

**NICOLE
KLAYMOON'S**

EMBODIMENT PROJECT



THE COMPANY

"Dance can 'speak' and language and language can 'move'." - Nicole Klaymoon



Nicole Klaymoon's Embodiment Project (EP) is an urban dance theater company based in San Francisco. The company has quickly gained notoriety based on their innovative use of various street dance styles, modern dance, live music/vocals, spoken word and theater — harnessing emotional transparency as a vehicle for social awareness. The juxtaposition of Popping, House, Hip Hop, B-boying/B-girling, and Waacking with theatrical spoken word helps create EP's signature style of 'choreo-poetry'. EP is made up of ten dancers and six singers, who work together to not only entertain, but make dance theater that unravels various social issues. The vocal ensemble is lead by EP's musical director and critically acclaimed singer/songwriter, Valerie Troutt. The company is unique in that each dancer also performs text and the vocalists are seamlessly interwoven into the choreographic works. The men and women in the company are fiercely dedicated to the empowerment of women, and explore the female orientation to street dance styles, while still honoring the history and ethos of this male-dominated art form. EP's mission is to uphold appreciation and understanding for Hip Hop dance and culture by presenting original, multi-media work to diverse audiences that challenge conceptual approaches to concert dance.

EP has been the recipient of numerous grants and awards including ODC's Rainin Opportunity Fund and the Zellerbach Foundation. Klaymoon's signature work, "House of Matter" was selected as one of the Bay Area's "ten companies and artists who challenged expectations and unveiled surprises... in 2012." In 2006 Klaymoon was chosen as one of ten choreographers to showcase original works at the *American College Dance Festival Gala* at the Carpenter Center (CA).

EP performed in the collaborative mixed media production *Block By Block*, directed by Sean San Jose, as part of the artist fellowship series at the de Young Museum in San Francisco. EP has also performed at highly recognizable festivals including, Marc Bamuthi Joseph's *Left Coast Leaning Festival*, *The Crucible Fire Arts Festival* and Dance Brigade's *Manifestival for Social Change*, ODC's *Walking the Distance Festival*, as well as *Voluspa: A Ghost Dance For 2012*. In the Bay Area, the company has presented original works at the de Young Museum, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, La Peña Cultural Center. EP has performed three consecutive years in the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Green Show (OR) as well as three home season shows at the Dance Mission Theater in San Francisco. EP is one of the artist-in-residence dance companies at the San Francisco's Red Poppy Art House and Dance Mission Theater.

EP is also recognized for their educational outreach, community arts practices, and ground breaking cross-cultural collaborations in Kenya, Africa. As part of a new generation of artists that practice Hip Hop dance forms, EP works to pay tribute to the forgotten struggles of pioneering African, Caribbean, and Latin American street dancers. The company continually engages in research and encourages dialogue about Hip Hop dance's vast history.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Nicole Klaymoon is the founder and Artistic Director of the Embodiment Project. She is a choreographer, spoken word artist, dancer, arts activist, and educator. She has had the opportunity to perform in dance works directed by Marc Bamuthi Joseph, Sean San Jose, Meredith Monk, Maria Gillespie, Annie Rosenthal-Parr, Anne Bluethenthal, and many others. She has shared a bill with Arianna Huffington, Deadprez, Elevators, Dance Brigade, and Rennie Harris Puremovement.

As a solo performer, Klaymoon created the dance theater production, *Sixth Vowel*, directed by Kamillah Forbes of the Hip Hop Theatre Festival New York and choreographed by Rennie Harris. Chuck Strouse, art critic of the Miami New Times, wrote "Nicole Klaymoon's *Sixth Vowel* was "THE BEST small theatrical production I have seen in this city in a decade. *Sixth Vowel* toured to highly recognizable festivals and venues including the Hip-Hop Theater Festival (NY), *Illadelph Legends* Hip-Hop Dance Festival (PA), Electric Lodge (CA), Miami Hip-Hop Project (MI), the Bride Theater (PA), UC Riverside (CA), and the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (Scotland), Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Black Swan Theater (OR), Studio Theatre (MD), 4th Street Theater, New York Theater Workshop (NY), and Intersection for the Arts Theater (CA).

She has facilitated a dance theater intensive sponsored by G.R.A.C.E. Africa and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival's *Deadalus* Project, in Kenya, Africa and has worked as a guest choreographer and arts educator in over thirty schools throughout the Bay Area. Klaymoon currently teaches a company technique class at Dance Mission (San Francisco), and is on faculty in the Performing Arts department at Marin Academy High School (Marin County) and ODC Dance School (SF).



She received a B.A. in Dance from UCLA and an M.F.A. from the California Institute of Integral Studies (SF). Klaymoon identifies as an eco-feminist choreo-poet, or rather someone who dynamically combines poetry and dance to invoke an emotional response from audiences regarding the interconnectedness between the oppression of women and nature. Through cross-cultural collaborations, experimentation, and meaningful dialogue she seeks to inspire honest expression, in herself and others.

MUSICAL DIRECTOR

Valerie Troutt is the founder and Artistic Director of *Mooncandy Live House Ensemble Project*. She is Bay Area born and bred, jazz and gospel trained, and internationally respected. She is a musical collagist, borrowing from ancestral centuries of sound, channeling spirits, and delivering the stories of our love, loss, and lives.



Troutt's creative and spiritual life emerged at the early age of seven with her first church solo. Refinement of skills in piano and guitar followed at the famed Walter Hawkin's Love Center. By adolescence, she became engrossed in further studies at Jazz Camps, Stanford Jazz, Howard University Jazz program and ultimately the New School Jazz Performance program for the Carmen McRae Scholarship winner.

After the requisite hand-to-mouth NYC grinds, lesson-rich production deals with labels like Oblique Sound, and a brief experience abroad as an ambassador for the International Association of Jazz Educators, Troutt returned to the Bay teaching music at the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts and performing for two years with the Grammy-nominated Linda Tillery and the Cultural Heritage Choir, most recently as a featured soloist on *Still We Rise, Still We Sing*. After performing at SOBs and The Knitting Factory, sharing stages with major recording artists like Les Nubians, and honoring legends such as Bobby McFerrin at tributes, Troutt dominated the West Coast jazz and theater circuit, including performances at Yoshi's Jazz Club, Laurel Street Fair, The Mint L.A., CODA Jazz Supper Club, and the Art 'n' Soul Festival, among others. She took part in collaborations with singer-songwriters like Jennifer Johns, Maria Muldaur, Kimiko Joy, and Sister Monica Parker, and recording with modern composers like Gregory Del Piero, Emanuel Ruffler, Howard Wiley and Jaz Sawyer.



MoonCandy Live House Ensemble Project

ARTISTIC COLLABORATOR

Choreographer and performer d. Sabela Grimes may be one of the Los Angeles dance world's best-kept secret"

- Los Angeles Times



d. Sabela Grimes aka Ovasoul7 is a multi-hyphenated artist, choreographer and educator whose work transforms speech and sound into a visual performance with movement that is electric on transmission. Sabela has conceived and presented a body of dance theater work that proactively seeks to expand beyond contemporary notions of Hip Hop culture and aesthetics. Projects such as *World War What?Ever?*, *40 Acres & A Microchip: Salvation or Servitude*, *Sankofa* and his evening length tour-de-force *BULLETPROOF DELI* exemplify his propensity to *funktion* as performer, choreographer, writer, composer, actor and costume designer.

In addition to his own work, Sabela has functioned as composer/sound designer for Victoria Marks' *Medium Big Inefficient Considerably Imbalanced Dance*, Baker & Tarpaga Dance Project's *Beautiful Struggle* and is currently composing for David Rousseve's, *Stardust*. He has also worked with the Dances Made To Order film series contributing his latest short film, *AVEILable*, and served as curator.

In 1997, Sabela joined Rennie Harris Puremovement (RHPM). During his tenure with RHPM, Sabela became a principal dancer and the company's Education/Outreach Coordinator. In addition to playing a leading role, Ben-V, in RHPM's award winning production *Rome and Jewels*, Sabela also contributed two musical compositions and co-authored the script.

Sabela holds a MFA in choreography from UCLA's World Arts and Culture Department and a BA in English also from UCLA. Sabela's performance work and pedagogical approach reveal his invested interest in the physical and meta-physical efficacies of Black dance practices. He created and continues to cultivate a technique-based approach to learning Black dance vernacular dances/dance forms called *Funkamentals*.



TOURING PROGRAM

"One of the most Rocking Dance Theater Pieces pieces that have hit the town in a long time." - SF Bay Guardian

House of Matter

Presented as a journey through the different rooms of a house, the performers in *House of Matter* demonstrate emotional transparency through athletic street dance, spoken word, and live song -- courageously invoking memories and longings for home. Renowned 'choreo-poet,' d. Sabela Grimes, live vocal ensemble lead by Valerie Troutt, and interactive video design all act as grand, operatic elements within the *House* as it morphs into a place of belonging.

- 10 dancers and 6 vocalists

- Premiered at Dance Mission Theater (San Francisco) June, 2012



TOURING PROGRAM CONT.



Repertory Program

The Repertory Program includes energetic and highly physical choreographic works that showcase various party dances and street dance traditions including Popping, House, Hip Hop, B-boying/B-girling, and Waacking. Repertory works also include captivating and awe-inspiring freestyle performances. This work communicates a celebratory and uplifting message of unity, action, and strength.

- 8 dancers

- Premiered at the de Young Museum
Koret Auditorium (San Francisco),
2011



TOURING PROGRAM CONT.

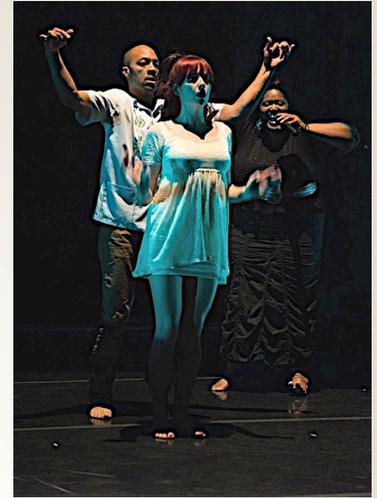
"Klaymoon has the gift of creating concert dance that is highly dynamic, cerebral, and emotive."

- Sean San Jose,
Co-Founder of Campo Santo
Theater Company

Dare to Love

Dare to Love is a series of compelling and hauntingly revealing 'chore-poems' and duets that explore themes of intimacy and manhood. These poetic movement narratives question the prevalent system of ideals that calls vulnerability a weakness and emotional expression naive vulnerability. Instead of relying on those dated ideals, *Dare to Love* creates a space where these emotional intricacies can be mapped through the body's movement. The piece draws not only from the physicality of each dancer, but also the complexity of his/her identity, lived experiences, and the anatomy of their 'soul'. *Dare to Love* features the critically acclaimed street dance innovator, d. Sabela Grimes, and the soulful and operatic live vocals of Valerie Troutt and Solas B. Lagee.

- 5 dancers and 3 vocalists
- Premiered at the ODC Theater's *Walking the Distance Festival* (San Francisco), 2013



TOURING PROGRAM CONT.



X Rated Planet

X Rated Planet is an all female dance theater piece that explores the interconnectedness between the exploitation and domination of women and its relationship to the planet. Through radically transparent language, both spoken and encapsulated inside of gestural movement, the *X Rated Planet* reveals a tapestry of real-life under-told stories; namely, ones of abuse, humanity, and heroism with a palpable urgency to build a better future for earth's progeny. Performers invoke the ancient archetypes and mythological figures to offer a broader interpretation of urban ritual.

- 5 dancers and 2 vocalists
- Premiered at *Voluspa: A Ghost Dance* for 2012
Dance Mission Theater (San Francisco), 2012



PRESS

Nicole Klaymoon's Embodiment Project was selected as one of the Bay Area's "ten companies and artists who challenged expectations or unveiled surprises... in 2012."

-SF Bay Guardian

"Nicole Klaymoon's *Sixth Vowel*, produced by the Miami Light Project last Friday was THE BEST small theatrical production I have seen in this city in a decade."

-Chuck Strouse, Miami New Times

"... there was something so grand and operatic about this house that became a home that I couldn't help but feeling pulled in."

-Rita Felciano, SF Bay Guardian

"Jazz vocalist Valerie Troutt is unquestionably one of the best... songwriters around. Armed not only with a pure-toned voice but a preternatural sense of rhythm... Troutt has the power to turn listeners into avid fans in the course of a few bars."

-Rachel Swan, East Bay Express

"You can have a first encounter with an artist who pushes you right to the edge of your seat — the work's ingredients are good, but it's the way they interlock or bounce off each other that makes you look forward to what else this person will come up with in the future. Such was the case with Nicole Klaymoon."

-Rita Felciano, SF Bay Guardian

" 'The body as our home' is one of those post-structuralist tropes that academia has bequeathed on us. In her opening spoken and danced monologue about 'wanting to let you in' but not daring to do so, Klaymoon didn't push it. The image of the house did set the tone — not for a series of narratives, but stories nonetheless."

-SF Bay Guardian

"Through song, movement, and spoken word, the Embodiment Project initiates a conversation about unity, action, and strength."

-SF Bay Guardian

"This age of American Idol and Disney-approved singers has no room for a big, brassy woman who takes no shit and can really belt one out. From Big Mama Thornton to Etta James all the way to Patti LaBelle, every generation has had one but ours. It's like when Chuck D asked all those years ago, "Who stole the soul?" Thank goddess for Valerie Troutt and the Fear Of a Fat Planet Crew. During college Valerie was mentored by jazz vocalist Dianne Reeves, Troutt approaches R&B standards, house grooves, and her original socially conscious jazz and soul compositions with the verve of the missing masters."

-D. Scot Miller, S.F. Weekly



PRESS CONT

“Valerie Truitt's voice is a thing of rare beauty -- stunning in its deceptive simplicity and expressive without resorting to melismatic melodrama. Truitt approaches her imaginative lyrics with stirring conviction, but she never oversells the song. ”

-John Murph - NPR

“*House's* trajectory from tension to reconciliation flowed seamlessly.”

-Rita Felciano, SF Bay Guardian

“The audience – from a bunch of goateed 20 year olds to elegant elderly ladies -- surfed along behind the hip-hop dancer/actor as she played the part of a school kid, commented on the way schools don't work, made you laugh your ass off, and think even harder.”

-Chuck Strouse, Miami New Times

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-Chuck Strouse, Miami New Times



EDUCATION OUTREACH

Master Classes

The company offers a broad range of classes in street dance styles (including House, Waacking, B-boying/B-girling, Hip Hop, and Popping), Modern Dance, Theater, Hatha Flow Yoga, Spoken Word, and Choreography. Embodiment Project's master classes in the 'Embodiment Method' offer a taste of the company's creative approach to building interdisciplinary collaborative works. These dynamic workshops include improvisation, innovative poetry writing exercises, and meaningful dialogue.



Lecture demonstrations

Lectures are an opportunity for company members to engage in a discourse with the audience about the EP's creative process, mission, and artistic works. Panel discussions and demonstrations are usually highlighted with informal showings of particular street dance forms, represented by company

Company Technique Class and Events

Embodiment Project's weekly company is held at Dance Mission Theater (San Francisco). This class incorporates influences from several styles of dance including House, Hip Hop and Waacking, as well as other urban social dance traditions. Each class challenges students with foundational footwork, strengthening, stretching, the craft of free-styling and unique choreography.

In 2010, EP hosted a weekly street dance event called the *REBIRTH*, which was sponsored by the Ford Foundation and La Peña Cultural Center. EP commonly throws events that together the Bay Area's street dance crews, DJ's, and community.



Youth Outreach

EP is a teaching company—members hold B.A. and M.F.A. degrees in dance and teach at both public schools and Universities. Reaching the next generation through Hip Hop movement and culture is vital to EP. The company strongly believes that with the right tools, our youth has the potential to use their creativity to brighten the world and solve its problems. EP has performed in school Assemblies and has taught at San Francisco's Stern Grove Festival Youth Program for the past two years. Klaymoon has taught spoken word and movement workshops in children's hospitals and has worked as a resident artist in over 30 schools in the San Francisco Bay Area.

COMMUNITY ARTS



Embodiment Project uses dance, storytelling, spoken-word, and theater to reach new communities. Our extensive experience includes work with underserved youth, people affected by HIV/AIDS, children's hospitals, and members of our global Hip Hop dance community. In addition to giving back to the Bay Area community, EP is passionate about fostering and expanding cross-cultural awareness and artistic collaborations.

EP is also recognized for their educational outreach, community arts practices, and groundbreaking collaborations in Kenya, Africa. Klaymoon and EP's sound designer, Makana Muanga, facilitated a performance training in Embu, Kenya, that was sponsored by G.R.A.C.E. Africa and Oregon Shakespeare Festival's Deadalus Project. Klaymoon guided youth in the creation of collaborative and interdisciplinary performance pieces that were showcased in schools in Embu, Kenya to promote self-awareness, healing, and empowerment through education about the HIV/AIDS virus.

EP has also performed in the site-specific community arts project, *SKYWATCHERS*, created with the Community Housing Partnership, residents of the Senator Hotel, Tenderloin National Forest (San Francisco), and ABD Productions.



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