NEFA/NTP recipient, a Creative Capital Awardee, a Jerome New Artist Fellow, an artist in residence at HERE Arts Center and BAX/Brooklyn Arts Exchange, and was a 2017-18 2050 Playwriting/Directing Fellow at New York Theatre Workshop.

Her works, *MESSIAH, YOU MINE, THE DARK GIRL CHRONICLES*, and *PRIESTESS OF TWERK* have been or will be featured by The Shed, JACK, La Mama ETC, Playwright’s Realm, BRIC, HERE, National Black Theatre, BAAD, Movement Research, BAX, Dixon Place, Painted Bride, 651 Arts, and elsewhere. Witherspoon has been recognized by the Mellon Foundation, NYFA, the Wurplitzer Foundation, Lambda Literary, and Theatre Bay Area, and most recently NEFA/NTP. She holds a BA from Smith College and a PhD from Stanford University in Theatre and Performance Studies, and her writing is published in the *Journal of Popular Culture*; *Imagined Theatres*; *Women, Collective Creation*, and *Devised Performance*; and *IMANIMAN: Poets Writing in the Anzaldúan Borderlands*. Witherspoon has held tenure-track professorships at Florida State University and Arizona State University, taught at Fordham and University of Massachusetts (Amherst), and is currently working on a manuscript tentatively titled *NATION IN THE DARK: A Black femme spell for justice*.



**HAO BAI** (Sound, Lighting & Projection Design) is a multidisciplinary designer in lighting, sound, video projection, and world-building (environment) for live and virtual performances. Hao works with groundbreaking and innovative artists including Charlotte Braithwaite, Abigail DeVille, Mei Ann Teo, Ping Chong, The Talking Band, Mabou Mines, The Wooster Group, The Builders Association, The Hawtplates (Justin Hicks), and Loco7, etc. Hao's work has been seen internationally at Asia Culture Center (South Korea), WuZhen Festival (China), in the states at Woolly Mammoth Theater(DC), TheatreWorks Hartford (CT), Baltimore Center Stage (MD), CAC (Cincinnati), Stanford (CA), Jone Hall (Houston), and in New York at The Public Theatre, NYU Skirball, NYU Tisch, Bushwick Starr, La MaMa, JACK, Performance Space New York, New Stage Theatre, 59E59, A.R.T./New York Theatres, 14 Street Y, HERE, BAAD!, Stella Adler, The Performing Garage, The Gallery Players, The Tank, etc. Recent: *Virtual: Final Boarding Call* (Ma-Yi Theater+WP Theater); *Nocturne in 1200s* (Ping Chong). Lighting: *Waterboy and the Mighty World* (Bushwick Starr & The Public Theatre). Projection: *Electronic City* (NYIT Awards). Sound: *Walden* (TheatreWorks). Production Design: *Where We Belong* (Woolly Mammoth Theater & National Tours); *and the grass grows* (Harvard University). Upcoming: Lighting & Sound: *7Mins* (HERE). Lighting: *CHINOISERIE* (Ping Chong).

[www.haobaidesign.com](http://www.haobaidesign.com)

**LINDA CHO** (Co-Costume Designer) is delighted to make her debut at The Flea. Broadway: *A Gentlemen's Guide to Love and Murder* (Tony Award), *Anastasia* (Tony, Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle Award nominations), *Velocity of Autumn*, *Great Society*, *Lifespan of a Fact*, *Take me out*, *POTUS*. Over 200 regional and international design credits in theatre, dance and opera. Recipient of numerous awards including the Irene Sharaff Young Master Award and The Ruth Morley Design Award from the League of Professional Theatre Women. She serves on the Advisory Committee of the American Theater Wing. M.F.A., Yale School of Drama,. [www.lindacho.com](http://www.lindacho.com)

**BRYSON EZELL** (Associate Sound Designer) has been working professionally for seven years. Regionally: *Dream Girls*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *Drowsy Chaperone*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, *When You Wish*, *West Side Story*, *In The Heights*, *Rock of Ages*, *A Christmas Carol*, *Freaky Friday*, *Hello Dolly!*, *Mamma Mia!*, *When We're Gone* (world premiere), *Girlfriend*, *Singing In The Rain*, *Newsies*, *Titanic*, *Cat In The Hat*, *The Music Man*, *Urinetown: The Musical*. Lyric Theater of Oklahoma. Local: *Legally Blonde* (Tisch New Theatre); *12 Angry Animals*, *Promenade*, *Elegies for Angels*, *Punks and Raging Queens*, *INTER//STELLAR*, *Urinetown: The Musical*, *The Bacchae* (New York University Drama). Bryson is happy to be working with The Flea Theater for the first time.

**SIOBHAN PETERSEN** (Covid Safety Manager) (They/Them) is a Brooklyn based stage manager and Covid safety manager. They are a recent graduate of SUNY Purchase and Arden is their first show as a CSM. Siobhan has worked on several shows for the Purchase Repertory Theatre, as well as the Jacob's Theatre (COMPANY.) They are incredibly excited and grateful to be working with The Flea.

**RAPHAEL REGAN** (Co-Costume Designer): *The Heart Stays* (feature film), *Collective Noun* (Corkscrew Theatre Festival), *King Lear*, *Apartment 3A*, *Romeo & Juliet*, *Race*, *Escape from Happiness* (Stella Adler), *Taiga in the Berkshires*, *In search of* (Williamstown Theatre Festival) *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Pippin*, *9 to 5* (Highlands Playhouse). Assistant Costume Design: *A Sherlock Carol* (New World Stages), *Anastasia* (Second National Tour), *Fandango for Butterflies* (La Mama), *Measure for Measure* (The Public Mobile), *Mlima's Tale* (Westport Playhouse), *Skeleton Crew* (Westport Playhouse). He received his MFA in Costume Design and Production from the University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music (CCM). He's happy live theatre is back and excited to be joining The Flea community! [www.RaphaelRegan.com](http://www.RaphaelRegan.com)

**CARLA THOMAS** (Wardrobe Supervisor) Fly Girl. Writer. Wardrobe Stylist. TV Host. Carla is a multimedia creative. Hailing from Baltimore, cultivated at Howard University and now thriving in Brooklyn, Carla is an around the way girl who is quietly brilliant. She creates fun and cool relatable content. She's always on a plane or in a showroom. Find her talking fashion and inspiring as Fly Carla on Instagram.

# ABOUT THE FLEA

## MISSION

We support and invest in experimental art by Black, brown, and queer artists. We provide space, financial support, producing partnership and other resources so that they may develop and share their vision in community with audiences.

## CORE VALUES

### Human Centered

We invest in people before things. We recognize that people are at the core of our work and will create opportunities that are equitable, fair and promote open access. When making decisions, we will consider everyone's humanity, unique life experiences and circumstances.

### Anti-racism & Anti-oppression

We actively work to dismantle structures that reinforce systemic racism and we replace them with structures that empower all of our community members and stakeholders. We are pro-Black, pro-brown, pro-woman/femme and pro-queer, at a minimum. We acknowledge this list is not exhaustive, and embrace the multitude of ever-evolving identities and intersections.

### Collaboration

We work together and we are not siloed. We value when artists, staff and stakeholders participate in the development of the organization. We invite heterogeneity and differences of opinion.

### Innovation

We believe in pushing boundaries and challenging the status quo, on stages and in our operations.

### Sustainability

We are accountable for our impact on the environment. We will do our part to sustain our planet for future generations.

### Transparency

We communicate clearly and don't speak in coded language. We are honest about what we can and cannot provide, and about how resources are divided. We invite our community to hold us accountable to our expressed values and mission.

Visit [www.theflea.org](http://www.theflea.org) for tickets and more information.

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The Flea is located at 20 Thomas Street in TriBeCa, 3 blocks above Chambers Street, between Broadway and Church Street



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Flea productions and programs are supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council, as well as the National Endowment for the Arts and the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature.

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