

I'm imagining you four months or so from now, in winter 2023.

**You'll be thawing off from the New York City cold,
looking at a plexiglass and wood enclosure,
waiting for *HotHouse*,
Baye & Asa's
newest work, to begin.**

But we're not there yet. It's still summer, and Baye & Asa
just finished a month-long BAC Open Residency at Baryshnikov Arts Center.
While in residence, they developed *HotHouse*, premiering at Pioneer Works in January.

Directed by

Amadi 'Baye' Washington and Sam 'Asa' Pratt
this company creates physically voracious, raging, tender, ferociously political
movement arts projects.

And to be clear, these are my words:
my reading of their upcoming evening-length work and my take on
the American violence

they are interrogating, exhuming, laying bare
in their larger body of work.

I'm Amy Shoshana Blumberg, a white woman in her thirties. I danced and now I make theater.

**The structure will be imposing,
with wooden studs every eight feet,
a lighting truss above,
a small doorway.
You will be on the outside looking in,
milling about, looking at it from all sides,
and maybe you'll wonder about the people who, just minutes from now, are going to be
confined
within it, and maybe your brain will associate that box with...**

This set, which is not in the room with us at BAC,
is the first thing we discuss when I join Sam and Amadi
in another largely glass enclosure: the airy John Cage and Merce Cunningham Studio.

"Lights change"

Sam shouts across the room to Amadi.

Amadi begins a solo.

Something outside this box
is here and looming and alive
And this character knows it

even if he cannot see it.
He sharply tugs his pants up.
He feels for it on the back of his neck.
He wrenches some
thing
from his own face
even as it
jolts
him
forward.
He throws the scales of justice
or is it that they throw him?
He is watching and at the ready and he knows
that this
thing
outside the edges of this box,
(and maybe already seeping in at the seams)
does not
wish him well.

**You will see a Black man and a white man
alone together,
sealed up,
breathing the same
air.
They both see a threat:
rapacious
looming
here.
But drenched in the air outside the box,
maybe you're wondering if you...**

This dance that Amadi and Sam are making is of the now:
this, the third year of global disease,
the four hundred and third year since the beginning of American slavery.
So it is, of course, also a dance of

the past three years.

The past four hundred and three years.

Four months from now

you will see a white man seeing a Black man.

**You will see the white man see the Black man seeing him.
The white man will throw his arms into a T, square his shoulders to the front, and twist his
body to the diagonal,
as if on a cross.
You will see a white man who
moments before
alone
tried and failed to find the fullness of his own extremities
but now
under the gaze of a Black man
he performs
masculine grandiosity.
A performance of...**

“You know what’s the biggest proof that astrology is all bullshit? The two of us. We are so different from one another, but people look at him and say: classic Leo. And then they look at me and say: classic Leo!”

“But we’re both outgoing. Isn’t that the biggest Leo quality?”

*It started in the first grade.
They were six.*

It is now the twenty fourth year of Sam and Amadi’s friendship.
I lilt at this news.

**Audiences and fans
will always lilt at this news.**

How could we not?

*In high school, Amadi and Sam could choose
dance
instead of P.E., and they did.
They studied Hip Hop and African dance languages.*

I learn in their artist statement, and by watching their choreography, that
these languages
are the foundation of Baye & Asa’s technique.

*The rhythms of these techniques, which they first learned
together,*

shape their approach to choreography,

to creating contemporary dance theater.

*And throughout the dancing and the years passing
Sam and Amadi
entrusted themselves to one another in a way that*

is palpable.

**You will see them almost meet in the middle,
but they pinball away
suddenly occupying the other man's side of the box.
And you'll know that when they do
collide
it will be...**

From here on out, I will let you imagine who is doing what to whom.

**They will run together, one man engulfing the crown of the other man's head with his chin.
One man will sit on the other's knee.
It will be almost parental
for a second, but then...
Eventually they will hurry forwards in a single file line,
the man in back cupping the other's neck with his palm.
The one in front will look behind to see if the other is still there.
He'll still be there, yes.
They will repeat the neck-holding-walk. The man in front will fall back.
They will propel one another until
they've stopped,
one man sitting on his shins, holding the other in his lap, face up.
They will look at one another.
And then
continue throwing each other with a violence
that is inherently intimate.**

*They entered breathing the same
stale air,*

but only one of them sees the staleness for what it is.

**One man will lie on the ground face up
the other will be standing above him.
They will be holding hands.
The standing man will place his foot on the recumbent man's thigh,
then move it towards his groin.**

They'll still be holding hands.

I wonder how it will end.

**They will continue, catapulting
one another
off,
immediately pulling the other in,
heaving the other towards the ground
until
they will be in the same shape as before.
They'll stop,
one man sitting on his shins, holding the other in his lap, face up.
They will look at one another.**

"I like you doing that in the center. It defies the middle a little."

**You'll realize you haven't inhaled or blinked
in what feels like minutes,
because it will just keep going
defying the laws of gravity and human tolerance
for almost everything.
But suddenly you'll find breath in your lungs again because
they've stopped,
one man sitting on his shins, holding the other in his lap, face up.
They will look at one another.
But this third time
the roles will be reversed.
And this time the man holding the other in his lap
will grab the other's shirt, pin it over his face, and throw both himself and the other on the
ground.
They will lie there,
one man exposing the other's body to the sky.**

This isn't how it ends. They haven't made it yet.

But it all feels incredibly generous to me, this mirror that Amadi and Sam are holding up
for us to look at ourselves,
for me to look at myself,
with their bodies as the frame.

**Maybe you'll be talking about how Baye & Asa
are setting works on world famous companies
or about how**

they deserve to earn some staggeringly large source of funding.
And you'll be talking about
HotHouse
and the men who made it.
The love they have for each other,

*the relationship they forged before they had the language -
dance or otherwise -
to talk about white supremacy.*

"I don't know if our do si do is stupid"

"It is objectively stupid"

"Maybe we just release one of the arms"

They dance.

"Part of the problem is that I'm just fucking standing here"

"No. It's just a bad move. We teach it to second graders"

"Is there a reason I'm ducking?"

"Oh, see, I can't see you ducking"

"It's an embellishment. I just don't know if it feels like a useful embellishment"

"Well...an embellishment can certainly be useful."

They dance again.