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JEAN APPOLON EXPRESSIONS TO PREMIERE *ANGAJE* PRODUCTION AT THE BCA

Jean Appolon Expressions (JAE) will present the world-premiere of its full-length production *Angaje*, conceived and choreographed by Jean Appolon, on March 27 and 28, 2015 at 8pm at Plaza Theatre at the Boston Center for the Arts (BCA).

Exploring themes of injustice, inequality and homophobia in the context of contemporary Haiti, *Angaje* is a series of interconnected dances created by Appolon for his company of eight dancers. *Angaje* will be set to music by Haitian legend Toto Bissainthe, both as audio recordings and performed live by vocalist Claudia Eliaza, guitarist Steve Desrosiers and JAE's resident percussionists.

In Haitian Creole, "Angaje" means "committed" or "engaged," with the implied meaning of political engagement. "Angaje" also describes a strand of protest music rooted in Vodou rhythms that lie at the heart of Haiti's culture and its founding as the first black republic in the world. Haitian folkloric music or "mizik rasin" has historically played an important role in Haitian identity politics. Beginning in the 1940s, the "mouvement folklorique" marked a major turning point in the recognition of the Haitian folkloric tradition as an artistic force, as well as the revaluing of the traditional arts and practices of the Haitian culture.

Angaje is a meditation on the realities of post-quake Haiti, where social, economic and political injustice persists despite promises and reconstruction efforts of Haitian and foreign leaders and institutions alike. Among the many forms of social oppression, violence against homosexuals is on the rise, as young men are sought out, maimed and sometimes killed by mobs of anti-gay protestors. *Angaje* will give voice to this interlocking set of issues through a narrative choreographic arc rooted in Haitian dance tradition and set to music of equal artistic, cultural and political importance.

Angaje is being created, in part, during Jean Appolon's 2014 BCA Dance Residency. The Dance Residency program at the BCA allows choreographers to create new work by providing free rehearsal and performance space, technical and administrative support, and direct financial assistance to be used at the artist's discretion. As part of JAE's Residency, an *Angaje* Preview Performance will take place on December 6, 2014 at 8pm at Calderwood Pavilion at the BCA. Also as part of the Residency, JAE will conduct a free community workshop entitled "Exploring the African Diaspora Through Caribbean Dance and Music" in collaboration with master teacher Jorge Arce from Puerto Rico on November 23rd from 5-7pm.

For more information about the events listed above, including ticket information, please visit <http://jeanappolonexpressions.org/events/> or bcaonline.org

ABOUT JEAN APPOLON

The Artistic Director and Co-founder of Jean Appolon Expressions, Jean Appolon is also a successful choreographer and teacher based in Boston and Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He received his earliest training and performance opportunities in Port-au-Prince with the Viviane Gauthier Dance Company, and the Folkloric Ballet of Haiti. Appolon continued his dance education in the U.S. with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and the Joffrey American Ballet School, graduating with a BA in 2003 from a joint degree program at The New School. Appolon teaches regularly at Boston Ballet, The Dance Complex (Cambridge, MA), and UMASS Boston, among other locations. Appolon was recently inducted to the 1804 List of Haitian American Changemakers in the U.S. Jean's work has received significant coverage in both U.S. and Haitian media outlets, including NPR, *The Boston Globe* and Haiti's *Le Nouvelliste*.



ABOUT JEAN APPOLON EXPRESSIONS (JAE)

JAE's mission is twofold: to restore and advance Haitian folkloric dance as one of the world's precious cultural resources for the benefit of Haitians and all people; and to develop young Haitians as contributing citizens through a high quality and intensive dance program. Since 2006 Jean Appolon has conducted a successful annual Summer Dance Institute in Port-au-Prince. The Institute targets young Haitians who lack financial resources and have limited access to dance education. In addition to the annual Summer Dance Institute, JAE aspires to develop DANCE HAITI! as an intensive, daily after-school dance program, which includes wrap-around services in academic tutoring and health education, for young Haitians without financial resources. JAE also has a home in Boston as a premiere Haitian contemporary dance company directed by Jean Appolon.

ABOUT JAE'S BOSTON-BASED HAITIAN CONTEMPORARY DANCE COMPANY

Based in Boston and directed by Jean Appolon, JAE's Haitian contemporary dance company combines Modern technique, Haitian folkloric dance and live traditional drumming, bringing a new artistic vernacular to its audiences. With its dynamic repertoire, JAE educates audiences about Haitian culture, traditions, history and current issues. The company has performed both at major venues such as Boston's Paramount Theater and in city parks and community spaces in free performances accessible to the public. JAE also has performed at many schools and colleges, including Harvard University, Lesley College and Wheaton College. JAE has been fortunate to share the stage with celebrities such as Danny Glover, Henry Louis Gates and Edwidge Danticat, and to collaborate with community partners such as Central Square Theater.

ABOUT GUEST ARTISTS CLAUDIA ELIAZA AND STEVE DESROSIERS

Claudia Eliaza is an established jazz vocalist of Haitian descent who performs regularly in Boston and internationally. She has performed with some of the jazz world's biggest stars including Nancy King, Barbara Morrison, Frank Foster, and Roy Haynes. Claudia has toured within the US, Dominican Republic, Switzerland, England, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and continues to tour throughout Russia. She graduated from Berklee College of Music.

Haiti-born guitarist/composer/writer Steve Desrosiers has an extensive history as both a session and live musician in the Boston and New York area. He honed his skills as a guitarist in Boston's world music scene with top local groups like Racine bands Batwèl Rada, which explored a fusion of Jazz and Haitian roots music. Presently Steve is the lead guitarist for Boston based Afro-Pop ensemble Federator No. 1 and lead guitarist in the Reggae and Jazz-fusion ensemble Liquid Revolution, led by Berklee professor Matt Jenson. Steve also serves as lead guitarist for singer, songwriter, poet and Ted Fellow Iyeoka Okowao and is a founding member of her band The Rock By Funk Tribe.

ABOUT BOSTON CENTER FOR THE ARTS

The Boston Center for the Arts (BCA) is a not-for-profit performing and visual arts campus that supports working artists to create, perform and exhibit new works; develops new audiences; and connects the arts to community. The BCA's historic South End campus is home to hundreds of working artists, as well as several non-profit arts and educational groups that provide a wide spectrum of services.

<http://www.jeanappolonexpressions.org>
<https://www.facebook.com/JeanAppolonExpressions>

Twitter: @JAEBostonHaiti

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If you would like more information, or would like to schedule an interview with Jean Appolon, please contact JAE Executive Director Stephanie Scherpf at 617-775-3345 or stephanie.scherpf@gmail.com.