

# OKWUI OKPOKWASILI

## POOR PEOPLE'S TV ROOM

*"Ruthlessly clean and clever...  
Okpokwasili puts the threat  
in triple threat." – Time Out NY*

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photo: Peter Born

Bessie Award-winning artist Okwui Okpokwasili uses an interdisciplinary, intensely visual and textured lens to look at issues of gender, culture, identity as they are expressed in American and global contexts. *Poor People's TV Room* is rooted in a kinetic history of collective action in Nigeria, drawing from historical events in order to explore the amnesia around collective action initiated by African women and to build a narrative around the impact of that erasure. Integrating choreography, song, text, and film, *Poor People's TV Room* crosses disciplines to make a visceral performance where the past is alive and unleashed in the present.

*Poor People's TV Room* is informed by two historic incidents in Nigeria: The Women's War of 1929, a resistance movement against British colonial powers; and the Boko Haram kidnappings of more than 300 girls, which launched the Bring Back Our Girls movement. Women have been central to these campaigns, and have played essential and powerful roles in Nigeria's independence. *Poor People's TV Room* attempts not only to unearth this complex history, but to investigate how buried narratives of women in Nigeria resonate with actions of the present throughout the world.

Other creative points of departure include: the dystopian mythology of author Amos Tutuola; Octavia Butler's science fiction; the TV room of a wealthy government official designated exclusively for poor people in his village; a lost girl in the present; and a ghost from the Women's War.

Conceived, Co-Written and Performed by Okwui Okpokwasili; Co-Written and Directed with Scenic and Lighting Design by Peter Born; Movement and Original Songs Created by Okwui Okpokwasili and Peter Born. Performed by Thuli Dumakude, Okwui Okpokwasili, Katrina Reid, and Nehemoyia Young. Costume Designer: Maria Ozmen; Production Manager, Santino Lo; Saxophone music by Sedric Choukroun.

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*Poor People's TV Room* is produced by MAPP International Productions in association with New York Live Arts, with lead support from New York Live Arts Resident Commission Artist program.

It has been commissioned by the American Dance Institute and the Walker Arts Center. *Poor People's TV Room* is a project of Creative Capital. It has received funding from The MAP Fund, supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. *Poor People's TV Room* was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation; and from the National Endowment for the Arts. It is supported by developmental residencies at The Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography at Florida State University in Tallahassee, FL; Brooklyn Creative Arts LAB (BRIC); Lower Manhattan Cultural Council; Denniston Hill Residency; Times Square Alliance Artists in Residence; "Alternative Spring Break: NYC Performing Arts" at Columbia; and 92Y in New York; The Rauschenberg Residency (Robert Rauschenberg Foundation) on Captiva Island, FL; and Wesleyan University in Middlebury, CT. An early work-in-progress iteration of *Poor People's TV Room* was presented by Lincoln Center in the David Rubenstein Atrium in June 2014.

**For more information:**

Michelle Coe, Director of Booking,  
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Running Time: TBD

Open Availability

National Dance Project subsidies available!

produced by **mapp international** productions

**OKWUI OKPOKWASIL** and **PETER BORN** are multidisciplinary artists whose projects result in raw, intimate experiences. Their first New York production, *pent-up: a revenge dance* premiered at Performance Space 122 and received a 2010 New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Award for Outstanding Production; an immersive installation version was featured in the 2008 Prelude Festival. *Bronx Gothic* was their second collaboration, co-commissioned by PS 122, Danspace Project, and Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. An early iteration was shown in the Platform Series: Parallels 2012 curated by Ishmael Huston-Jones at Danspace Project. The full version of *Bronx Gothic* premiered at PS 122's 2014 COIL Festival, where it enjoyed a sold-out two week run. The piece was later presented by ShowBox in Los Angeles, and recently toured to Zagreb, Croatia and throughout France. *Bronx Gothic: The Oval* was a featured installation and performance at the River-to-River Festival in June 2014.



photo: Peter Born

**OKWUI OKPOKWASIL** is a New York-based writer, performer and choreographer. She frequently collaborates with award-winning director Ralph Lemon, including: *How Can You Stay in the House All Day and Not Go Anywhere?*; *Come Home, Charley Patton* (for which she won a Bessie Award); a duet performed at The Museum of Modern Art as part of *On Line: Drawing Through the Twentieth Century*; and, most recently, *Scaffold Room*. She has appeared as an actor in many productions, including: Nora Chipaumire's *Miriam*; Julie Taymor's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Kristin Marting's *SOUNDING*; Young Jean Lee's *LEAR*; Richard Foreman's *Maria Del Bosco*; Richard Maxwell's *Cowboys and Indians*; and *Joan Dark* (The Goodman Theater/The Linz European Capital of Culture). Film credits include *Malorie's Final Score*, Knut Åsdam's *ABYSS*, *The Interpreter*, *The Hoax* and *I Am Legend*.

Okpokwasili has also been selected for a number of artist programs and awards, including: The French American Cultural Exchange (2006-2007); MANCC Choreographic Fellowship (2012); Baryshnikov Arts Center Artist-in-Residence (2013), New York Live Arts Studio Series (2013); Under Construction at the Park Avenue Armory (2013); New York Foundation for the Arts' Fellowship in Choreography (2013); Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Extended Life Program (2014); and The Foundation for Contemporary Arts' artist grants, Dance (2014). Okpokwasili is a graduate of Yale University.

**PETER BORN** is a director, designer and filmmaker. In 2013, he designed and created the set for Nora Chipaumire's *rite/riot*. Peter has shot, edited and produced various short films, including *hunger* with David Thomson (2012), promotional videos (including for Moleskin and Sadie Nash Leadership Project) and video for use in theater pieces. He is working toward completing his first feature length documentary *Das Federkleid / the Featherdress*. He currently works as an art director and prop stylist for fashion videos and photo shoots with clients such as Vogue, Estee Lauder, Barney's Co-op, Karl Lagerfeld, Bloomingdales, Old Navy, "25" magazine, Northrup Grumman and BedderAbs. Collaborators include Kanye West, Barnaby Roper, Santiago and Mauricio Sierra, Quentin Jones and NoStringsUS Puppet Productions. Peter is a former New York public high school teacher, itinerant floral arranger, corporate actor-facilitator and a furniture designer. He is a graduate of Yale University.



**MAPP International Productions** is a nonprofit producer of major performing arts projects that raise critical consciousness and spark social change. We support all phases of an artist's creative process, and we engage audiences in the issues behind the art. Through this heightened focus, MAPP supports an evolving cadre of creators whose work ignites communities worldwide. [Come With Us.](#)

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