

PRESENTED BY AMANDA + JAMES

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# FABRIC SOFTENER

asia stewart + yaz lancaster

SATURDAY JUNE 11  
7:30 PM

COFFEY STREET STUDIO  
153 COFFEY ST BK 11231



**BROOKLYN** **ARTS** **COUNCIL**

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

My nana, Barbara Jean Lockhart, was the first person to introduce me to Toni Morrison's work. I was ten years old when she gave me *The Bluest Eye*. The next year, she slipped four more of Morrison's books into my bedroom: *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby*, and *Beloved*. They sat as outliers among my collections of picture and chapter books, as they had once sat on my mother's shelf. Though I knew that Morrison's works were fictional, I claimed them as proof that there were other Black girls like me conducting their own experiments and finding out for themselves what it meant to build a life (on hostile ground).

My family treated books like hand-me-downs, passing novels like secrets back and forth. They were one of the many things I inherited from my mother and grandmother. Books and fine (not-coarse-enough-to-perm) hair. Books and a smattering of moles that multiply with every year. Books and calloused 9.5 size feet abused from years of being squished into size 9 shoes. Books and that peculiar way of being both tender and hard-headed all at once.

My grandmother passed away on my 21st birthday in 2017 and in the wake of her passing I felt untethered, adrift at a moment when I was expected to celebrate my official entry into adulthood. I missed the sermons she would give in the bathroom or kitchen, with bobby pins or a hot comb in hand. Lectures that began with the phrase, "Long after I'm dead and gone..." and ended with "I love you." I have spent the past five years making sense of her instructions and re-assembling a blueprint that maps how to avoid coercion, withstand threats, throw a punch, hide money, and craft exit plans.

Several of my nana's survival strategies anticipated traumas and acts of harm that I experienced later in my life. Recognizing this, I began to wonder how much of my life was already foretold, continuing cycles that had already been established and experienced by my ancestors.

My questions generated the foundation of this performance, which offers a meditation on intergenerational trauma and Black inheritance. Choreographed as a baptism in blood-red waters, *Fabric Softener* (re)stages an inauguration into Black womanhood and unveils its violent backdrop. I ask that you bear witness to this baptism and support its ritual as a member of the congregation.



Photograph of Barbara Jean Lockhart at her high school prom (1960)

# CAST + CREW

**Conceived and Directed by Asia Stewart**

**Produced by Amanda + James**

**Voice and Movement: Asia Stewart**

**Violin: Yaz Lancaster**

**Sound Design: Yaz Lancaster**

**Light Board Operator: Amanda Hameline**

# MOVEMENT LIST

**Movement I: Wash**

**Movement II: Scrub**

**Movement III: Rinse**

**Movement IV: Spin**

**Movement V: Hang**

**Movement VI: Dry**

**Runtime: 60 minutes, no intermission.**

# SONG LIST

**I: My Lord, What a Morning**

**II: You May Bury Me in De' East**

**III: Oh Peter, Go Ring Dem Bells**

**IV: Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child**

**V: There is a Balm in Gilead**

**VI: It's Me Oh Lord (Standing in the Need of Prayer)**

**VII: Steal Away**

**VIII: They Crucified My Lord**

**IX: I'm Troubled in Mind**

**X: I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray**

**\*This performance features audio recordings of Toni Morrison reading excerpts from *Song of Solomon* at the 1977 Bread Loaf Writers Conference at Middlebury College.**



# ARTIST BIOS

**Asia Stewart (she/her)** is a Brooklyn-based performance artist whose conceptual work centers the body as a living archive. After receiving degrees in the social sciences from Cambridge and Harvard University, she has sought ways to transform the language specific to studies of race, gender, sexuality, and diaspora into materials that can be felt and worn on the body. As a National YoungArts Winner in Musical Theatre and a former National Arts Policy Roundtable Fellow with Americans for the Arts, Stewart uses her past experiences on stage to inject her work with a heightened sense of theatricality. In 2020, Stewart concluded her first independent performance series, *Graft*, which attempts to capture the violence that constructions of whiteness and femininity wrought on Black bodies. Works from that series have been showcased at venues such as the Mercury Store, Untitled Space, NARS Foundation, Goodyear Arts, A.I.R. Gallery, Kellen Gallery, and Anthology Film Archives. One piece was also recently acquired by the Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC. Stewart will continue to develop new works in 2022 and 2023 with the support of the Brooklyn Arts Fund and A.I.R. Fellowship.



**Yaz Lancaster (they/them)** is a Black transdisciplinary artist most interested in relational aesthetics and the everyday; fragments and collage; and liberatory politics. Yaz performs as a violinist, vocalist, and steel pannist in a wide variety of settings from DIY and popular music to chamber ensembles; and their work is presented in many different mediums and collaborative projects. It often reckons with specific influences ranging from politics of identity and liberation, to natural phenomena and poetics. Yaz has had the privilege and opportunity to create with artists like A Far Cry, Beth Morrison Projects, ContaQt (with Evan Ziporyn), Contemporaneous, JACK Quartet, Leilehua Lanzilotti, Skiffle Steel Orchestra, Sound-Off: Music for Bail and Wadada Leo Smith. They are in post-genre duo *laydøwn* with guitarist-producer Andrew Noseworthy; and work with Luna Composition Lab, I CARE IF YOU LISTEN and Peach Mag. Yaz holds degrees in violin and poetry from NYU; and they live in Lenapehoking (Harlem, NYC) with their bassador puppy Nori.



# SUGGESTED READINGS

The following texts were incredibly important resources for me to revisit as I devised this work. I hope that you will consider reading some of these texts as well:

- Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother*
- Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*
- Gayl Jones, *Corregidora*
- Toni Morrison, *Song of Solomon*
- Ntozake Shange, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*
- Dagmawi Woubshet, *The Calendar of Loss*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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- **Maria Lockhart**
- **NARS Foundation**

*AMANDA + JAMES* is a New York-based non profit arts production company dedicated to producing the works of young artists. We provide a space for this community to follow creative impulses, refine their ideas into projects, and collaborate and learn from their peers.

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