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Tesseract

Charles Atlas / Rashaun Mitchell / Silas Riener

BAM Harvey Theater

Dec 13—16 at 7:30pm; Dec 16 at 2pm

Running time: approx. one hour & 40 minutes, including intermission

Music by

Fennesz

Thomas Arsenault (Mas Ysa)

Lighting design by **Davison Scandrett**

Season Sponsor:

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Leadership support for dance at BAM provided by The Harkness Foundation for Dance.

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CHARLES ATLAS



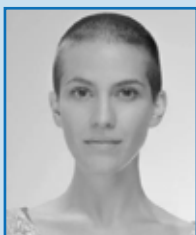
DAVID RAFAEL BOTANA



ELEANOR HULLIHAN



KATE JEWETT



CORI KRESGE



RASHAUN MITCHELL



SILAS RIENER



RYAN THOMAS JENKINS

PART I—TESSERACT □

Directed and edited by **Charles Atlas**

Choreography by **Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener**

Music by **Fennesz**

Set and costume design by **Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener**

Performers

David Rafael Botana

Kristen Foote

Hiroki Ichinose

Cori Kresge

Rashaun Mitchell

Silas Riener

Melissa Toogood

Produced by **Victoria Brooks**

Project managed by **Ian Hamelin**

Camera operator, Steadicam operator, and color correction **Ryan Thomas Jenkins**

Steadicam operator for “Fog” **Victor Lazaro**

Stereography **Andrew Parke**

First assistant camera **Alena Samoray**

Second assistant camera and photography **Mick Bello**

DIT and compositing **Eric Brucker**

Assistant editing **Lazar Bozic**

Post production assistance **Collin Leitch**

Digital landscaping **James Siewert**

Lead audio engineering **Stephen McLaughlin**

Audio engineering **Jeff Svatek**

Direction of stage technologies **Geoff Abbas**

Assistant technical direction **Eric Lin**

Lighting direction **Dan Swalec**

Master carpentry and rigging **William Fritz**

Production technicians **Carl Lewandowski** and **Michael Wells**

Grip and scenic assistance **Amanda Cherlebois**

Scenic assistance **Daniela MacCallum**

Costume fabrication **Julia Donaldson** and **Yvette Helin**

Black and white textile drops **Fraser Taylor**

Artist services administration **Zhenelle Falk**

General management for Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener **Katy Dammers**

World premiere: January 2017 at EMPAC/Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Special thanks to Penelope Armstead-Williams, Ali Naschke-Messing, and Joe Westmoreland.

PART II—TESSERACT ◯

Choreography by **Rashaun Mitchell + Silas Riener**

Video by **Charles Atlas**

Music by **Mas Ysa**

Performers

David Rafael Botana

Eleanor Hulihan

Kate Jewett

Cori Kresge

Rashaun Mitchell

Silas Riener

Kayla Farrish (understudy)

Lighting design **Davison Scandrett**

Costume design **Rashaun Mitchell** and **Silas Riener** with **Mary Jo Mecca** and **Yvette Helin**

Steadicam operation **Ryan Thomas Jenkins**

Assistant to Charles Atlas **Lazar Bozic**

Stage management **Dani Prados**

Costume construction **Yvette Helin** and **Mary Jo Mecca**

General management **Katy Dammers**

Scrim courtesy of Juilliard. Special thanks to Melissa Toogood, Justin Faircloth, Stanley Gambucci, Xenia Mansour, Maddie Schimmel, Cassidy Wagner, Judy Fishman, Richard Feldman, anonymous, Mary Filardo, Ariane Harrison, Liz Radke, Dorothy Reilly, Katherine Sonnenborn, Vicki Mitchell and Greg Mitchell, and Cathy Reilly and Joe Riener.

Tesseract ◻ by Charles Atlas / Rashaun Mitchell / Silas Riener was commissioned and produced by EMPAC/Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and co-commissioned by Triangle France.

Tesseract ◯ by Charles Atlas / Rashaun Mitchell / Silas Riener was co-commissioned by EMPAC / Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, the Walker Art Center, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and On the Boards.

Tesseract 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. Additional funding from the Dean's Grant administered by the Tisch School of the Arts through New York University. *Tesseract* was developed, in part, through residencies at EMPAC/Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, The Watermill Center, and the Walker Art Center.

Tesseract □, a stereoscopic, three-dimensional video, is a six-chapter work of science fiction. It is also Charles Atlas' first dance video in more than a decade. Filmed with a mobile camera rig that moves with the choreography, *Tesseract* □ traverses a series of hybrid and imagined worlds. It was staged and filmed over a series of production residencies at EMPAC/ Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Each chapter combines a specific set, choreography, and camera motion to encompass duet and ensemble pieces choreographed and performed by Rashaun Mitchell and Silas Riener.

Manipulating the three-dimensional footage to combine live dance with animation, Atlas' distinctive video effects reach into otherworldly dimensions beyond the stage.

The second part, *Tesseract* ○, expands the view from film frame to proscenium stage. A performance for six dancers and multiple mobile cameras—the footage of which Atlas will manipulate in real-time and project back onto the stage—*Tesseract* ○ superimposes the space of dance with live cinematic production, rendering a choreographic analogue to the four-dimensional cube from which the piece takes its title.





CHARLES ATLAS (director, editor, videographer) has been a pioneering figure in the creation of time-based visual art for more than four decades, extending the limits of his media and forging new territory in a wide range of genres, stylistic approaches, and techniques. Over the years he has made media/dance works, multichannel video installations, feature-length documentaries, video art works for television, and live electronic performances. Throughout his career, he has fostered collaborative relationships, working intimately with such artists and performers as Leigh Bowery, Michael Clark, Douglas Dunn, Marina Abramovic, Yvonne Rainer, ANOHNI, and most notably Merce Cunningham, for whom he served as filmmaker-in-residence for a decade from the early 1970s through 1983. Since 2003, Atlas has been interested in exploring different contexts that exploit the use of live video, such as in *Instant Fame* (2003–06), which consisted of a series of real-time video portraits of performers and artists created live in the gallery space. His recent live video/installations include *The Pedestrians* (2011), in collaboration with Mika Tajima at the South London Gallery, and *Charles Atlas and Collaborators* (2013) at the Tate Modern. His installation, *The Tyranny of Consciousness* (2017), was shown at the recent Venice Biennale and was awarded a Special Mention. Atlas has received a Guggenheim Fellowship, three Bessie Awards, the Foundation for Contemporary Art's John Cage Award, and a 2016 USA Gracie Fellowship.

RASHAUN MITCHELL (choreographer, set/costume designer, performer) is a 2014 Guggenheim Fellow and recipient of the 2012 Bessie Award for Outstanding Emerging Choreographer. His choreography has been presented by New York Live Arts, Danspace Project, Baryshnikov Arts Center, REDCAT, Institute of Contemporary Art Boston and Summer Stages Dance, La MaMa Moves Festival, Mount Tremper Arts, Skirball Center at NYU, the Museum of Arts and Design, The Lab, and at numerous site-specific venues and universities. With his ongoing collaborator, Silas Riener, he received a 2014 City Center

Choreographic Fellowship, was selected for LMCC's inaugural Extended Life Development Program, and was a Wellesley College Artist in Residence. Their work together has been presented by EMPAC, Walker Art Center, MCA Chicago, On the Boards, and MoMA PS1. Other awards include a 2007 Princess Grace Award: Dance Fellowship, a 2013 Foundation for Contemporary Art "Grant to Artist," and a 2011 Bessie Award for sustained achievement in the work of Merce Cunningham 2004–12. He is a Cunningham trustee and licensed stager of the repertory. Mitchell is on faculty at NYU Tisch School of the Arts, and has taught master classes throughout the country. Since graduating with a BA from Sarah Lawrence College, Mitchell has worked on projects with artists Anne Carson, Stephin Merritt, Carla Fernandez, Chantal Yzermans, Donna Uchizono, Pam Tanowitz, Risa Jaroslow, Sara Rudner, Jonah Bokaer, Richard Colton, Deborah Hay, Rebecca Lazier, Jodi Melnick, Sara Mearns, Moriah Evans, the Bureau for the Future of Choreography, Charles Atlas, Xavier Cha, Davison Scandrett, Phillip Greenleaf, and Claudia La Rocco.

SILAS RIENER (choreographer, set/costume designer, performer) graduated from Princeton University in 2006 with a degree in comparative literature and certificates in creative writing and dance, with a focus on linguistics. As a dancer he has worked with Chantal Yzermans, Takehiro Ueyama, Christopher Williams, Joanna Kotze, Jonah Bokaer, Rebecca Lazier, Tere O'Connor, Wally Cardona, and Kota Yamazaki. He has an ongoing collaboration with sculptor Martha Friedman. He was a member of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from November 2007 until its closure at the end of 2011, and received a 2012 Bessie Award for his solo performance in Cunningham's *Split Sides* (2011 Next Wave). While performing with MCDC, Riener completed his MFA in dance at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts (2008). Riener was the movement designer for the architecture and design firm Harrison Atelier in 2013–14. Since 2010 he has collaborated with choreographer Rashaun Mitchell. Together they have been part of Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Extended



Life Dance Development program, New York City Center Choreographic Fellowship, and have been artists in residence at EMPAC, Mount Tremper Arts, Wellesley College, Jacob's Pillow, and Pieter. His work has also been curated at EMPAC, the Serpentine Pavillion, Danspace Project, Architecture OMI, CATCH, as part of LMCC's River to River Festival, Chocolate Factory, and BFI Gallery.

DAVID RAFAEL BOTANA (performer) was introduced to movement at a young age through Spanish dance, gymnastics, and Goju-Ryu Karate. He has a BFA in dance performance from New World School of the Arts (2006) under the direction of Daniel Lewis, and also studied tai chi and contact improvisation. He worked with Jonah Bokaer as a performer in *On Vanishing* (2011) at the Guggenheim Museum and in *Filter* (2011) at Festival de Danse les Hivernales in Avignon. He was also part of the last Merce Cunningham Repertory Understudy Group (2010—11). He has worked with Pam Tanowitz, Bill Young, and sculptor/painter Jonathan Van Dyke, and has collaborated with Leslie Satin and Bradley Teal Ellis. Botana was a cast member of Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* at the McKittrick Hotel (2011—17). He has been a dancer with Rashaun Mitchell and Silas Riener since 2015.

CHRISTIAN FENNESZ (composer) is a guitarist and composer active in electronic music and records who is known as Fennesz. He uses guitar and notebook computers to make multilayered compositions that blend melody and treated samples with glitch-influenced sounds and washes of white noise. His first duo recording with Jim O'Rourke, *It's Hard for Me to Say I'm Sorry*, was released in 2016. Fennesz is published by Touch Music and lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

ELEANOR HULLIHAN (performer) is a performer, choreographer, and teacher living in Brooklyn. She has performed and created work with John Jasperse, Beth Gill, Jennifer Monson, Sarah Michelson, Andrew Ondrejcek, Mike Mills, Jessica Dessner, Sufjan Stevens, Lily Gold, Rashaun Mitchell, Silas Reiner, Charles Atlas, Zeena Parkins, and Tere O'Connor, among

others. She received formative training from UNCSA, NYU Tisch Dance, ADF, SEAD, and with Kelly Kane, Janet Panetta, Clarice Marshall, and Christine Bratton. She was a danceWEB scholar in 2010 and co-curated Movement Research's spring festival in 2011. Hullihan's fantasy performance band, *asubtout*, has been presented throughout NYC. She has choreographed for music videos and commercials and has been a movement coach for feature films. Hullihan teaches Pilates and body conditioning at her private studio and American Ballet Theater's JKO training program. She is currently creating new work with Jimmy Jolliff and Asli Bulbul.

RYAN THOMAS JENKINS (camera/ Steadicam operator, color correction) is senior video technician at EMPAC/Curtis R. Priem Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and has an MFA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute with a focus in sculpture and the moving image. He specializes in Steadicam, gimbal, 3D film, and camera operation. He has worked on film, sculpture, installations, and touring productions for Laurie Anderson, Charles Atlas, Jem Cohen, Brent Green, Cally Spooner, Eve Sussman, Martine Syms, the Wooster Group, and many more. Jenkins lives in upstate New York with his parter Nora, their dog Gunni, and two young boys, Wyatt and Calder.

KATE JEWETT (performer) is a dancer, dance maker, educator, and rehearsal director. She holds a BFA from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Early in her career Jewett was a member of Merce Cunningham's Repertory Understudy Group. In 2005, she joined Shen Wei Dance Arts and was named rehearsal director in 2009. As the company education director she created a dance-in-education program for NYC schools. Her own works have been performed at DeSales University, the United Nations, Park Avenue Armory, SCGSAH's Gunter Theater, Milano Teatro Scuola Paolo Grassi, and Fabbrica Europa and Performatica festivals. Jewett founded Watusi Regime, a site-specific collaborative performance series. With her sister Beth Jewett, she co-founded Moving Minds, a workshop series that

combines modern dance with critical thinking skills.

CORI KRESGE (performer) is a New York-based dancer and teacher with a BFA in dance from SUNY Purchase. Kresge is a Darmasiswa International Scholarship recipient for studies in Balinese dance in Indonesia. She has been a member of the Merce Cunningham Repertory Understudy Group, José Navas/Compagnie Flak, and the Stephen Petronio Company. As a freelance dancer she currently performs with Esme Boyce, Xavier Cha, Bill Young, Sarah Skaggs, Ellen Cornfield, Rebecca Lazier, Wendy Osserman, multimedia artist Liz Magic Laser, and filmmaker Zuzka Kurtz, among others. Kresge has been dancing with Rashaun Mitchell and Silas Riener since 2012.

DAVISON SCANDRETT (lighting designer) met Silas Riener, Rashaun Mitchell, and Charles Atlas during his tenure as director of production for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company from 2008—12. Since then he has created designs for Mitchell and Riener's productions *NOX*, *Veal*, *Interface*, *Taste*, *Way In*, *PERFORMANCE*, *Light Years*, and *Blue Name*. Other design credits include works by Pam Tanowitz, Sarah Michelson, Andrew Ondrejčák, Rebecca Lazier, Paris Opera Ballet, and the off-Broadway productions of Mike Birbiglia's *Thank God for*

Jokes and Neal Brennan's *3 Mics*. Production management credits include projects with Marina Abramovic, Wendy Whelan, Sarah Michelson, Benjamin Millepied, Miguel Gutierrez, Kyle Abraham, Brian Brooks, Jennifer Monson, BalletBoyz, Homer's Coat, and numerous productions for Lincoln Center Festival. He was the recipient of a Bessie Award for his collaboration with Sarah Michelson and Parker Lutz on the visual design of *DOGS* (2006 Next Wave).

THOMAS ARSENAULT (Mas Ysa) (composer) composes and performs as Mas Ysa. Born in Montreal, Canada, he spent his formative years in São Paulo, Brazil, before moving to the US to study modern composition at the Oberlin Conservatory. While living between Brooklyn and Woodstock, NY he released two albums, *Worth* (2014) and *Seraph* (2015), both of which received critical acclaim. He has also toured internationally. *Tesseract* marks Arsenault's third collaboration with choreographer Rashaun Mitchell, having previously collaborated on *NOX* and *Interface*. He resides in New York City, where he recently released a new untitled EP and companion film, directed by Dan Shapiro.



Susan Yung: Can you talk about the visual concepts and costumes in the film? Were there any specific sources or influences?

Rashaun Mitchell/Silas Riener: The visual design is based on a spectrum of ideas ranging from exposed and conspicuous imagery to notions of concealment and camouflage. There's a foundational question about how bodies might exist in different environments, how we might assimilate or rebel in a given setting. We explore the disembodiment of shape in abstract geometry and how it might refer back to something on a body, a landscape. We found anchors in *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, a satirical 1880s novel and animated film of politics set in a geometrical universe and the low-budget film *Cube 2: Hypercube*, a futuristic experiment where the participants are in a disorienting cube that keeps changing.

But influences are so hard to track. They splinter and unravel over time and then emerge in mysterious ways, often layered with other influences until they become unrecognizable or take on new meanings. The “desert scene” may or may not relate to Frank Herbert’s novel *Dune*. We worked with excellent costume fabricators

and artists Julia Donaldson and Yvette Helin, both of whom take our hare-brained ideas and make them a wearable reality.

SY: Discuss the technical side of the film—collaborating with Charles Atlas, the set designs and fabrication, the shoot, the integration of the green screen elements, how long the whole process took...

RM/SR: The process took 2½ years. Initial conversations about science fiction grew into brainstorming sessions that were mostly eclipsed by the technical realities and the financial concerns with mounting something so ambitious. We conceived of the sets and then brought in images for the team at EMPAC to construct to our specific measurements. The “kaleidoscope” scene was made of many interconnected, faceted triangles that ultimately form a supine human figure disguised as a mountain range. Another scene was a reworking of figurative and abstract tapestries that were printed and designed by Fraser Taylor and used in a previous piece as a backdrop. Here they were placed throughout the stage space to create multiple “rooms.” The green screen shoot was the most unplanned scene. We had all worked with green screens

before so we knew many decisions could be made in post-production. The background desert topography was added later. The final duet scene is composed of tubular crinoline, a stretchy, reflective material that we hung throughout the theater like jungle vines.

SY: How do you two collaborate on choreography?

RM/SR: We argue until we don't anymore. We take turns bossing each other and the dancers around. We work on multiple things at once. We are interested in the blurring of authorship.

SY: In part 2, Ryan [Thomas Jenkins] is almost like another dancer on stage. Are his movements as choreographed as the dancers', or does he have some leeway in his patterns?

RM/SR: Ryan's pathways and timing are completely choreographed. The equipment is very heavy and takes up a lot of space. The framing of the shots is so sensitive that he has to be incredibly exacting in performance in order for the image to be captured in the right way. He has to know his own choreography, the camera tracking, and each individual dancer's choreography. He is the seventh dancer in the work.

SY: How involved is Charles Atlas in Ryan's movements, and what is his role (if any) during the performance?

RM/SR: Charlie is usually stationed in the back of the house and is responsible for mixing the live images and the pre-designed images. It's a live act. The creation of Ryan's choreography and camera angles was very collaborative. It reflects a mixture of our conceptual and spatial demands as well as Charlie's process of responding to the choreography and the technical demands of producing a potent and incisive image.

SY: How did you come to collaborate with Charles?

RM/SR: We first worked with Charlie in the Merce Cunningham Dance Company on numerous film/dance projects so we had a shared history and model for collaborating. Charlie approached us in 2014 to work on the EMPAC commission. While in Troy, NY, we went to the movie theater together to see 3D films whenever we could.

Susan Yung is senior editorial manager at BAM.

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