

FLYAWAY PRODUCTIONS ANNOUNCES THE WORLD PREMIERE OF
Meet Us Quickly With Your Mercy

October 9 – 17, 2020



Clarissa Dyas in *The Wait Room* (2019). Photo by Austin Forbord/Rapt Productions.

flyawayproductions.com

“This is art at the heart of the democratic ideal.”
– Rita Felciano, *San Francisco Bay Guardian*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, June 10, 2020 – Flyaway Productions has announced the world premiere of **MEET US QUICKLY WITH YOUR MERCY**, the second in a trilogy of outdoor aerial public art performances addressing the devastating effects of mass incarceration. *Meet Us Quickly* is presented in partnership with the **Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD)** and through CounterPulse’s curated co-production program. It will take place on the exterior facades of CounterPulse as well as on the Dahlia Hotel next door, with eight performances at 7:30 p.m. and 9 p.m., Friday and Saturday, October 9, 10, 16 and 17, and an additional performance at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 15. All performances are free. For health and safety reasons due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, audience size at each showing will be sharply limited. For reservations, visit counterpulse.org.

Meet Us Quickly follows the enormously successful run of *The Wait Room*, a work that explored the experiences of women with incarcerated loved ones. *The Wait Room* opened in San Francisco in April 2019 before traveling to the grounds outside of Sing Sing Prison in New York’s Hudson Valley in the fall,

marking Flyaway's East Coast debut. The third and final installment in Flyaway's ***The Decarceration Trilogy: Dismantling the Prison Industrial Complex One Dance at a Time*** is slated to premiere in 2021.

While *The Wait Room* focused on "ceremonies of degradation" – being turned away at prison visiting hours for the zipper in a child's pants or the underwire in one's bra, having to sit and wait with both feet on the floor at all times, to give just two examples – *Meet Us Quickly* brings an intersectional feminist and racial justice framework to explore the failures of our criminal justice system. "*Meet Us Quickly* asks how Black and Jewish voices, including Jews of color, can amplify the call for racial justice via an end to mass incarceration," said Flyaway Artistic Director **Jo Kreiter**.

Unfolding in three parts, *Meet Us Quickly* links the "caging of black bodies" in the United States, from the period of slavery through the current era of mass incarceration, to the dehumanization of Jews that flourished on both sides of the Atlantic throughout much of the 20th century and which is becoming prominent again today with the rise of white nationalism.

Enlisting the support of partner organizations including MoAD, **Prison Renaissance** and **Bend the Arc Jewish Action**, Flyaway acknowledges the shared pain of Jewish and African-American histories of race and capture. "As an artist and an activist, I am working to facilitate an opportunity for greater reconciliation between Black and Jewish communities," said Kreiter. "While I don't believe that contemporary anti-Jewish bigotry in the U.S. is equivalent to the structural racism felt by people of color, I want to encourage acts of resistance based on our shared history."

Kreiter's primary collaborator on the project is writer **Rahsaan Thomas**, currently behind bars at San Quentin State Prison. He is a co-founder of Prison Renaissance, a five-year-old nonprofit that joins artists, educators and activists in support of progressive reform. They correspond via weekly letters and phone conversations, generating content for *Meet Us Quickly* based on historical research and their own personal experiences.

Additional collaborators include composer and Jewish ethnomusicologist **Jewlia Eisenberg**, scenic designer **Sean Riley**, lighting designer **Jack Beuttler** and costume designer **Jamielyn Duggan**. Dancers include **Bianca Cabrera**, **Clarissa Dyas**, **Laura Elaine Ellis**, **Maddy Lawder**, **Megan Lowe**, **Sandia Sexton** and **Helen Wicks**.

In addition to nine live performances of *Meet Us Quickly*, Flyaway has organized a number of associated events. At 7 p.m. on October 1, MoAD will host a panel symposium featuring prominent Black and Jewish changemakers, including **Emile DeWeaver**, **Ash Lynette**, **Rebecca Walker** and **Eric Ward**. The panel will also center the voices of Jews of color in the push for racial justice. MoAD is located at 685 Mission Street in San Francisco. For more information about this event, visit moadsf.org.

The symposium on October 1 will also feature the opening of an exhibition of visual artists living at San Quentin, curated by Thomas. The exhibit will travel from MoAD to CounterPulse where it will appear on display each evening throughout the run of *Meet Us Quickly*. Finally, at the conclusion of the talk on October 1 and after each performance, October 9 - 17, Bend the Arc will lead audience members in a suite of actions designed to inspire citizen participation in efforts to end mass incarceration.

The world premiere of Meet Us Quickly With Your Mercy is supported by The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, Fleishhacker Foundation, Rainin Foundation, Zellerbach Foundation, Creative Work Fund, MAP Fund,

Bill Graham Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, California Arts Council, San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Grants for the Arts and New Music USA.

LEAD ARTISTS

ABOUT JO KREITER

Jo Kreiter is a San Francisco-based choreographer with a background in political science. Through dance she engages physical innovation and the political conflicts we live within. Her company, Flyaway Productions, explores the range and power of female physicality. Kreiter creates a sense of spectacle to make a lasting impression with an audience, striving for the right balance of awe, provocation and daring. Her tools include coalition building, an intersectional feminist lens and a body-based push against the constraints of gravity. Recent awards include a Guggenheim Fellowship, Rauschenberg Foundation Artist-as-Activist Fellowship, the Rainin Foundation Open Spaces Award and a National Dance Project Creation Grant. In her book, *Moving Sites: Investigating Site-Specific Dance Performances*, author Victoria Hunter cites Kreiter as a leader in the field of site-specific dance.

ABOUT RAHSAAN THOMAS

Originally from Brooklyn, New York, Rahsaan Thomas has been incarcerated since 2000. In 2015, he co-founded Prison Renaissance, a nonprofit organization that joins artists, educators and activists in support of progressive reform. He also co-hosts and co-produces Radiotopia's award-winning podcast, *Ear Hustle*. He has contributed to numerous outlets and publications including the book *Uncaged Stories*; The Marshall Project in collaboration with *Vice* magazine; *Missouri Review's Literature on Lockdown*; *Life of the Law*; *The Beat Within*; and *Brothers in Pen's* 2014 and 2015 anthologies. Thomas is a member of the Society of Professional Journalists, and a 2020 recipient of The Marshall Project and Sundance Institute's Documentary Short Film Fund.

ABOUT FLYAWAY PRODUCTIONS

Flyaway Productions specializes in the art of placemaking. Founded in 1996 by Jo Kreiter, Flyaway Productions is an apparatus-based dance company that explores the range and power of female physicality and advances social issues in the public realm. The company uses the artistry of spinning, flying and suspension to engage political issues. Flyaway creates dances on both architectural and fabricated steel objects, with dancers suspended anywhere from two to 100 feet off the ground. Flyaway has a long history of transforming oral history into public art, articulating the experiences of unseen women. Flyaway has developed nationally recognized expertise in creating site-specific performance including: *Mission Wall Dances*, *The Live Billboard Project*, *The Ballad of Polly Ann*, *Niagara Falling*, *Multiple Mary and Invisible Jane*, *Needles to Thread*, *Grace and Delia are Gone*, and *Tender (n.): A Person Who Takes Charge*.

Flyaway's site-specific works are free to the public, engaging a wide audience that otherwise might never attend a professional dance performance. Through its GIRLFLY program, Flyaway provides artist-as-activist training for low-income girls that stimulates awareness of the physical body and of the social framework that undervalues women and girls.

FACT SHEET

WHAT:

Flyaway Productions presents the world premiere of *Meet Us Quickly With Your Mercy*, the second in a trilogy of works addressing the devastating effects of mass incarceration.

Choreographer & Director: **Jo Kreiter**

Lead Writer: **Rahsaan Thomas**

Dancers: **Bianca Cabrera, Clarissa Dyas, Laura Elaine Ellis, Maddy Lawder, Megan Lowe, Sandia Sexton, Helen Wicks**

Composer: **Jewlia Eisenberg**

Set Designer: **Sean Riley**

Lighting Designer: **Jack Beuttler**

Costume Designer: **Jamielyn Duggan**

WHEN:

October 9 – 17, 2020

Friday, October 9 at **7:30 p.m.** and **9 p.m.**

Saturday, October 10 at **7:30 p.m.** and **9 p.m.**

Thursday, October 15 at **7:30 p.m.**

Friday, October 16 at **7:30 p.m.** and **9 p.m.**

Saturday, October 17 at **7:30 p.m.** and **9 p.m.**

WHERE:

CounterPulse

80 Turk Street

San Francisco, CA 94102

TICKETS:

Free

For health and safety reasons due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, audience size at each showing will be sharply limited. For reservations, visit [counterpulse.org](https://www.counterpulse.org).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

[flyawayproductions.com](https://www.flyawayproductions.com)

For all press inquiries contact John Hill at johnhillpr@gmail.com.