**News From PASA**

**For immediate release**

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***Sacred Spaces?* to Premiere January 29**

**Cleo Parker Robinson Dance and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra**

**Perform a Tribute to St. Landry Parish’s Arsoned Churches**

**Lafayette, LA:** “They’ve burned our churches,” will be the opening line when Cleo Parker Robinson Dance and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra perform the Louisiana premiere of *Sacred Spaces?* at the Heymann Center at 7:30 p.m. on January 29, 2025. A stage full of artists will tell this story of reconciliation and redemption through spoken word, new music, stark pictures and the choreography of a legend in a moving experience that was born out of the 2019 arson of three Black Baptist churches.

Jackie Lyle, Performing Arts Serving Acadiana’s (PASA’s) Executive Director, read with horror the news accounts of the arson of three Black churches in St. Landry Parish: St. Mary Missionary Baptist Church, Greater Union Baptist Church, and Mount Pleasant Baptist Church.

A firm believer that challenging stories can be uniquely shared through performing arts, she drafted a sketch of a performance that would include dance and music.

Lyle approached the Denver, CO-based Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Company and the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, who both seized the chance to be a part of the project.

In June 2022, the team arrived in Acadiana for a powerful gathering of congregants and others at St. Mary Missionary Baptist Church in Port Barre. More than two emotional hours of reflection, questioning and sharing informed the new choreography and music. Retired UL professor Joe Riehl transcribed the discussion word for word. His documentation is incorporated into the performance as spoken word.

Working with local dancers in UL’s dance studio, Cleo Parker Robinson and her assistant artistic director Winnifred Harris laid out the initial movement of *Sacred Spaces?*. Adonis Rose, artistic director of the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra, composed the music written for *Sacred Spaces?*

When acclaimed Louisiana photographer Debbie Fleming Caffery learned of the project, she offered images that she had captured of the burned churches in the earliest days after the fires. These, too, are incorporated into the staging of *Sacred Spaces?.*

“We are so grateful that our vision was embraced by the artists, the congregations and the pastors of the churches, as well as our artistic community, grant givers and so many others,” says PASA executive director Jackie Lyle. “Creating new work—especially the kind that reflects the shocking nature of this particular history—is risky. With great respect for the church communities and the artists, we accomplished our goal to put this project on stage”.

In addition to the public performance on January 29, a variety of events that are open to the public will take place, beginning with an opening reception on Sunday, January 26 at Warehouse 535, located at 535 Garfield St. in Lafayette. Information about the other events led by the artists, which include artists talks, hands-on music activities, movement and dance activities, is available on pasaonline.org. Participation in these community events is free. Registration will be required.

A daytime performance for eighth grade students in Lafayette Parish public schools will take place on the morning of January 29. PASA’s daytime performances for students are supported by a generous grant from Love Our Schools.

*Sacred Spaces?* had its world premiere in September 2022 in Denver, CO, where Cleo Parker Robinson Dance is based, and has been performed in many US cities.

This project has received support from the New England Foundation for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts and South Arts; ArtsForward, which was supported by the Mellon Foundation, and the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation.

Generous corporate sponsors have backed the project, Lafayette Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Lee Michaels, City club at River Ranch, Kinchen Funeral Home, Christa and Chip Billeaud, and the Louisiana Lottery.

PASA is supported by an operational grant from the Louisiana Division of the Arts, Office of Cultural Development, Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, in cooperation with the Louisiana State Arts Council, and an External Agencies Funding Program grant, sponsored by Lafayette Consolidated Government and administered by the Acadiana Center for the Arts.

**About Cleo Parker Robinson**

Cleo Parker Robinson is founder, artistic director and choreographer of the 50-year-old Denver-based artistic institution, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance. She leads a professional dance Ensemble, Youth and Junior Youth Ensembles, a Dance Academy, an International Summer Dance Institute, a 240-seat theatre that bears her name, and a myriad of community outreach programs. Her philosophy of “One Spirit, Many Voices” is reflected in all she does, and is the vision she brings to everyone she meets, everywhere she goes.

In 1998, President Bill Clinton appointed Ms. Parker Robinson to the National Council on the Arts where she served until 2005 as one of the two appointed members of the fourteen-member council in Washington D.C. In 2005, Ms. Parker Robinson received a Kennedy Center Medal of Honor during the Center’s “Masters of African American Choreographers” series. In 2021, Ms. Parker Robinson and her fellow co-founders of the International Association of Blacks in Dance received the National Medal of Arts from President Joe Biden.

A master teacher/choreographer and cultural ambassador, she has taught and performed with her Ensemble around the world, touching people of all ages and backgrounds who have participated in Ms. Parker Robinson’s workshops and master classes at conservatories, universities and neighborhood dance centers.

**About Adonis Rose**

Adonis Rose is a Grammy-award-winning artist, composer, educator, and producer from the city of New Orleans, LA. He has played and recorded with the biggest names in Jazz, including Terence Blanchard, Betty Carter, Dianne Reeves, Marcus Roberts, Harry Connick, Jr., Nnenna Freelon, Kurt Elling, and Wynton Marsalis, and has performed on the most renowned stages in the world.

Rose was appointed to the position of artistic director of the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra in 2017. He has been instrumental in the organization's success by developing educational and community programs, leading performances, and developing partnerships associated with The Jazz Market, a 350-seat performance venue in New Orleans’ Central City neighborhood which is home to the orchestra. He serves as the New Orleans Music and Culture Curator for JazzAscona in Switzerland and was recently named the executive director of the NOCCA Foundation.

For more information, contact PASA at 337-769-3231 or email [jackie@pasaonline.org](mailto:jackie@pasaonline.org).

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**About PASA:** Performing Arts Serving Acadiana offers performing arts entertainment, focusing on dance, theater, and classical music, with occasional forays into other genres. PASA also delivers performing arts activities—master classes, workshops, lecture demonstrations and other offerings—in a variety of locations in the Acadiana area.

For more information about PASA or any of the performances, call PASA at (337) 769-3231 or email jackie@pasaonline.org.

PASA 2024-2025 Public Performance Dates:

January 29, 2025: Cleo Parker Robinson Dance & the New Orleans Jazz Orchestra

Heymann Performing Arts Center.

February 20, 2025: Michael Doucet & John Warner Smith. The Theater at Baranco Elementary. Corner of Moss St. & Mudd Ave.

March 14, 2025: Omnium Circus. Heymann Performing Arts Center

All performances begin at 7:30 p.m.