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ADF AND DANCECLEVELAND TO PREMIERE WORK BY GREGORY VUYANI MAQOMA AND MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH

Durham, NC, February 11, 2021— Building upon their partnership over the past few years and with a desire to work together to support artists and their creativity during this extraordinary moment in time, The American Dance Festival (ADF) and DANCECleveland have commissioned a new dance film by South African choreographer Gregory Vuyani Maqoma and poet, arts activist, and educator Marc Bamuthi Joseph. The new work, Untold Secrets of the Heart Chamber, will premiere online on February 25th at 7:00pm EST. The screening will be followed by a conversation with the artists moderated by Gina Belafonte and Jefferson Tshabalala. The work will be available for additional viewings for 30 days following the premiere. This is a FREE event although there is a suggested donation of \$10.

Untold Secrets of the Heart Chamber is a trans-Atlantic, pandemic-backdropped missive between almost strangers. Gregory Maqoma and Marc Bamuthi Joseph met in the fall of 2020 to begin discussing the matter of Black life as filtered through 25 years of South African democracy and one particularly hot summer on the American racial timeline. The result is a piece that connects these world-scaled events to the intimacy of the artists' respective homes and sanctuary spaces. Untold Secrets of the Heart Chamber is an 18-minute long dance film/live performance shot on two continents in the time of COVID-19. Edited by David Szlasa, and performed by Maqoma and Joseph, the work ponders democracy, what grandmothers leave behind, and the safety extended from Black fathers to their sons.

Maqoma stated, "The idea to work with Marc Bamuthi Joseph has been in my mind for a while and I was just waiting for an opportunity. I don't think there could have been a better time than the one we are experiencing with COVID-19 and its ripple effect across the globe. The irony is that this devastation has brought many of us together but also separated the bad apples from the good ones and forced many to look deep inside their skin to validate their existence and accelerate personal introspection. Working with Marc is an experience that is interwoven in words and movement, the architecture of body and sound that is embedded in our histories. To see this manifest and develop in different spaces, within the confinements, is both a privilege and a joy."

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Joseph said, "I've been fascinated by Gregory Maqoma's work for over a decade and was elated to learn that he too felt an aesthetic kinship and collaborative curiosity. This work plays to our respective strengths while at the same time exposing the inherent vulnerabilities of making work in the time of the pandemic. We both bring a sense of heartbreak to our political analysis and an ethic of viscerality to our approach of the ethereal. I'm already learning so much about myself and about what's possible as we explore this new work and hope audiences might also accept the invitation to learn something new about what's generatively possible within the landscape of great loss..."

The link to *Untold Secrets of the Heart Chamber* will be live at <https://bit.ly/2LGhHqd> on Thursday, February 25th at 7:00pm EST and will be available for viewing for 30 days after the premiere.

BAMUTHI (Marc Bamuthi Joseph) is a 2017 TED Global Fellow, an inaugural recipient of the Guggenheim Social Practice initiative, and an honoree of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship. Bamuthi's opera libretto, *We Shall Not Be Moved*, was named one of 2017's "Best Classical Music Performances" by *The New York Times*. His evening-length work created in collaboration with composer Daniel Bernard Roumain, *The Just and The Blind*, was commissioned by Carnegie Hall and premiered to a sold out house in March 2019. His upcoming piece, *In His Name*, is inspired by the forgiveness exhibited by the congregation of Emanuel AME Church in Charleston and will premiere at The Perelman Center in New York in 2021.

While engaging in a deeply fulfilling and successful artistic career, Bamuthi also proudly serves as Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. He is in high demand for his creative approach to organizational design, brand development, and community mediation and has been enlisted as a strategic partner or consultant for companies ranging from Coca Cola to Carnegie Hall. His TED talk on linking sport to freedom design among immigrant youth has been viewed more than 1 million times and is a testament to his capacity to distill complex systems into accessible and poetic presentations. Bamuthi's community development philosophy called "The Creative Ecosystem" has been implemented in dozens of cities across the United States and is the subject of several critical writings, including one of the seminal essays in *Cultural Transformations: Youth and Pedagogies of Possibility*, published by Harvard Education Press.

Bamuthi is the founding Program Director of the exemplary non-profit Youth Speaks and is a co-founder of Life is Living, a national series of one-day festivals which activate under-resourced parks and affirm peaceful urban life. He has lectured at more than 200 colleges and has carried adjunct professorships at Stanford and Lehigh, among others.

Gregory Vuyani Maqoma became interested in dance in the late 1980s as a means to escape the political tensions growing in his place of birth, Soweto, South Africa. He started his formal dance training in 1990 at Moving Into Dance where in 2002 he became the Associate Artistic Director. Maqoma has established himself as an internationally renowned dancer, choreographer, teacher, and director. He founded Vuyani Dance Theatre in 1999 when he was undertaking a scholarship at the Performing Arts Research and Training School in Belgium under the direction of Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker.

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Maqoma is respected for his collaborations with artists of his generation like Akram Khan, Vincent Mantsoe, Faustin Linyekula, Shanell Winlock, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Nhlanhla Mahlangu, and Theatre Directors James Ngcobo and Kwame Kwei-Armah.

Several works in his repertoire have won him accolades and international acclaim. This includes FNB Vita Choreographer of the Year in 1999, 2001, and 2002 for *Rhythm 1.2.3*, *Rhythm Blues*, and *Southern Comfort* respectively. He received the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Dance in 2002. Maqoma was a finalist in the Daimler Chrysler Choreography Award in 2002 and in the Rolex Mentorship Programme in 2003. He is the recipient of the 2012 Tunkie Award for Leadership in Dance. In 2014 he received a “Bessie,” New York City’s premier dance award, for *Exit/Exist* for original music composition. He served as a nominator in the 2016-2017 Rolex Arts Initiative as well as curating the 2017 Main Dance Program for The National Arts Festival. His current works *Via Kanana* and *Cion: Requiem of Ravel’s Bolero* have been halted from touring due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2017 Maqoma was honored by the French government with the Chevalier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Knight of the Arts & Literature) Award. In 2018 Maqoma was one of the selected visiting artists at Virginia Commonwealth University Dance Department as well as a visiting teacher at Ecole De Sables - Toubab Dialaw - Senegal. In 2018 Maqoma collaborated with William Kentridge as a choreographer and performed in Kentridge’s opera *The Head And The Load* which premiered at The Tate Modern Gallery in London in July and toured to Germany, Austria, Holland, and New York. Maqoma is part of the selection committee for Dance Biennale Afrique Festival to take place in Marrakech at a date yet to be announced.

In 2019 Maqoma collaborated with Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah in the production *Tree* produced by Manchester International Festival and the Young Vic. In 2020 Maqoma was honored by the International Theatre Institute in partnership with UNESCO to be the author of the prestigious International Dance Day Message.

About DANCECleveland:

DANCECleveland, a Cleveland, Ohio based non-profit, is one of a handful of presenters in the nation that is dedicated solely to the presentation of modern and contemporary dance. The centerpiece of the organization’s programming is its annual performance series. The performances are surrounded by an array of educational outreach events including artist-run master classes, residency programs, student matinees, pre-performance lectures, and post-performance Q&A sessions, designed to both break artistic boundaries and provide community access to the dance aesthetic and dance luminaries that DANCECleveland brings to Northeast Ohio. Learn more at DANCECleveland.org.

About ADF:

Throughout its 87-year history, ADF has been a nationally recognized leader in our indigenous art form of modern dance. Generations of dancers and choreographers have come to ADF as students, taught as faculty, and created and performed work as professional artists. Each summer, ADF has been the beating heart of the

dance world. The best companies in the world premiere work on ADF's stage, much of it commissioned by the festival. Other festivals and season programs are measured against ADF. Over 25,000 people see performances by more than 20 companies each season. The festival has commissioned 442 works and premiered over 700 pieces including dances by Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, and Paul Taylor. Each summer at ADF, more than 300 students from some 28 countries and 38 states study with ADF's 70 faculty members. They come as kids in leotards with as many doubts as dreams. They leave as dancers and artists—and sometimes even new members of companies. Lives change in those 5½ sweaty weeks. Beyond the summer, ADF maintains year-round dance studios offering movement classes to over 650 participants, provides over 180 free classes to almost 4,000 local dancers, and offers choreographic residencies providing artists with the necessary space and time to create. americandancefestival.org.

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