



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ODC THEATER ANNOUNCES ITS 13TH ANNUAL SUMMER DANCE FESTIVAL

STATE OF PLAY

LISA FAGAN + LENA ENGELSTEIN | WANJIRU KAMUYU
LEILA AWADALLAH | GIZEH MUÑIZ | MOLLY ROSE-WILLIAMS
BLACK BENATAR | KIRA FARGAS | KIMIE PARKER | NATALYA SHOAF

July 31 – August 3, 2025



Lena Engelstein, left, and Lisa Fagan in *Deepe Darknesse*. Photo: Maria Baranova.

odc.dance/stateofplay

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, May 22, 2025 – ODC Theater is delighted to announce the program for its 13th annual summer dance festival, July 31 - August 3. **STATE OF PLAY** invites audiences to join the creative process through a curated artistic exchange, presenting premieres alongside works-in-progress by dance artists from across the U.S. and as far away as Paris, France.

This year's festival will feature two evening-length works and seven short-form works at various stages of development. Single event tickets range from \$0 to \$80, and day and festival passes are \$80 and \$300 respectively. For reservations visit odc.dance/stateofplay.

"Each of the State of Play artists follows their unique call to embody their own internal landscape," said ODC Theater Creative Director **Chloë L. Zimberg**. "This generosity is incredibly vulnerable, risky, and perhaps, especially precious in our present time."

Zimberg joined ODC Theater resident curators **Maurya Kerr** and **Zaquia Mahler Salinas** in selecting nine projects for presentation this year. The participating artists include **Lisa Fagan + Lena Engelstein**, **Wanjiru Kamuyu**, **Leila Awadallah**, **gizeh muñiz**, **Black Benatar** (aka **Beatrice L. Thomas**), **Molly Rose-Williams**, **Kira Fargas**, **Kimie Parker** and **natalya shoaf**.

The works span the gamut from investigations of identity, immigration and emotional attachment to what one artist calls "acts of devotion" and "ceremonies of togetherness." In addition to presentations by each of these artists, in the immediate run-up to the festival, July 28 – 30, there is the **State of Play Workshop**, a three-day dance- and movement-based workshop featuring a selection of the festival's artists. The instructors this year are muñiz, Fargas, Rose-Williams, shoaf, Fagan + Engelstein, Awadallah and Kamuyu.

A description of each of the curated events follows below. All the events in the Risk-Takers and Curious Creators series will take place on the main stage at ODC Theater. And each of the works in the Experimenters series will take place in the Argyle Studio at ODC Dance Commons. For more information about these and other events taking place during the festival visit odc.dance/stateofplay.

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RISK-TAKERS

Evening-Length Works

LISA FAGAN + LENA ENGELSTEIN | *Deepe Darknesse* (West Coast premiere)

Friday, August 1 at 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, August 2 at 8 p.m.

Dubbed devotees of "The High Weird" (Helen Shaw, *The New Yorker*), Lisa Fagan and Lena Engelstein have been making experimental performance together since 2021, describing their practice as "a co-generative, circulatory idea machine, whose unconventional performative frameworks are rooted in dance-adjacent physicality but reimagine what choreography can be used to accomplish theatrically." They are currently in residence at New York Live Arts. This summer's State of Play festival will mark their Bay Area debut.

In *Deepe Darknesse* (pronounced dee-pee dark-NESS-ay), which premiered in New York in 2023, Fagan and Engelstein push past their physical limits and press the edges of the playing space in a frenetic, oddball, unrelentingly theatrical Rube Goldberg machine. Inspired by the ancient Roman chronicle, *The Golden Ass*, a work which recounts the adventures of a young man turned into a donkey, *Deepe Darknesse* features performer **Hannah Mitchell** alongside Fagan and Engelstein. “The performers’ muscularity and skewed humor kept the absurdity twanging, kind of dangerously. The show could have just felt like ‘ah, this is fun & nuts,’ but instead I was scared for my life” (Helen Shaw).

WANJIRU KAMUYU | *An Immigrant's Story* (West Coast premiere)

Thursday, July 31 at 8 p.m.

Friday, August 1 at 6 p.m.

Currently based in Paris, France, Wanjiru Kamuyu was born and raised in Kenya. In 2015, she lived in Oakland, California while serving as a guest professor at Mills College. She has danced with Urban Bush Women and toured with the Broadway hit musical *Fela*. She’s also received numerous commissions which have taken her across the United States, Africa, Asia and Europe, working with distinguished theater directors including Jérôme Savary, François Auguste and Hassan Kassi Kouyate. She founded her own company, WKcollective, in 2009.

In *An Immigrant's Story*, Kamuyu weaves together five stories of people who define themselves in one way or another as a foreigner, immigrant, migrant or “othered body.” Drawing on a diverse collection of almost two dozen stories that Kamuyu has assembled over many years, *An Immigrant's Story* is different each time it’s performed, though two of the stories, one of them Kamuyu’s own, serve as a framing device. “*An Immigrant's Story* explores the complexity of the ‘othered’ in relationship to re-creating a sense of belonging,” writes Kamuyu.

CURIOUS CREATORS

Short-Form Performances

MOLLY ROSE-WILLIAMS | *CRUSH*

Friday, August 1 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, August 3 at 6 p.m.

Molly Rose-Williams melds dance, physical theater, spoken word and circus, drawing heavily on a childhood spent playing sports and practicing Chinese acrobatics. The Berkeley native has performed across the United States, as well as Canada, Belgium and Mexico. When she’s not dancing, she works as a creative producer for *The Nocturnists* podcast, teaches cooking and science, and writes about dance.

Part love letter, part absurdist caper, and part cultural satire, *CRUSH* is a solo dance-comedy show for anyone who's ever had a crush. “I created *CRUSH* over the course of a relationship – from the initial meeting to falling in love and eventually breaking up two weeks before the

show opened,” notes the artist. *CRUSH* premiered in San Francisco in 2022 to glowing reviews. For State of Play, Rose-Williams will show a thirty-minute excerpt from the evening-length work.

LEILA AWADALLAH | *shuhada alive-streamed un-ceased FIRE* (West Coast premiere)

Saturday, August 2 at 7 p.m.

Sunday, August 3 at 7 p.m.

Leila Awadallah ليلي عوض الله is a dancer, choreographer and community collaborator who divides her time between Minneapolis and Beirut, Lebanon. In defining her artistic compass, Awadallah names Palestine as her “root” within an array of “Arab American contexts, conjuring mixed Mediterranean ways and waves.” In 2021, she founded Body Watani Dance, which she leads with her sister Noelle.

For State of Play, Awadallah will perform a work she made in collaboration with choreographer **Alexandre Paulikevitch**. *Shuhada alive-streamed un-ceased FIRE* premiered last fall as a “duet” with a unique, self-playing musical instrument. With movement and storytelling, Awadallah confronts and distorts the tropes of the Arab, feminine body often perceived as a seductive other or a threat against the State. The music continuously builds into a drone-like soundscape that drives Awadallah’s experimental Baladi movement.

GIZEH MUÑIZ | *FISHBLOD* (world premiere)

Thursday, July 31 at 7 p.m.

Sunday, August 3 at 4:30 p.m.

Originally from Mexico, gizeh muñiz is a movement, teaching and performing artist based in the Bay Area. She describes her practice as centered on fostering “spaces that allow them to play and divest from concepts of linearity in a creative process, with the intention of practicing freedom.” Muñiz’s recent performance and teaching work has taken her to the P.O.R.C.H festival in Germany, Improspeckje in Croatia, GUSH in San Francisco and 4x4 in Tijuana, to name a few. In the Bay Area, muñiz curates and produces a class series called “Gatherings.”

FISHBLOD is the first solo within a larger project of solos titled *MuSeD*, which muñiz describes as “acts of devotion” and “a ceremony of togetherness.” “As we navigate an increasingly tumultuous political landscape, I insist on thinking/dreaming with our whole bodies. A strategy for survival is to fall in love with change.”

BLACK BENATAR | *Meet Black Benatar* (work-in-progress)

Thursday, July 31 at 6 p.m.

Saturday, August 2 at 9:30 p.m.

Black Benatar is the stage name of **Beatrice L. Thomas**, a multidisciplinary artist, performer and storyteller working across the disciplines of drag, puppetry and stage illusion. Best known for

their solo touring work *Black Benatar's Black Magic Cabaret*, Benatar is currently developing a new solo show, *Meet Black Benatar*, which they describe as a “puppet show from the inside out.” With humor and whimsy, *Meet Black Benatar* presents an assortment of “eclectic neighbors,” including “the Fybroid family, Cystina the squatter, and the twins Ova and Reese, in a playful exploration of motherhood, identity and community.”

EXPERIMENTERS

Works-in-Progress

KIMIE PARKER | *komainu duet* (work-in-progress)
Saturday, August 2 at 6 p.m.

Kimie Parker is a dancer and educator based in Brooklyn, New York. Her movement practice centers on unveiling/distorting the anatomical/social form and function of her Asian body. In addition to developing and performing her own choreography, Parker is a company dancer, rehearsal director and teaching artist with Sidra Bell Dance New York.

For State of Play, Parker will present a work-in-progress with collaborator **kira shiina**, titled *komainu duet*. With a nod to her ancestry, Parker’s title alludes to the protective lion-dog statues placed at the entrance to Japanese temples. “Though found in pairs, the two are not the same,” explains Parker. “Unique expressions distinguish them from one another, mirroring the individual experiences of two sisters as they navigate their dual identities as both Japanese and American. This duet abstractly contemplates the responsibilities of daughters, the consequences of fetishization in the West and the inherent loneliness of womanhood.”

NATALYA SHOAF | *from seed to bloom* (world premiere)
Sunday, August 3 at 5 p.m.

Based in the Bay Area, natalya shoaf is a dance and teaching artist who has performed with Robert Moses’ KIN, OYSTERKNIFE, Flyaway Productions, dawsondancesf and dazaun.dance, among others. She currently teaches at Oakland School for the Arts and performs with The Foundry directed by Alex Ketley. For State of Play, shoaf will present *from seed to bloom*, developed under the mentorship of laura elaine ellis and Robert Moses. *From seed to bloom*, a solo performed by shoaf, represents “one Black woman’s passage through known and unknown time and space, navigating themes of destruction, hope, lineage and legacy.”

KIRA FARGAS | *Maya* (work-in-progress)
Friday, August 1 at 5 p.m.

Kira Fargas is a queer, first-generation Filipina American movement artist. After earning a BFA in Dance from the University of Arizona, Fargas returned home to the Bay Area where she has collaborated with UNA Productions, EIGHT/MOVES and Detour Productions. Alongside

Hadassah Perry, she co-directs the Contemporary Training Program at Westlake School for the Performing Arts.

For State of Play, Fargas will present *Maya*, a work for four dancers. Taking its name from the former national bird of the Philippines, *Maya* explores the anguish, longing for community and instinct for self-preservation that arise in response to the forced displacement of peoples and the state-sanctioned separation of families.

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ABOUT ODC THEATER

ODC Theater participates in the creation of new works through commissioning, presenting, mentorship and space access; it develops informed, engaged and committed audiences; and it advocates for the performing arts as an essential component to the region's economic and cultural development. The Theater is the site of over 120 performances a year involving nearly 1,000 local, regional, national and international artists.

Since 1976, ODC Theater has been the mobilizing force behind countless San Francisco artists and the foothold for national and international touring artists seeking debut in the Bay Area. The Theater, founded by Brenda Way and currently under the creative direction of Chloë L. Zimberg, has earned its place as a cultural incubator by dedicating itself to creative change-makers, those leaders who give the Bay Area its unmistakable definition and flare. Nationally known artists Spaulding Gray, Diamanda Galas, Bill T. Jones, Eiko & Koma, Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE, Karole Armitage, Sarah Michelson, Brian Brooks and John Heginbotham are among those whose first San Francisco appearance occurred at ODC Theater. For more information about ODC Theater and all its programs visit www.odc.dance/theater.

ODC Theater is generously supported by the Phyllis Wattis Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Fleishhacker Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, Andrew Mellon Foundation and our many individual donors.

FACT SHEET

WHAT:

ODC Theater presents its 13th annual summer dance festival, **STATE OF PLAY**, featuring four days of activities across ODC's campus, including nine works, a mix of fully-produced evening-length pieces, shorter works, and works-in-progress from artists from across the U.S. and as far away as Paris, France.

Risk-Takers | Evening-Length Works:

- I. *An Immigrant's Story* (West Coast premiere) by **Wanjiru Kamuyu | WKcollective**
- II. *Deepe Darknesse* (West Coast premiere) by **Lisa Fagan + Lena Engelstein**

Curious Creators | Short-Form Works:

- I. *shuhada alive-streamed un-ceased FIRE* (West Coast premiere) by **Leila Awadallah**
- II. *FISHBLOD* (world premiere) by **gizeh muñiz**
- III. *Meet Black Benatar* (work-in-progress) by **Black Benatar**
- IV. *CRUSH* by **Molly Rose-Williams**

Experimenters | Works-in-Progress:

- I. *komainu duet* (work-in-progress) by **Kimie Parker**
- II. *Maya* (work-in-progress) by **Kira Fargas**
- III. *from seed to bloom* (world premiere) by **natalya shoaf**

WHEN:

July 31 – August 3, 2025

Thursday, July 31

5 p.m.: Kira Fargas
6 p.m.: Black Benatar
7 p.m.: gizeh muñiz
8 p.m.: Wanjiru Kamuyu

Friday, August 1

5 p.m.: Kimie Parker
6 p.m.: Wanjiru Kamuyu
7:30 p.m.: Molly Rose-Williams
8:30 p.m.: Lisa Fagan + Lena Engelstein

Saturday, August 2

6 p.m.: Kimie Parker
7 p.m.: Leila Awadallah
8 p.m.: Lisa Fagan + Lena Engelstein

9:30 p.m.: Black Benatar

Sunday, August 3

4:30 p.m.: gizeh muñiz

5 p.m.: natalya shoaf

6 p.m.: Molly Rose-Williams

7 p.m.: Leila Awadallah

WHERE:

ODC Theater

3153 17th Street

San Francisco, CA 94110

ODC Dance Commons

351 Shotwell Street

San Francisco, CA 94110

TICKETS:

Day Pass: **\$80**

Festival Pass: **\$300**

Single Tickets: **\$0 - \$80**. For reservations call **415-863-9834**, or online visit

odc.dance/stateofplay.

For information about accessibility, including ASL translation and wheelchair seating, visit odc.dance/stateofplay.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

odc.dance/theater

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