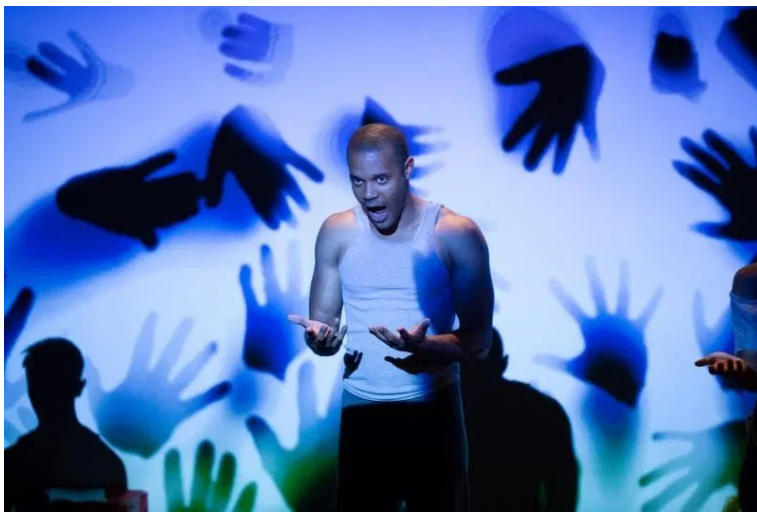


CULTUREBOT
MAXIMUM PERFORMANCE

Port Cities NYC

MAY 31, 2016 by CLAIRE TIGHE in RESPONSES

STAY IN
THE LOOP
@CULTUREBOT



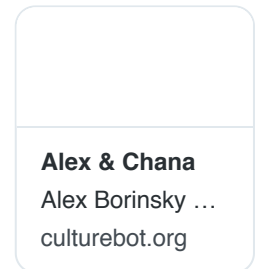
Jabari Brisport performs at Port Cities' workshop at Dixon Place in 2015. Photo credit: Kelly Stuart.

New York was a cloud as we waited together at Pier 11, just off of Wall Street. I clutched my jacket closed and huddled together with the other audience members as a rainy wind blew. We were waiting to board a water taxi, the first stage of the evening's showing of the **Port Cities Project**, a global performance linking five

mance number one. After the completion of Port Cities NYC, four additional locations – Cape Town, Jakarta, Perth, and Amsterdam – will each have their own unique shows to explore our shared global heritage. Once the five cities are completed, documentation of the performances in each will live online and in a gallery in Amsterdam.

In concept, Port Cities is awesome. It bridges the micro level of individual lives to the larger societal structures at play, reminiscent of the incredible work of **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, which asks audiences to connect our lives with the global structures that shape them. Moving its audience by boat from one location to another across the waters of lower Manhattan – a locale burdened with layer upon layer of complicated history – Port Cities NYC asks its audience to literally accompany the show’s characters as they complete a journey. The show’s text blends poetry and prose, exploring, as characters traverse four hundred years of history, dropping references to slavery, lynching, mass incarceration, and police brutality. It is a major undertaking that Port Cities NYC pulls off beautifully. All in a thirty-five minute run time.

@newgeorges
@porterchana talks "upward spiral" of LEAP AND THE NET WILL APPEAR w amazing @AlexBorinsky **@culturebot** here! Perfs start Sunday!? End in 2 wks! Prepare! **#readytoleap** @taraahmadinejad **#briefchroniclebooks @thefleatheater culturebot.org/2019/06/30699/...**



Jun 14, 2019

Culturebot Retweeted



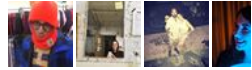
The Public Theate @PublicTheaterNY
Replying to @PublicTheaterNY
"Yeah, I mean I think good AD'ing is like that. One hopes. To learn how it's made." - Molly Murphy via **@culturebot** **#PublicTheaterWomenculturebot.org/2014/11/22686/...**

appropriate time in American history. We are more ready for it now than we ever have been. In the US, the project arrives during [#BlackLivesMatter](#) and an amazing black cultural moment, as well as a terrifying political one, rife with hatred and violence. Conversations about America's pervasive racism and structural inequality are happening at the national level. The American public is looking more closely at the performance community, pointing out its political flaws, and asking it to do better. We can look at just two recent examples in a landscape of many. The first: [#OscarsSoWhite](#), an ongoing digital conversation about Hollywood's diversity problem. The second: our obsession and criticism of our obsession with [Hamilton](#), inarguably the most prominent Broadway phenomenon in decades, one that [deliberately](#) forefronts writers, performers, and creative team members of color as it centers the stories of white historical figures.

While I found Port Cities NYC to be a brave and moving piece, I remain politically skeptical of its framing of the experiences of a white woman at the center of a narrative of enslavement. The piece follows the white protagonist's process of coming to terms with her Dutch ancestors'

Like Page

35 friends like this



...

moral implications of her white heritage while navigating an intimate relationship with her life partner, a person of color. It is estimated that 11 million African and Caribbean people were enslaved in the transatlantic Slave Trade, a horrific economic structure that benefited white merchants and traders, and created troubling, long-lasting inequalities for black people across the globe. And yet: we are still overwhelmingly centering the narratives of white folks in the context of the transatlantic Slave Trade. And we – writers, directors, producers, performers, audience members – are responsible for interrogating this pattern.

Performance remains a resonant form in part because it provides lenses through which we may view and understand our cultures and our structures. If Port Cities NYC asks us to take a closer look at our shared history and the cultural forces at play, then it is only fair to consider the following: In America, whose stories get told and by whom? Who owns narratives in this country? Whose narratives have historically been explored and taken seriously in public spaces? Whose narratives have accessed the resources required to be produced and reach wider audiences? While one director can only be held so ac-

this piece is situated.

As [Syreeta McFadden](#) so perfectly states at The Guardian, “The dominant narrative of American identity, one centered in whiteness and its aesthetics, is one that black American artists have explored, confronted and challenged since the nation’s beginning... But those efforts, while vanguard and significant, have stayed at the mainstream’s margins.” For this reason, I have to ask more of works that frame and re-frame, center and re-center the experiences of white folks in the context of slavery, colonialism, and oppression. The time to center narratives of descendants of enslaved people is long overdue. To be sure, framing a piece around the experience of a white woman will resonate with some audience members who may otherwise be apathetic to the histories of the marginalized. But the narratives of people of color have too long remained on the margins of American cultural creation and consumption. It is time for their stories to be center stage.

Share this:



More

Loading...

Tagged with: *Claire Tighe, Jabari Brisport, Marc Bammuthi Joseph, Port Cities NYC, Syreeta McFadden*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claire Tighe



Claire is a writer whose work has also appeared at The Village Voice, Bitch, Ms., Rewire, Belt Magazine, and others. Read more at clairetighe.com or follow her [@ecofeminismo](https://twitter.com/ecofeminismo).

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

This site uses Akismet to reduce spam. [Learn how your comment data is processed.](#)

ARCHIVES

2019

AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2018

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2017

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2016

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2015

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2014

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2013

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2012

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2011

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2010

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2009

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2008

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2007

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2006

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2005

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2004

DEC NOV
OCT SEP
AUG JUL
JUN MAY
APR MAR
FEB JAN

2003

DEC

CULTUREBOT

CULTUREBOT ARTS & MEDIA 2016 // ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

