

SPIRITUS / VIRGIL'S DANCE



WRITTEN BY AND STARRING

DAEL ORLANDERSMITH

DIRECTED BY **NEEL KELLER**

FEBRUARY 1 - MARCH 9, 2024

Rattlestick
THEATER

Rattlestick Theater
in partnership with Merrimack Repertory Theatre
present

SPIRITUS/VIRGIL'S DANCE

Written by and Starring
Dael Orlandersmith

Scenic Design Takeshi Kata	Costume Design Kaye Voyce	Lighting Design Mary Louise Geiger	Original Music & Sound Design Lindsay Jones	Projection Design Nicholas Hussong
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Associate Scenic Design Colleen Murray	Associate Costume Design Annie Hoeg	Associate Lighting Design K Rudolph	Associate Sound Design Veronica J. Lancaster	Associate Projection Design Joey Moro
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Stage Manager
Martha Donaldson

Production Assistant
Misha Fristensky

Press Representative
The Chamber Group

Directed by
Neel Keller



Originally commissioned by Merrimack Repertory Theatre Courtney Sale, Nancy L. Donahue Artistic Director; Bonnie J. Butkus, Executive Director

Originally produced at the Contemporary American Theater Festival in Shepherdstown, West Virginia in July 2023, Peggy McKowen, Artistic Director

Spiritus/Virgil's Dance was developed, in part, with support from Fisher Center LAB, which receives funding from the Fisher Center at Bard's Artistic Innovation Fund with lead support from Rebecca Gold and S. Asher Gelman through the March Forth Foundation. Fishercenter.bard.edu

SUPPORT RATTLESTICK

Greetings!

In this new year, we've been reflecting on the profound significance of gathering together. What prompts us to leave the comfort of our homes and head to the theater? What motivates us to invest time and effort in seeking communal experiences?

We believe that attending a play at Rattlestick offers a rare, one-of-a-kind experience that brings the entire audience together. This is especially true for a new work by Dael Orlandersmith, who expertly captures the ritual central to all theater. Though we begin as strangers, there's a special bond created when we share a collective emotional experience. Unlike the mundane crowds of daily life in subways, airports, banks, and the like, being part of a theater audience is a wholly distinct experience. At the theater, we lean towards each other; we become a group with a common experience. This shared space, this theater, becomes a momentary haven that leaves a lasting imprint on each heart, mind, and soul.

Thank you so much for joining us at Rattlestick tonight and engaging in this communal ritual. If you're inspired to further support our mission of delivering ambitious, new theater, please click the link below to explore how you can contribute.



A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Will Davis". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

-Will Davis
Artistic Director

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ABOUT THE ARTISTS



DAEL ORLANDERSMITH (Playwright and Virgil) is a playwright whose plays include *Beauty's Daughter*, *Stoop Stories*, *Black N' Blue Boys/Broke Men*, *Horsedreams*, *Bones*, *The Blue Album*, *Yellowman*, *The Gimmick*, *Monster*, *Forever* and *Spiritus/Virgil's Dance*. Ms. Orlandersmith was a Pulitzer Prize finalist and Drama Desk Award nominee for *Yellowman*, and the winner of the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for *The Gimmick*. She is the recipient of a Lucille Lortel Foundation Playwrights Fellowship and an Obie Award for *Beauty's Daughter*, as well as a New York Foundation for the Arts grant, The Helen Merrill Award for Emerging Playwrights, a Guggenheim Fellowship, along with several other awards and honors. Her play, *Forever*, was commissioned and performed at the Mark Taper Forum/Kirk Douglas Theatre Fall of 2014, followed by performances at the Long Wharf Theatre in Winter 2014/15, New York Theatre Workshop in Spring 2015, and at Portland Center Stage in Winter 2016. Her play *Until the Flood* was produced at St Louis Repertory in the fall of 2016, Rattlestick Theater in 2018, and Milwaukee Rep in 2019, as well as Portland Center Stage, ACT Seattle, the Arcola Theatre in London, the Galway Arts Festival at the Druid Theatre, and the Traverse at Edinburgh Festival. In 2020, Ms. Orlandersmith received the Doris Duke award. She is currently working on two commissions for Artists Repertory Theatre in Portland and Milwaukee Repertory Theatre.

NEEL KELLER (Director) has enjoyed a long and happy collaboration with Dael Orlandersmith after meeting almost 30 years ago on a production of *Romeo and Juliet*. Over the last several years they have worked closely on creating and producing Orlandersmith's acclaimed plays *Until The Flood*, *Forever* and *Spiritus/Virgil's Dance* on stages across the US and Europe. Neel's other recent productions include, the world premieres of Julia Cho's *Office Hour*, Eliza Clark's *Quack*, Jennifer Haley's *The Nether*, Kimber Lee's *to the yellow house*, and Lucy Alibar's *Throw Me On The Burnpile and Light Me Up*. Neel has directed at many theaters including, The Public Theater, New York Theatre Workshop, Rattlestick Theater, La Jolla Playhouse, Goodman Theatre, South Coast Repertory, and Williamstown Theatre Festival. Neel is a member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society and the Directors Guild of America.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Takeshi Kata (Scenic Designer) Broadway: *Prayer for the French Republic* (Friedman), *Clyde's* (Helen Hayes), Derren Brown's *Secret* (Cort), *Water for Elephants* (upcoming). Off Broadway: Atlantic, NYTW, Playwrights Horizons, Public, Rattlestick, Second Stage, Signature, Vineyard, among others. Other Recent Projects include *Until the Flood* (FIND festival, Shaubühne, Berlin) and *Bug* (Steppenwolf). Kata is the recipient of the 2022 Michael Merrit Award for Excellence in Design and Collaboration, and has received Drama Desk, Obie, and Jeff Awards. He is an Associate Professor at University of Southern California, School of Dramatic Arts.

Kaye Voyce (Costume Designer) Rattlestick: *Until The Flood*, *Ironbound*, *Horsedreams*, *Faster*. Broadway: *Sea Wall/A Life* (co-design), *True West*, *The Nap*, *Significant Other*, *The Real Thing*, *The Realistic Joneses*, and *Shining City*. Selected off-Broadway: *Jonah* (Roundabout), *The Bedwetter* (Atlantic Theater - book by Sarah Silverman), *Shhhh* (Atlantic), *Morning Sun* (MTC), *Mud/Drowning* (set and costume design, Mabou Mines), *Anatomy Of A Suicide* (Atlantic), *Marys Seacole*, *After The Blast* (LCT3), *Mary Page Marlowe* (2ST), *The Antipodes*, *Signature Plays*, *The Wayside Motor Inn* (Signature), *Coriolanus*, *Hamlet*, *Measure For Measure* (Public Theatre), *Greater Clements* (LCT). Other recent credits include *Stranger Love*, a seven hour opera/dance/orchestral event with the LA Philharmonic.

Mary Louise Geiger (Lighting Designer) at Rattlestick *Until the Flood*, *Draw the Circle*. Broadway: *The Constant Wife* (American Airlines Theatre). Off-Broadway: *Partnership*, *Conflict*, *Becomes a Woman* (The Mint); *Halfway Bitches Go Straight to Heaven*, *Good Television*, *The New York Idea* (Atlantic Theatre); *X*, *Or Betty Shabazz v. The Nation* (Acting Company); *Nat Turner in Jerusalem*, *Forever*, *Oedipus at Palm Springs* (New York Theatre Workshop); *Kindness*, *Blue Door*, *The Busy World is Hushed* (Playwrights Horizons); *Mabou Mines Dollhouse*, *Red Beads* (Mabou Mines). Regional: ACT, 5th Avenue, Goodman, Huntington, Steppenwolf, Milwaukee Rep, Guthrie, Pioneer, Cleveland Playhouse, Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Center Theatre Group, LA Opera, among others. Training: Yale School of Drama. Faculty: NYU Tisch. www.mlgeiger.com

Lindsay Jones (Original Music & Sound Designer) Broadway: *Slave Play* (Tony nominations for Best Score and Best Sound Design of a Play), *The Nap*, *Bronx Bombers* and *A Time to Kill*. Off-Broadway: *Privacy* (The Public Theater), *Bootycandy* (Playwrights Horizons), *Feeding the Dragon* (Primary Stages), *Top Secret* (New York Theatre Workshop) and many others. Regional: Guthrie Theater, Center Stage, American Conservatory Theater, Hartford Stage, Alliance Theatre, Goodman Theatre, Arena Stage, Old Globe Theatre, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre and many others. International: Stratford Festival (Canada), Royal Shakespeare Company (England) and many others. Audio dramas: Marvel, Audible, Next Chapter Podcasts, award-winning "The Imagine Neighborhood." Film/TV scoring: HBO Films' *A Note of Triumph* (2006 Academy Award for Best Documentary, Short Subject) and over 30 other films. He is the co-chair of Theatrical Sound Designers and Composers Association, and teaches Composition For Theatre and Music History at the University Of North Carolina School Of The Arts. www.lindsayjones.com

Nicholas Hussong (Projection Designer) is a designer for live (and now digital) performance and events. Creative Producer at Dwight Street Book Club. Broadway: *Skeleton Crew* (Tony Nomination). Off-Broadway: *Skeleton Crew*, *These Paper Bullets* (Atlantic, Drama Desk Nom), *Wet Brain* (Playwrights Horizons), *On That Day in Amsterdam* (Primary Stages, Drama Desk Nom), *White Guy on the Bus* (59E59), *Chick 6* (LaMama), *Until the Flood* (Rattlestick). Other credits include: *The Wizard of Oz* (Geva), *RENT!* (Paper Mill Playhouse), *Vietgone* (The Guthrie), *to the yellow house* (La Jolla), *Kleptocracy* (Arena), *Until the Flood* (15 regional and international locations); *Haint Blu*, *Hair & Other Stories* (Urban Bush Women); *Woman's Party* (Clubbed Thumb); *Grounded* (Alley); Arden Theater, Playmakers Rep, Berkshires Theatre Group. Other work includes; Atlanta Opera, Virginia Museum of Art, David Zwirner Gallery, Marc Jacobs, Mass MoCA, Complex Magazine, AMC+, San Diego Shell, San Diego Symphony, Nashville Symphony, Hartford Symphony, Tony Awards (CBS), Ask Ronna Podcast. He also designed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Germany, China, Canada and Vienna. Co-Creator of FEAST, an immersive dining experience with Listen&Breathe (Nantucket, Ireland & please, hopefully, someday, the US). Adjunct Lecturer NYU Tisch. Yale MFA. UAW & USA829. www.nickhussong.com

Martha Donaldson (Production Stage Manager) Broadway: *Leopoldstadt*, *Diana: the musical*, *The Lifespan of a Fact*, *Escape to Margaritaville*, *The Children*, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Crucible*, *A View from the Bridge*, *You Can't Take It with You*, *Next to Normal*, [title of show], *Top Girls*, *The Year of Magical Thinking*. Most recent Regional: *Babbitt* (La Jolla Playhouse), Off Broadway: New York Theatre Workshop, Public Theater, Manhattan Theater Club, St. Ann's Warehouse, and many others.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Colleen Murray (Associate Scenic Designer) is a scenic designer and visual artist based in Brooklyn. Recent design credits: *Gloria* (Doug Hughes), *Happy Days* (Nico Krell), *Ohio* (Caitlin Sullivan, Anne Kauffman, co-design w/ dots), *Dirt* (Sour Milk), *Conveyances* (Zoey Martinson), *Citizen: An American Lyric* (Whitney White), *Cellino v. Barnes* (David Rafiledes, & Michael Breen), *Airline Highway* (Pamela Berlin). Upcoming, *Here Be Sirens* (Jen Pitt). TSOA scholarship recipient. www.colleenmurraydesign.com IG@coll3enmurray

Annie Hoeg (Associate Costume Designer) Recent assistant credits include: *Blues for an Alabama Sky* (McCarter), *The Road Awaits Us* (Big Dance Theater) and *Infinite Life by Annie Baker* (Atlantic). Other wardrobe credits include Playwrights Horizons, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Company, The Public, Clubbed Thumb, Papermill Playhouse, Classic Stage Company, and The Transport Group. BFA: NYU.

K Rudolph (Associate Lighting Designer, they/she) is a lighting designer whose body of work includes lighting everything from national landmarks around Washington, DC with 4Wall Entertainment to avant-garde devised work in downtown Manhattan. NYC design/associate: HERE Arts Center, Theatre at St. Clements, Second Avenue Dance Company, Columbia University, Corkscrew Theatre Festival, SheNYC, Kervigo Ensemble Theater, and Noor Theatre. DC design/associate: Arena Stage, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Woolly Mammoth, Signature Theatre, and Synetic Theater. Other: Blue Hour, 2019 Prague Quadrennial. karudolph.com

Veronica J. Lancaster (Associate Sound Designer) is excited to be working with Lindsay Jones again. Recent credits include the site-specific *Sometimes the Rain, Sometimes the Sea* with Rorschach Theatre, *Flying West* at Everyman Theatre, *The Lover and The Collection* at Shakespeare Theatre Company, and *That Face* at Baltimore Center Stage. Other regional credits include works with Round House Theater, Theater J, Keegan Theatre, Studio Theater, Metro Stage, WSC Avant Bard, The University of Maryland, and Georgetown University.

Joey Moro (Associate Projection Designer) designs lighting, projection, and scenery. Joey has designed over 150 productions in NYC, regionally, and abroad. As Moro Media, the live event media company, Joey has engineered and or programmed Broadway, regional theatre, major ballet, immersive museum exhibits, corporate events and more. Moro Media creates custom video hardware solutions, and event staffing solutions for many types of events. Joey is an Associate Professor at Berklee NYC, and a lecturer at Yale Drama, and NYU Tisch.

Misha Fristensky (Production Assistant) Regional: *Babbitt* (La Jolla Playhouse), *Dames at Sea* (Henry Strater Theatre), *Always Patsy Cline* (Durango Arts Center) Film/TV: "The Gilded Age" S1/S2 (HBO), "Girls 5eva" S2 (NBC Universal)

Will Davis (Artistic Director) is the first transgender person to lead a major nonprofit institution without a defined LGBTQ mission. As a director and choreographer, his work has been seen off-broadway at Signature Theatre, City Center, Roundabout Theatre, MTC, MCC, Playwrights Horizons, Clubbed Thumb, and Soho Rep. Regionally his work has been seen at La Jolla Playhouse, Baltimore Center Stage, Shakespeare Theater Company, Long Wharf Theatre and ATC in Chicago where Davis previously served as Artistic Director. He received a Helen Hayes award for best direction for his work on *Colossal* at the Olney Theatre Center and was nominated for a Lucille Lortel award for his direction of *Men on Boats* at Playwrights Horizons. He is an alum of the Soho Rep Writer/Director Lab, the NYTW 2050 Directing Fellowship, the Brooklyn Art Exchange's Artist in Residence program, and the Princeton Arts Fellowship.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

PRODUCTION STAFF

Production Manager - **Filippo de Capitani**

Board Operator - **Ryan Juda**

Audio Engineer - **Tiffany Stor**

Head Electrician - **Tom Dyer**

Head Sound - **Five Ohm Productions**

Lighting Board Programmer - **Piper Phillips**

Projections Programmer - **Joey Moro**

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Production Photographer - **HanJie Chow**

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Scenic elements provided by ShowTex. Lighting equipment provided by Hayden Production Services. Sound equipment provided by Five Ohm Productions. Projection equipment provided by MRT. Additional equipment provided by Moro Media.

Special thanks to Javier Arau, Contemporary Arts Theater Festival, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Brianna L. Hernández, Graduate Department of Design for Stage and Film at NYU, Gideon Lester, Bob Lomison & the Staff at Winnfield Funeral Home, Materials for the Arts, Martha Roth, Saint John's in the Village, Mangda Sengvanhpheng, Elliott Sharp, Matt Stapleton, Daniella Topol, and Harriet Williams & Peter Askin.

Spiritus/Virgil's Dance is generously funded by the Axe-Houghton Foundation, Distracted Globe Foundation, and R. Lee Stump & Abigail Roth.



The Director is a Member of the
**STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS
SOCIETY**, a national theatrical labor union.



**TO TAKE A DEEPER LOOK INTO *SPIRITUS/VIRGIL'S DANCE*
EXPLORE THE (PRE)SHOW GUIDE**

NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I heard Dael before I met her. One night in the early 1990's I went to the Nuyorican Poets Cafe on the lower east side. Dael was one of the poets who read their work that night. I was struck by her ferocity and kindness. She balanced clinical observation with an open, empathetic heart. She was, and remains, a uniquely compelling presence. I am grateful that the conversation we began that night has lasted for almost 40 years.

Over that time we have had the great fortune to present Dael's plays throughout the country and across Europe. Because of that, we have spent a lot of time walking together in many very different cities. I love these times because I get to be with Dael when she is observing people going about their daily lives. She has an uncanny ability to watch people and pick up on their states of mind and the circumstances of their lives. On these walks I get to witness the beginning of her process, the observations and empathy that will lead to complex characters and new plays that challenge and welcome us all.

Spiritus/Virgil's Dance is about the search for vocation, for purpose. The very human drive to find value and fulfillment. Our work on the play has paralleled that search. It was born, perhaps unconsciously, from the pandemic. Dael knew that the crisis forced us all to confront our notions of life and death. As those of us fortunate to make it through began to return to life, Dael was interested in how we would navigate our fears of death and our recognition that we had been given an opportunity to find new paths.

When Dael first wrote and performed *Spiritus/Virgil's Dance* we were all, like Virgil, reemerging from the land of the dead. We had witnessed the Inferno and were in a process of reflection, discovery, and action. I know that the play will continue to shift and grow as people move on in that process. Appropriately, that process harkens back to Dante. We suddenly discovered ourselves in an unknown world, a world that had changed enough to be, in some ways, unrecognizable. What is the way forward? Which path to take?

In the play, Virgil is keenly aware of the power and importance of time. Time has been a blessing and force in my relationship with Dael. Over nearly four decades, we have become trusted traveling partners, geographically and spiritually. Time has let us build mutual trust and respect. Collaborating with Dael is a way to support her deep, life-long exploration of the world and what humans do to find their way through the dark woods. I am grateful that she has invited me along.

- Neel Keller



UP NEXT AT RATTLESTICK

COMMUNITY EVENTS

THOUGHTS ON THE END OF LIFE

Monday, February 19th

A post-show conversation with end of life doulas on their work
with **Brianna L. Hernández, Martha Roth, and Mangda Sengvanhpheng**

MUSIC LIVES ON

Wednesday, March 6th

A post-show conversation and listening session with NYC musicians on the relationship between music and death
with **Javier Arau, Elliott Sharp and Matt Stapleton**

FIRST TUESDAYS

On the first Tuesday of each month, we partner with a local bar in our West Village community to host an intimate evening of cocktails and conversation featuring Rattlestick artists and friends. The best part? The first round is on us.

Join our Membership Program today at any level to access an invitation to our First Tuesdays artist salon series, free performance ticket(s), discounts on guest ticket(s), and early access booking. Pending the Patron level you choose, get additional benefits ranging from opening night invitations and to other special event access. On top of affordable memberships starting at \$125, for a limited time, Rattlestick is offering discounted memberships up to 20% off to patrons under 40. If you would like to inquire about a discounted membership, please email Laura at lzlatos@rattlestick.org.

FEBRUARY 6, 2024



MARCH 5, 2024



ABOUT RATTLESTICK

MISSION + HISTORY

Founded in 1994 by David van Asselt and Gary Bonasorte, Rattlestick Theater has been steadfast in producing diverse, challenging, and provocative plays while fostering the future voices of the American theater. Now led by Artistic Director Will Davis, the first transgender person to run an off-Broadway theater, we are proud to make Rattlestick a place that is focused on energetic theater that responds to the complexities of our culture in conversation with community partners. Our mission is to produce ambitious plays to inspire empathy and provoke conversation that will lead to positive social change.

From our historic West Village theater, Rattlestick has produced the first plays and early works of some of today's leading voices, including Martyna Majok (*Ironbound*), Diana Oh (*mylingerieplay*), and Heidi Schreck (*There Are No More Big Secrets*). We are proud to make Rattlestick a place where some of our nation's most celebrated playwrights feel safe to test their boldest ideas, including Dael Orlandersmith (*Until the Flood*), José Rivera (*Massacre, Sing to Your Children*), and Samuel D. Hunter (*Lewiston/ Clarkston*, nominated for the Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play and the Outer Critics Circle Awards for Outstanding New Off-Broadway Play).

CORE VALUES

Community

We believe in the power of theater to communicate in surprising ways. We are committed to creating a culture of belonging. By creating a safe space that invites individuals and organizations to come as they are, our community is expansive and inclusive. Together we are moving towards an intimate collective.

Equity

We believe in providing an equitable space where theater can be used as a force for social justice. We are committed to embracing diverse communities and individuals through creating social justice-related theatrical work.

Empowerment

We believe in empowering artists to create, engage, grow, and belong through theater. We create space for flexibility, safety, igniting the spark, and fanning the flames. By upholding the values of Community, Equity, and Empowerment, we can actively pursue.

Artistic Freedom

We believe in being a creative environment where artists are respected and empowered to do their best work. When a new play is programmed for a mainstage production, the playwright and director have 80% of the artistic vote. Creating work isn't about "pleasing producers", rather empowering the artists to be the visionaries of their work.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We are hosted by Rattlestick Theater, whose physical space stands on the unceded lands of the Lenape People. As both an in-person and an online event that addresses Global Issues, we recognize that in countless places in the world Native Peoples were abused, murdered, and forcefully removed from their lands by ideals and actions of "land discovery" and settler colonization. We recognize and respect all the Native Peoples all over the World, and invite every individual in this event to investigate the history of the land on which they stand and their Native Peoples. Colonization is an ongoing process that still harms and destroys lives and cultures. Let us honor, respect and hold the open space for all Native Peoples, past, present and future. This acknowledgment demonstrates a commitment to dismantle the ongoing legacies of settler colonialism.

[LEARN MORE ABOUT RATTLESTICK](#)

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2023 - 2024 RATTLESTICK ARTISTS & FELLOWS

Andrew W. Mellon National Playwright in Residence: Basil Kreimendahl
Terrence McNally New Works Fellows: Molly Herron Bicks, HyoJeong Choi, Haygen Brice-Walker
Van Lier New Voices Fellows: AriDy Nox, a.k. payne
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