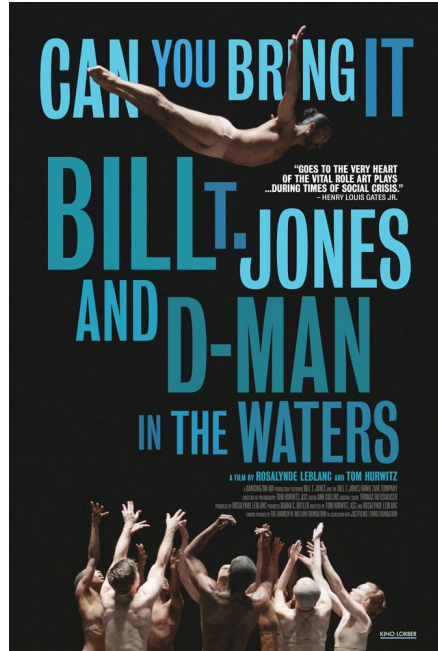


KINO LORBER

Presents



CAN YOU BRING IT: BILL T. JONES AND D-MAN IN THE WATERS

A film by Rosalynde LeBlanc and Tom Hurwitz, ASC

DOC NYC 2020

Frameline Film Festival 2021

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"Roz and Tom succeeded in telescoping the story of 'D-Man in the Waters' into the future. I look forward to the journey of this film. Because this film should not let people forget - you're lucky in your life if you have one moment where you're at once strong enough, brave enough, and resourceful enough to throw down and make something like 'D-Man in the Waters' come into being. This work is not about anybody's epidemic. It is about the dark spirit of what is happening in the world and how you push back against it."

—Bill T. Jones

LOGLINE

Reaching beyond the world of dance and the remarkable legacy of renowned choreographer-dancer-director Bill T. Jones, this documentary touches the essence of creativity and its relevance to the times in which we now live.

SYNOPSIS

Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters brings to life the creative process that culminated in choreographer-dancer-director Bill T. Jones's tour de force ballet *D-Man in the Waters*, one of the most important works of art to come out of the AIDS crisis. In 1989, *D-Man in the Waters* gave physical manifestation to the fear, anger, grief, and hope for salvation that the emerging Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company (both partners at the time) felt as they were embattled by the AIDS epidemic. As a group of young dancers in the present re-interpret the work, they deepen their understanding of its power – exploring what is at stake in their own lives in order to commit and perform it successfully. Through an extraordinary collage of interviews, archival material, and uniquely powerful cinematography, this lyrical documentary uses the story of this iconic dance to illustrate the power of art and the triumph of the human spirit.

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

I am a dancer and a filmmaker, which essentially means I am profoundly interested in storytelling. Dance, to me, is not a spectacle of physical feats, it is the physical manifestation of emotion. It is the poeticizing of body language and the revelation of how experiences are remembered in the body. And documentary film, with its capacity to use the articulate image to move beyond journalism, unveils historical and emotional truths as aesthetic experiences. Both art forms can render the most complex and cerebral subjects into movement and moving images, activating at once the intellect and instinct of the viewer. In this way both art forms allow stories once lived to move again.

Can You Bring It: Bill T. Jones and D-Man in the Waters is my labor of love. This feature-length documentary film tells the remarkable history and legacy of one of the most important works of art to come out of the age of AIDS – Bill T. Jones’s tour de force ballet, *D-Man in the Waters*. I was a dancer in Bill T. Jones’s company for many years and now I am one of a handful of dance educators reconstructing his work in colleges around the country. It was while re-staging *D-Man in the Waters* in 2012 that I came upon a profound revelation: The absence of AIDS from current political and social discourse in this country has left successive generations without any way to contextualize the spirit and intensity of the art made in response to it. Thus, my dream was born: to create an immersive documentary film that would carry forward the story about an enduring work of art born out of a devastating epidemic.

I brought on board Tom Hurwitz, ASC as my co-director and collaborator. Tom is one of the most honored documentary cinematographers with over thirty years of experience shooting dance. His filmic expertise, coupled with my intimate access to the dance and to Bill T. Jones, helped to shape our goal to make a dance documentary that doesn’t simply present a rarefied performance of choreography on screen, but also merges dance and film in service to the dynamism, nuance, and complexity of the human experience.

Tom and I determined an artistic approach for the film in which the past and present are in equally active engagement, allowing the history and legacy of *D-Man in the Waters* to unfold. The process of teaching the dance in present day is captured in cinéma vérité, serving to emphasize the fact that what awakens for these nine young dancers, as they go deeper into this abstract, historical dance piece, is actually an increased awareness of the real world they live in. This overall process of discovery for the ensemble eventually focuses in on the experience of the young man Jones has chosen for the lead, whose struggles to learn the choreography begin reflecting and informing the personal struggles in the dancer’s own life. Eventually, all the parts of the dance are in place, yet the spirit of *D-Man in the Waters* lies dormant. The students discover that for the dance to be truly enlivened, the choreography and history don’t simply need to be learned, rather they need to be embodied – owned in the present time, by the present body.

In capturing the artistic process during desperate times, *Can you Bring It* demonstrates the ways in which the arts can move a group of people toward greater understanding, toward a deeper sense of community, and toward an education grounded in feeling and empathy. As our world has shifted in the last few months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it is our hope that this film won’t only carry forward an important history, it will also inspire courage and resilience in the face of adversity.

– Rosalynde LeBlanc
(Co-Director, Producer)

D-MAN IN THE WATERS

D-Man in the Waters is Jones' seminal performance and one of the most significant works of art to come out of the era of AIDS.

In this exhilarating work by Kennedy Center Honoree, MacArthur Grant awardee and Tony Award-winner Bill T. Jones (*Fela!*, *Spring Awakening*), rigorous formalism and musicality embody resilience and triumph over loss. The piece captures the infectious energy, innocence and will to survive of a beleaguered generation, and though it deals with sorrow, it maintains a defiantly celebratory tone.

Felix Mendelssohn's soaring Octet for Strings propels the non-stop momentum, sending the dancers hurling across the stage in a whirlwind of leaps, rolls, and slides. Jones has said that the fact that Mendelssohn was just 16 years old when he composed the work resonated strongly with him. "This piece was created when we were dealing with a lot of death," he said. "So creating this work was for us a way of dealing with grief, by finding the joy in the music this 16-year-old boy created."

Jones' tour-de-force was awarded a New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Award and is praised for being one of the finest examples of the post-modern dance aesthetic. The New York Times called it "a stylish, impassioned outpouring of movement."

BIOGRAPHIES

Rosalynde LeBlanc, Producer and Co-Director

Rosalynde LeBlanc danced with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company (1993 -1999), and Mikhail Baryshnikov's White Oak Dance Project (1999 - 2002). She has also worked onscreen with film directors Burt Barr, John Turturro, Gretchen Bender, and Matthew Rolston. She can be seen in the short film, *Roz*, the PBS Specials, *Still/Here*, *Free to Dance*, *Dancing in the Light*, *A Good Man*, and in the feature film, *Romance and Cigarettes*. Ms. LeBlanc Loo is a leading figure in the legacy and pedagogy of Bill T. Jones. She re-stages his work around the country and runs the Jones/Zane Educational Partnership at Loyola Marymount University, where she is an Associate Professor in the Department of Dance. In 2020, her work in dance research and pedagogy was recognized with an honorary induction into the Jesuit Honor Society, Alpha Sigma Nu.

Tom Hurwitz, ASC, Co-Director and Director of Photography

Tom Hurwitz, ASC, a member of the American Society of Cinematographers, is one of America's most honored documentary cinematographers. Winner of two Emmy Awards, the Sundance and Jerusalem Film Festival Awards for Best Cinematography, Hurwitz has photographed films that have won four academy awards and several more nominations, recently for *Dancemaker* and *Killing in the Name*. Mr. Hurwitz's features and television programs have won dozens of awards, Emmy, Dupont, Peabody, Directors Guild and film festival awards for Best Documentary, over the last 25 years. He recently won Emmy Awards for Best Documentary Specials for the PBS show *Jerome Robbins* and the PBS series *Franklin*, as well as Sundance Awards for *Queen of Versailles*, and *Love Free or Die*. Other award-winning films and programs that Mr. Hurwitz has photographed include: *Studio 54*, *Cradle of Champions*, *Joan Didion: The Center Will Not Hold*, *Nothing Left Unsaid: Gloria Vanderbilt and Anderson Cooper*, *Valentino: The Last Emperor*, *Harlan County USA*, *Wild Man Blues*, *My Generation*, *Down and Out in America*, *The Turandot Project*, *Liberty*, *Dolley*, *Faith and Doubt at Ground Zero*, for PBS; and *I Have a Dream*, for ABC; and *Killing in the Name*, and *Questioning Faith* for HBO. In addition, films that he has directed have won the Cine Golden Eagle and have been shown in festivals around the world. Mr. Hurwitz is also a founding member of the faculty of The MFA Program in the Social Documentary Film Program at New York's School of Visual Arts.

Ann Collins, Editor

Ann Collins is best known for her work as an editor on Griffin Dunne's documentary, *Joan Didion: The Center Will Not Hold* for which she was nominated for an ACE Eddie Award. Ms. Collins also worked on *Swim Team*. Her work has premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, the New York Film Festival, and the Berlin Film Festival. Ms. Collins was also the principal editor for *Sound and Fury*, which was nominated for an Academy Award. Ms. Collins is a member of the faculty of The MFA Program in the Social Documentary Film Program at New York's School of Visual Arts.

Duana C. Butler, Producer

Duana C. Butler is an independent producer/director. Ms. Butler served as the Series Director/Producer of the public television documentary series *Afropop: The Ultimate Cultural Exchange* (E.P.: Black Public Media; Distributed by APT). She was a producer on the short *Hold On* (Dir: Christine Turner; Premiere, 2017 Sundance Film Festival). She co-produced the documentary *Miss Navajo* (Dir: Billy Luther; Premiere, 2007 Sundance Film Festival; PBS broadcast *Independent Lens*). Other credits include Curator/Producer of WNET/Thirteen's independent film series *Reel New York*.

Bill T. Jones, Artistic Director/Co-Founder/Choreographer: Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company; Artistic Director: New York Live Arts

Bill T. Jones is a multi-talented artist, choreographer, dancer, theater director and writer, and Associate Artist for the 2020 Holland Festival. Mr. Jones has received major honors including the Human Rights Campaign's 2016 Visibility Award, 2013 National Medal of Arts to a 1994 MacArthur "Genius" Award and Kennedy Center Honors in 2010. Mr. Jones was honored with the 2014 Doris Duke Performing Artist Award, recognized as Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government in 2010, inducted into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2009 and named "An Irreplaceable Dance Treasure" by the Dance Heritage Coalition in 2000. His ventures into Broadway theater resulted in a 2010 Tony Award for Best Choreography in the critically acclaimed *FELA!*, the musical which was co-conceived, co-written, directed and choreographed by Mr. Jones. He also earned a 2007 Tony Award for Best Choreography in *Spring Awakening* as well as an Obie Award for the show's 2006 off-Broadway run. His choreography for the off-Broadway production of *The Seven* earned him a 2006 Lucille Lortel Award.

Mr. Jones began his dance training at the State University of New York at Binghamton (SUNY), where he studied classical ballet and modern dance. After living in Amsterdam, Mr. Jones returned to SUNY, where he became co-founder of the American Dance Asylum in 1973. In 1982 he formed the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company (then called Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane & Company) with his late partner, Arnie Zane. Mr. Jones is currently Artistic Director of New York Lives Arts, an organization that strives to create a robust framework in support of the nation's dance and movement-based artists through new approaches to producing, presenting and educating. For more information, visit <http://www.newyorklivearts.org/>.

His work in dance has been recognized with the 2010 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award; the 2005 Wexner Prize; the 2005 Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement; the 2003 Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize; and the 1993 Dance Magazine Award. His additional awards include the Harlem Renaissance Award in 2005; the Dorothy B. Chandler Performing Arts Award in 1991; multiple New York Dance and Performance Bessie Awards for his works *The Table Project* (2001), *The Breathing Show* (2001), *D-Man in the Waters* (1989) and the Company's groundbreaking season at the Joyce Theater (1986). In 1980, 1981 and 1982, Mr. Jones was the recipient of Choreographic Fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, and in 1979 he was granted the Creative Artists Public Service Award in Choreography.

CREDITS

Directed by

Tom Hurwitz, ASC and Rosalynde LeBlanc

Producer

Rosalynde LeBlanc

Director of Photography

Tom Hurwitz, ASC

Sound

Alan Barker

Peter Miller

Editor

Ann Collins

Original Score

Thomas Rutishauser

Producer

Duana C. Butler

Executive Producer

Karen Dial

Sound Supervisors

Marlena Grzaslewicz

Mariusz Glabinski

Music Editor

Mariusz Glabinski

Re-recording Mixer

Martin Czembor

Featuring

The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company

Produced and Presented by

New York Live Arts

Starring

Bill T. Jones

Arthur Avilés

Johari Briggs

Seán Curran

Lawrence Goldhuber
Gregg Hubbard
Heidi Latsky
Janet Lilly
Betsy McCracken

The Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Performers

Antonio Brown
Rena Butler
Erick Montes Chavero
Talli Jackson
Shayla-Vie Jenkins
LaMichael Leonard
I-Ling Liu
Joseph Poulson
Jenna Riegel

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KINO LORBER

With a library of over 4,000 titles, Kino Lorber Inc. has been a leader in independent art house distribution for 35 years, releasing 30 films per year theatrically under its Kino Lorber, Kino Repertory and Alive Mind Cinema banners, garnering seven Academy Award® nominations in nine years. In addition, the company brings over 350 titles yearly to the home entertainment and educational markets through physical and digital media releases. With an expanding family of distributed labels, Kino Lorber handles releases in ancillary media for Zeitgeist Films, Cohen Media Group, Greenwich Entertainment, Artsploitation, Palisades Tartan, Menemsha Films, Raro Video, and others, placing physical titles through all wholesale, retail, and direct to consumer channels, as well as direct digital distribution through over 40 OTT services including all major TVOD and SVOD platforms. In 2019, the company launched its new art house digital channel Kino Now which features over 1000 titles from the acclaimed Kino Lorber library. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Kino Marquee initiative was launched in 2020 pioneering "virtual theatrical" releases of art house films with revenue shares that allows audiences to support almost 400 local independent theaters.