

JEREMY MCQUEEN'S BLACK IRIS PROJECT PRESENTS



a groundbreaking four-part dance film documenting & amplifying the voices of system involved young men of color

Loosely inspired by Maurice Sendak's classic children's novel *Where the Wild Things Are*, *WILD* follows the journey of several young men as they struggle to break free from the systemic injustices that permeate Black and Brown communities. Using physical movement to illustrate and honor the history of Black bodies moving through space while encountering oppression, this cutting-edge contemporary ballet incorporates poetry, reflective journal entries, visual art, and original music by an array of millennial artistic voices. Transforming the young men's personal stories into an artistic dance work intended to be a reclaiming of time, unity, space, and Black culture, *WILD* has been co-commissioned by; Open Society Foundations, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, CUNY Dance Initiative and the Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College, with additional support from New Music USA, Dance/NYC's Coronavirus Dance Relief Fund & Dance Advancement Fund, and The Black Iris Project's generous seed planters.

Featured in

The New York Times

What It Means to Break Free: A Tale of Detention, Told in Dance

The choreographer Jeremy McQueen's film "Wild: Act 1" seeks to give voice to young men caught in the criminal justice system.

March 16, 2021 By Brian Seibert

<https://nyti.ms/3d988uo>

Founded by choreographer Jeremy McQueen in 2016, **The Black Iris Project** (BIP) is a ballet collaborative and education vehicle which creates new, relevant classical and contemporary ballet works that celebrate diversity and Black history. Based in New York City, BIP hosts a team of predominantly artists of color, and delivers cross-disciplinary and original works. Championing individuality, the collaborative harnesses the Black inherent creative spirit. The ballets that McQueen choreographs for BIP are rooted in Black history and community, bringing inadequately-represented stories to public attention through an art form that has only recently begun to expand outside its privileged past. His works push the boundaries of the ballet world as they highlight the personal narratives of significant Black public figures as well as extraordinary individuals amongst the general public who navigate a world that is prejudiced and dangerous for them. The BIPs vision is to encourage and inspire youth of color to pursue art, movement and music as an expressive outlet and means for collective healing, as well as educating audiences about how Black history relates to the modern Black journey. BIP has performed for audiences around the country and has been featured in numerous publications including The New York Times, Elle Magazine, Village Voice, Out Magazine, Huffington Post, The Root, and received a 2020 New York Emmy® Award-nomination for it's first dance film, "A Mother's Rite".

"On a daily basis, we casually cage Black and Brown children in adult prisons without a second thought. Jeremy McQueen has captured the inhumanity of that policy choice through a series of dance performances that will take your breath away. Anyone who advocates for justice reform -- or who believes that justice should not be distorted by racism -- needs to see and experience these performances. They will remind you that we need to use every avenue to push for change."

Kim Taylor-Thompson, Board Chair, Equal Justice Initiative



"As someone who has worked to break through many doors in the world of dance, particularly ballet, I feel it is our duty as artists to be a catalyst for those that are unheard, unseen, and undervalued. With "WILD" - a tough work centered around healing - I wanted to continue to uplift diversified voices while breaking down the ivory silos and pillars so that we not only have a seat at the table and our work on the table, but to ensure that the voices of the voiceless are heard and amplified."

Jeremy McQueen, Director & Choreographer



Jeremy McQueen is an Emmy® Award-nominated choreographer & director, dedicated to story-telling rooted in experience and social engagement. His work aims to create spaces of comfort, solace, and connection through reflection—a sharing of observations of what is going on around him. Born and raised in San Diego, California, McQueen is a graduate of The Ailey School/ Fordham University, B.F.A. in dance program and has performed in Broadway's *Wicked*, *The Color Purple*, *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, and numerous Metropolitan Opera productions. McQueen is a 2020 recipient of the Soros Justice Fellowship from Open Society Foundations, 2019 recipient of the Bronx Council of the Arts' BRIO (Bronx Recognizes Its Own) Award, 2013 recipient of the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago's Choreographers of Color Award [Winning Works], and a two-time finalist of the Capezio Award for Choreographic Excellence.

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