

# **SANKOFA** DANZAFRO







# THE COMPANY





# SANKOFA

## DANZAFRO

In Akan, a Ghanaian language, Sankofa means "to return to the root". More than a word, it is an African philosophy that proposes to know the past as a condition to understand the present; as a way to see the future. This thought has guided the path of the Afro-Colombian dance and music company **Sankofa Danzafro**. Founded by Rafael Palacios in 1997 with its home in Medellin, Colombia, Sankofa is dedicated to training and creation in dance as well as interacting with the community. Through the practice of dance, Sankofa's mission is to bridge the gaps between the many African diaspora communities in Colombia – along with other populations whose human rights have been violated. Sankofa's choreographic language searches for the poetics that are at the root of Afro dance, experienced through the frame of today. In this way, Sankofa honors both the traditional and the contemporary. Through its programs, the company nurtures community mentorship, social awareness, personal growth, and supports the sustainability of local cultures inside of the national dynamics of Colombia.

Sankofa's achievements have been noted with recognitions such as the 2008 National Dance Award to Rafael Palacios for "San Pacho ... Blessed!"; a mention in 2010 by the United Nations as a "good practice of Afro-descendant social inclusion in Latin America" with the cross-cultural collaboration "Steps in the Earth Project," (created with dancers in the Pacific, Chocó and Urabá regions and the Archipelago of San Andrés y Providencia) which resulted in the publication of a book of the same title; and by the Training of Trainers and Danza Viva Program of the Ministry of Culture between 2008 and 2016. Sankofa has a wide repertoire of works and has toured to countries such as Brazil, France, Peru, Spain, Jamaica, Burkina Faso, Canada, Uruguay, and China. The company made its "electrifying New York debut" (NY Times) in the US invited by the Battery Dance Festival in 2015. The performances at The Joyce Theater were part of the company's debut US tour, which also included engagements in Boston (Celebrity Series), West Palm Beach (Kravis Center), Kansas City (Open Spaces Festival), Los Angeles (USC Voices & Visions), Laguna Beach (Laguna Beach Dance Festival) and Davidson, NC (Davidson College).

Sankofa Danzafro's mission is  
“to dance to be **heard**, rather than to be seen”

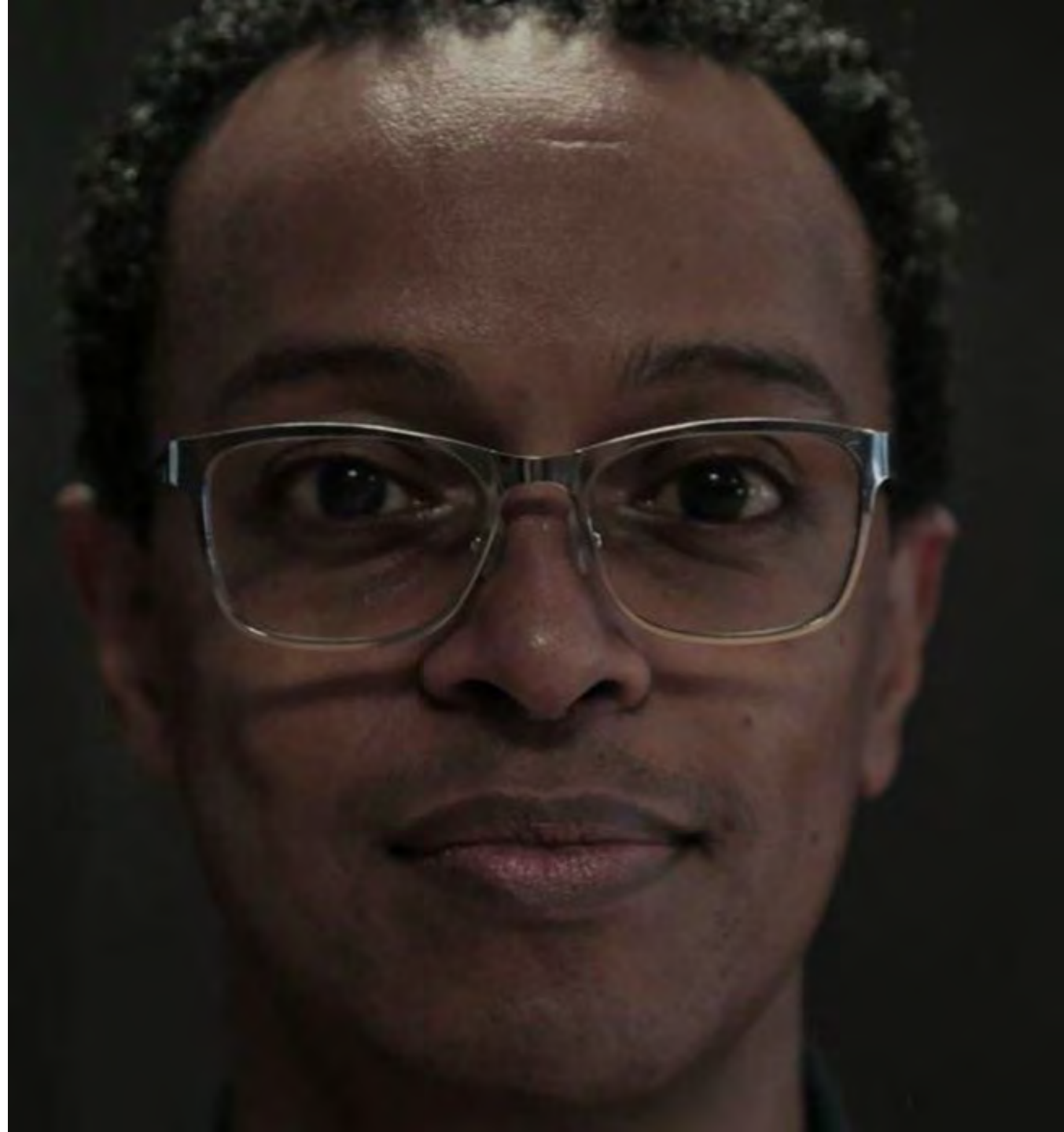




# ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Rafael Palacios is a Colombian choreographer, teacher and dancer, researcher of traditional, Afro-contemporary, and urban dance. His experience as a dancer in Africa and Europe, studying with Germaine Acogny and Irene Tassembedo has been the basis for the founding of Sankofa Danzafró. His creations explore social and racial inequality, ancestral knowledge and a search for a new place of Afro-Colombian culture in the Colombian society. With a trajectory of more than twenty years, his works for Sankofa Danzafró have been presented in theatres and festivals around the world, showing the diversity of afro-Colombian dance. He has been a guest choreographer for the Celebration of the 159 years of Abolition of Slavery, in Medellín, Colombia in 2010 for which he created *The City of Others*. He was also guest choreographer for *The Summit of the Americas* (Cartagena 2012), Inauguration of the *World Games* (Cali, 2013), and for the First International Dance Biennial of Cali (Colombia, 2013). In 2008 he received the National Dance Award from the Ministry of Culture with the work *San Pacho ... Blessed!*.

Rafael Palacios has been a social activist through dance and has been committed to education of afro-descendent youth since he started his work in Colombia. *Steps on Earth*, his project of knowledge exchange among black communities in Colombia, received mention of the UN as a good practice of Afro-descendant social inclusion in Latin America (Cali, 2010). In 2018 he received the National Prize for the Arts with his work *The City of Others* awarded by the Universidad de Antioquia. Palacios is a specialist in Epistemologies of the South of CLASCO (Latin American Council for Social Sciences) and is currently getting his master's degree in Education and Human Rights at the Latin American Autonomous University.





# THE CITY OF OTHERS











Photo: Darial Sneed

Most cities are inhabited by people of different origins, cultures, and ways of understanding the world. In cities, thousands of people coexist in a defined environment, each having its own view of a common reality. In many countries, far from being a source of progress, cities can be a place of hostility, loneliness, and discrimination. **The City of Others** was created from our personal experiences of racism and oppression in our daily lives in Medellín, Colombia.

**The City of Others** includes traditional Colombian songs and rhythms, such as the Vallenato from the Atlantic region coastline, and dances, such as the Bullerengue (also from the Atlantic coastline) and the Currulao and Abozao dances from the Pacific coastline.

For life in a metropolis to be a positive space for constructive living and collective communities, I feel it is necessary to embrace the extended family concept prevalent in rural communities: what I own is for everyone; under my roof, there is room for someone else; if you need me, I am here; I am not the exclusive owner of what surrounds me.

**The City of Others** examines the lack of opportunities for the many who, for generations, have been marked by ethnic discrimination and social inequality. In Colombia, African diaspora communities and other marginalized peoples have been treated in the same dismissed manner - as second class citizens. In **The City of Others**, these communities claim political and social power, transcending racism and prejudice. This is their city – it is everyone's city.

**The City of Others** was created in celebration of Colombia's 159th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery and was commissioned by the Mayor's Office of Medellín - Casa de Integración Afrocolombiana, 2010.











**Direction and Choreography:**

Rafael Palacios.

**Light and set design:**

Álvaro Tobón.

**Costumes concept:** Rafael Palacios.

**Photography:**

Robert Torres

elmurcy\_

Darial Sneed and Elyssa Goodman

Battery Dance Festival, NYC, 2015

**Performers:**

Yndira Perea

Feliciano Blandón

Camilo Perlaza

José Luna Coha

Yeison Moreno

María Elena Murillo

Armando Viveros

Sandra Vanesa Murillo Mosquera

Maryeris Mosquera Batista

Diego León de los Rios













# ACCOMMODATING **LIE**











Photo: Paulina Perez

**Accommodating Lie** arises from the knowledge of Afro-Colombian dance based on research and reflection.

**Accommodating Lie** questions certain stereotypes around Afro-descendant traditions. Through costumes that emphasize supposed bodily characteristics of black women and men, dancers expose sexualization and exoticism as hyperbolic categories that the Western gaze has attributed to their bodies, symbolically or literally.

Thus, as a stage product, a cari-caturized body appears that belies the essence of Afro-descendant culture. In a commitment to the right to defend the meaning of our artistic and spiritual manifestations, we insist on not being represented, but self-represented in the memory and wisdom of the community.











**Performers:**

Yndira Perea Cuesta

Camilo Perlaza Micolta

Yeison Moreno Córdoba

María Elena Murillo Palacios

Maryeris Mosquera Batista

Armando Viveros

Sandra Vanessa Murillo Mosquera

**Original Music Composition and**

**Performance:**

Jose Luna Cocha

Feliciano Blandón

Gregg Anderson Hudson

**Direction and Choreography:**

Rafael Palacios

**Light and set design:**

Álvaro Tobón

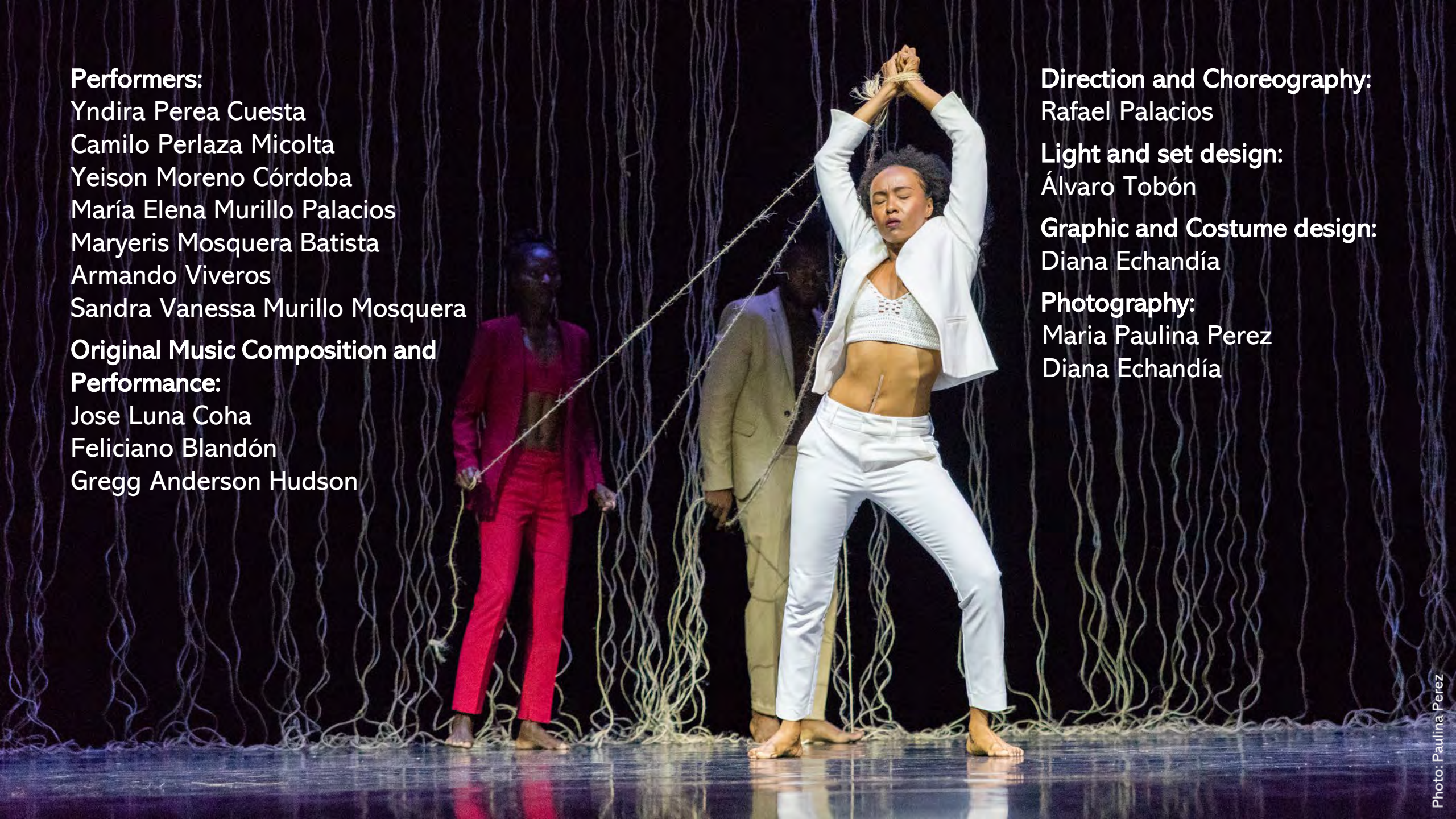
**Graphic and Costume design:**

Diana Echandía

**Photography:**

Maria Paulina Perez

Diana Echandía













# BEHIND THE SOUTH





Rafael Palacios' newest work for Sankofa Danzafró, *Behind the South: Dances for Manuel* (Detrás del Sur: Bailes para Manuel), is a tribute to the distinguished Colombian writer Manuel Zapata Olivella's most acclaimed work: "Changó, el Gran Putas," in which Zapata combines his creative genius and meticulous documentation work around the Afro-descendent diaspora in the South American continent.

*Behind the South: Dances for Manuel* is composed of five acts, following the structure of Zapata's novel. Through choreography and dramaturgy, the performance references reckless omens, miraculous births, and libertarian rebellion; expressing the pain of losing connection with the motherland and the nostalgia of no return. Vicissitudes of enslaved men and women intertwine with the intervention of their ancestors, their dead, and the orishas Yemayá, Elegba, and Changó, forgers of their destinies. *Behind the South: Dances for Manuel* celebrates the vital force of the muntu (the African people) and their use of the dancing body and music as ritual to invoke Changó, the son of Yemaja and the mother goddess, protector of birth in the Yoruba tradition and religion.

*Behind the South: Dances for Manuel* (60 minutes) was premiered in May, 2021 as a co-production with the Teatro Mayor Julio Mario Santo Domingo in Bogotá. This work tours with 12 dancers, 3 musicians and 3 staff/crew, a total of 18 people.









**Artistic direction and choreography:**

Rafael Palacios

**Lighting and set design:**

Álvaro Tobón

**Costume design:**

Diana Echandia

**Research advisor:**

Carlos Correa Angulo

**Musical composition:**

Juan José Luna Cohá  
Pluconpla

**Photography:**

Marcela Gomez



**Performers: \***

Yndira Perea Cuesta

William Camilo Perlaza Micolta

Sandra Vanesa Murillo Mosquera

Yeison Moreno Córdoba

Liliana Hurtado Hínestroza

Yeison Moreno Córdoba

Juan José Luna Cohá

Jhoan Andres Mosquera Ibargüen

Nicolás Mosquera Ramirez

Daniela Hernández Arango

Estayler Osorio Fuentes

Maryeris Mosquera Batista

Yesid Quejada Moreno

Maria Elena Murilo

Diego de los Ríos

\* Cast may vary by tour











# BLACK VOICES







Photo: Murcy Photography

History has always been written by the oppressors and if we look at this fact with the lens of racism, it means history has been written by white people. The mission of Colombian dance company Sankofa Danzafrö is “to dance to be heard, rather than to be seen”.

Rewriting the narrative and retelling history through the eyes of the afro-descendant communities in Colombia and everywhere, using their own voices, has been the motivation of Artistic Director Rafael Palacios for making dances for over 20 years.

With this new project of devised individual stories and short self-made dances, Sankofa Danzafrö reaches out to the black communities and ask them to share personal narratives about life, racism, the pandemic, inequality, freedom, solitude and separation, resilience, achievements, defeats or anything significant for each participant.



Presenters will be asking their communities of color to submit their stories, ten of which will be chosen by to be translated into dances. The authors of the stories will be working in one-to-one virtual sessions with Rafael Palacios to create short 3 minutes dances to be performed in a live streaming event. Writers will have to feel comfortable dancing during a live stream but will not necessarily have to be part of the dance community or a trained performer.


Presenters can decide to create an archive of all stories submitted, accessible to their audiences for download with the ticket sale, and to have a Q&A or pre-performance talk with Rafael Palacios about racism and colorism in Latin America and the importance of dance as a form of resistance and resilience.

Black Voices was presented at Celebrity Series of Boston and George Mason University in 2021.



Photo: Katherynn Moreno



A man with glasses and a patterned shirt is looking down at a bowl. The background is dark with some plants and a sheer curtain.

“A dancer is not just made from  
technique but from personal  
experience. It is important to find the  
personal movement of each.”  
-Rafael Palacios, Boston Globe





## Assorted Press Articles





Photo: Paulina Perez

Exclusive representation - Elsie Management

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