

Dance Review: KAIROS Dance Theatre's “Husk/Vessel” — A Place where Embraces and Violence Meet

NOVEMBER 1, 2022 — [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

By Thea Singer

Love, anger, frustration, hope, sadness, lullabies — they are all here through movement that is at turns elegant and awkward, nuanced and propulsive.



Cassie Wang in *Husk/Vessel*. Photo: Liz Linder.

The very title of director Paula Josa-Jones's driving, thrumming new work for **KAIROS Dance Theatre** evokes the coming together of opposites — a ying yang of the textures that have characterized our pandemic lives. Created over those at once barren and cramped two years, *Husk/Vessel* kineshetically explores the sloughing off of brittle membranes and the filling of interior hollows with passion and light.

Choreographed by Josa-Jones and KAIROS artistic director DeAnna Pellecchia, the 45-minute piece for five women premiered October 14 and 15 at Boston University Dance Theatre. Using large swathes of white fabric as symbol and, intriguingly, as dance partners, Josa-Jones and Pellecchia, in collaboration with the performers, posit on stage a landscape as turbulent as a dust storm and as ephemeral as clouds. Love, anger, frustration, hope, sadness, lullabies — they are all here through movement that is at turns elegant and awkward, nuanced and propulsive.

Each dancer has her own massive bedsheet, which, through artistic legerdermain, she transforms now from a cloak to a whipping lasso, from a holding cell to a shelter, from a skating pond to a doll-as-effigy held aloft, the head fashioned by the dancer's hands clasped around its throat.

The eclectic score, by Pauline Oliveros, Fred Frith, D.J. Fraction, and Dhaka Brakha, butts echoes and sonorous instrumentation up against static, bell clangs, gongs, trills, and more — at least those are some of the sounds that caught my ear. The dancers perform a series of solos, duets, trios, and ensemble sections. Throughout, it's as if they are both inside the music and the music is inside them.

The story — and it is a narrative of sorts, rife with relationship squabbles and reconciliations — begins with all five women, scrunched under their coverings, slithering in unison across the stage on individual paths: they're droplets of mercury seeking to merge. One by one they individuate, their heads emerge and then their whole selves. A single dancer jumps into the arms of another, who cradles her. Another, later, bangs on the ground what at one time was a protective covering, stomps away, then comes back to wrestle with her would-be betrayers. Welcome to a pandemic-infiltrated world — a place where embraces and violence meet.

It is hard to take your eyes off dancer Rachel Linsky. Each impulse — the “and” before the movement — arises from deep in her core, flipping her onto her back, rolling her inside her sheet like a snowball gathering thickness. In a startling duet, the glorious Kristin Wagner grabs Linsky by her belt and rockets into the air, ultimately riding her like a seahorse.

Olivia Blaisdell brandishes the fabric like a cape, swirling until she's encased in it, a virtual mummy. Reversing course, she spreads the sheet as outstretched wings before tossing it to the winds: I'm done with you; you restrict me.

You might think that 45 minutes of interactions among people and cloth would get tiresome, but the opposite is true: it's riveting. You get caught up in the rapid dynamic shifts and the roiling emotions aroused by these no-holds-barred dancers. There's something cathartic in witnessing the intensity and intimacy — the shared breath and sweat — of people, all of us, who have been separated from one another for far too long.

Josa-Jones opens the show with her 10-minute solo "Cavallus," an homage to the loss of her beloved Andalusian stallion, Capprichio. It beautifully sets the stage for the ever-changing weather of *Husk/Vessel*.

Josa-Jones is known for her work with an inter-species company comprising horses, dancers, and riders. The curtain rises on a ghostly horse: a saddle crafted atop a half-barrel with wheels. Josa-Jones dressed in gray — a jacket, long layered skirt, and ballooning leggings, accented by a black veil across her face — mounts the steed.

The air is thick with mourning; it's as if we're looking at the dance at dusk. The soundscape, by Fred Firth, is discordant, full of gongs and shuddering strings. As Josa-Jones manipulates the horse around the space, she executes odd, haunting movements: sitting upright, her bent knees rise to her chest, her hands clutch as if pulling at heartstrings, her bare feet jitter.

She is saying goodbye, gently while also acknowledging, to herself and us as her witnesses, that Capprichio will be with her, and through her work with us, forever.

Thea Singer is a longtime dance critic and science writer based in Brookline, Mass. Her articles have appeared in numerous publications including the *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, *Scientific American*, *MORE magazine*, *O the Oprah magazine*, *Psychology Today*, *Huffington Post*, *Boston magazine*, the *Daily Beast*, and *Nature Outlook*.



BY: THEA SINGER

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1872

The Boston Globe

2022

Choreographed by Paula Josa-Jones, KAIROS Dance Theater's 'HUSK/VESSEL' explores the coverings that contain us

By **Karen Campbell** Globe Correspondent, Updated October 12, 2022, 2 hours ago



From cocoon-like skins and swirling capes to mysterious shelters and slippery pathways, large swaths of fabric suggest a sense of continual transformation in KAIROS Dance Theater's new "HUSK/VESSEL," which premieres at Boston University Dance Theater Oct. 14-15. "The fabric, which can contain and carry us, is also an expression of our inner materials — skin, fascia, muscle, bone — revealing what holds and separates us," says choreographer/director Paula Josa-Jones.

The new 45-minute work for an all-female cast, co-choreographed with KAIROS cofounder and artistic director DeAnna Pellecchia, is the first major ensemble work in 20 years that Josa-Jones has created for a company other than her own. From the '80s to the early 2000s, the internationally acclaimed dancer/choreographer was a mainstay of Boston's contemporary dance scene. She cofounded Green Street Studios and founded her own company — Paula Josa-Jones/ Performance Works — choreographing provocative, theatrical works that were as emotionally charged as they were visually captivating. In addition to eclectic group dances, she created and danced a large repertoire of solo works, many arising from her experience as gender nonconforming and exploring concepts of identity.

Around the turn of the millennium, Josa-Jones moved to Martha's Vineyard and shifted much of her focus to working with horses — both in artistic projects and equine therapy — developing practices that incorporated horses, riders, and dancers. That's when Pellecchia, straight out of Roger Williams University, joined the choreographer's company — dancing and learning to embody Josa-Jones's practice of somatic (mind-body) movement and deeply personal storytelling.

“The way I make and manipulate and think about dance was influenced the most by Paula,” Pellecchia says.

Over the years, the two have become colleagues. “DeAnna brings a kind of integrity and engagement and clarity that is quite unique,” says Josa-Jones, 76. “Her openness to learning is really important, to not fasten down the corners of her practice but have curiosity to go places she hasn't been before. That's why I value her work so greatly.”

Pellecchia, 45, considers herself a protégé of the veteran. “She taught me what I know, and now I teach dancers what I know. This idea of passing down knowledge and experience is sacred in this piece — something I think will really resonate with audiences.”

Pellecchia cofounded KAIROS in 2012, and the company has become known for immersive, multisensory works that often speak to social issues. She commissioned Josa-Jones to create a new work for her company just before the pandemic hit. “HUSK/VESSEL” took two years to fully develop, with the dancers — masked and separated from each other by boxes outlined on the floor — in Pellecchia's 16-by-18-foot home studio. They communicated with Josa-Jones via Zoom for a year, until they finally were able to rehearse for the first time in person in June 2021.





Pellecchia says the uncertainty of the pandemic created an intimacy, vulnerability, trust, and connectedness that became woven into the piece. “The rawness going on in those rehearsals,” she recalls, “we had no idea what was going on and when it would end, but we were still showing up, getting into our squares, doing this together. This piece kept us dancing.”

The choreographers’ shared common language and points of reference were essential to the creative process, and helped Pellecchia, who also performs in the work, translate Josa-Jones’s concepts to the dancers in the room. “This piece couldn’t have happened otherwise,” Josa-Jones says.

But she also credits KAIROS’s dancers. “Peeling back layers to expose your most vulnerable self takes a courageous heart,” Josa-Jones says, and she hopes that inspires audiences of the new work as well. “I want them to stop thinking and start feeling,” she says. “I want them to allow themselves to be moved.”

Pellecchia adds, “Relying on each other to show up and keep going during the pandemic — it highlighted all the ways we are separate and yet not separate. At the end of the day, we are all just skin, fascia, muscle, bone ...”

“HUSK/VESSEL”

Presented by KAIROS Dance Theater

At Boston University Dance Theater, Oct. 14-15

Tickets \$20-\$25, <https://www.kairosdancetheater.org>

The Boston Globe

FALL ARTS PREVIEW

10 standout dance performances to catch this season

Fall's rich offerings include outdoor festivals, plus hip-hop, ballet, flamenco, folkloric and contemporary dance

By **Karen Campbell** Globe Correspondent, Updated September 9, 2022, 6:00 a.m.



KAIROS DANCE THEATER/PAULA JOSA-JONES Veteran dance fans in the area will remember the provocative work of contemporary dancer/choreographer Paula Josa-Jones. Once a lynchpin of the Boston dance scene, she has not presented a major work for her own company in Boston for more than two decades. But she and longtime associate DeAnna Pellecchia, Kairos Dance Theater's artistic director, are joining forces for a new evening-length collaboration called "Husk/Vessel," which examines clothing as both covering and habitat. *Oct. 14-15, \$20-\$25. Boston University Dance Theater.*

<https://www.kairosdancetheater.org/>





5 things to do this weekend, including a dance performance from KAIROS and a screening of 'Mardi & the Whites'

Plus, a production of "Ada and the Engine" at Central Square Theater and the El Encuentro film festival in Lowell.

Arts & Culture 4 hours ago

'husk/vessel'

Friday, Oct. 14-Saturday, Oct. 15

This multimedia dance performance from KAIROS Dance Theater was made in collaboration with choreographer Paula Josa-Jones, who has been deeply involved with dance theater since 1985. The work is a meditation on costume — is it covering, a habitat or both? In this performance, on stage at Boston University Dance Theater, costumes become characters. Each dancer is engulfed in their costume, moving with and against it. [Olivia Moon](#), an artist in this year's cohort of WBUR's The Makers, is a part of the dance troupe. [[Learn more about this year's Makers here.](#)]





KAIROS DANCE THEATER'S HUSK/VESSEL MARKS RETURN OF DANCE LEGEND PAULA JOSA-JONES FOR COLLABORATION WITH ACCLAIMED REGIONAL COMPANY

Fall Premiere Performances Run Oct. 14 – 15 at Boston University Dance Theater
[Photos available here.](#)

BOSTON – September 23, 2022 – Legendary contemporary choreographer and dancer **Paula Josa-Jones** returns to Boston next month to premiere HUSK/VESSEL with acclaimed performance company [KAIROS Dance Theater](#). Performances run Friday, Oct. 14 @ 7:30p and Saturday Oct. 15 @ 3p and 7:30p at Boston University Dance Theater.

HUSK/VESSEL was conceived by Josa-Jones and co-choreographed with KAIROS co-founder and executive artistic director **DeAnna Pellecchia**, who has danced with Josa-Jones for over 20 years. The artists' long shared history informs the work's collaborative creation, grounded in a visually rich and viscerally somatic style of movement. This is Josa-Jones's first work choreographed for KAIROS. Having focused on a robust ongoing career with her own company – exploring interspecies dance with humans and horses, and bringing solo and group performances around the country – this is the first major ensemble work Josa-Jones has created for another professional dance company in nearly 20 years.

HUSK/VESSEL was developed, set and rehearsed entirely during the pandemic, drawing on Pellecchia and Josa-Jones's close working relationship to transcend COVID limitations. "Working with DeAnna in this way has challenged both of us, especially developing a collaborative work in separate, virtual spaces," says Josa-Jones. "Neither of us has worked this way

before. It is a real privilege to work with DeAnna and her company, which pushes the dancers to fully explore the edges of themselves.”

Josa-Jones says that in HUSK/VESSEL costume and fabric are both covering and habitat, concealing and revealing the dancers and their movement, as well as simultaneously limiting and expanding the possibilities for movement and character. The work features an all-female cast in solos, duets and groups, each inhabiting a unique garment-world of their own, exploring gradual and abrupt transformations and interactions as soloists and as an ensemble.

“Paula’s creation process demands that each of the dancers make deep personal connections, exploring the somatic and emotional relationships with layers of fabric,” Pellecchia says. “That connection is deeply personal to me, having first met Paula when I was a dancer in her company. This work is a love letter to Paula from me. She taught me what I know, and now I teach dancers what I know. This idea of passing down knowledge and experience is sacred in this piece – something I think will really resonate with audiences.”

Josa-Jones opens the show with a new solo work for herself. CAVALLUS was created as an “offering in movement” to honor the passing of Capprichio, her beloved Andalusian stallion. Josa-Jones is renowned for an extensive body of work with an inter-species company including horses, dancers and riders. Her equine work includes live performance, film, teaching, and humanitarian work with rescued and abused animals.

TICKETS AND LOCATION DETAILS

HUSK/VESSEL tickets are \$20-25 and available directly on Eventbrite [here](#) and via KAIROS Dance Theater [website](#). Tickets also will be available for purchase at the door. Performances take place at Boston University Dance Theater, located at 915 Commonwealth Ave.

ABOUT KAIROS DANCE THEATER

Established in 2012, KAIROS Dance Theater creates emotionally powerful performances that promote art as a threshold for communication and social change. KAIROS aims to redefine the role of art in culture by crafting projects that speak to social issues and work towards rewriting culturally defined narratives. KAIROS’s immersive, multi-sensory performances have been featured as a “Critics’ Pick” eighteen times by the Boston Globe; and presented throughout New England, the United States and around the world at galleries, museums, theaters, site-specific landscapes, and educational spaces. Learn more at www.kairosdancetheater.org.

ABOUT PAULA JOSA-JONES

Paula Josa-Jones is a dancer/actor, choreographer, writer, visual artist and movement educator known for her visually rich, emotionally charged dance theater. Her work includes dances for humans, inter-species work with horses and dancers, film and video. Josa-Jones has been called “one of the country’s leading choreographic conceptualists” by The Boston Globe, and the Village Voice describes her work as “powerful, eccentric, and surreal.” Her dances have been produced in Russia, Europe, Mexico and throughout the United States. She has taught in the dance programs at Tufts University, Boston University and at universities, colleges and dance festivals nationally and internationally. Learn more at www.paulajosajones.org.

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CALENDAR LISTING FOR HUSK/VESSEL

WHAT: The [KAIROS Dance Theater](#) company premiere of HUSK/VESSEL marks a return to Boston for legendary contemporary choreographer and dancer Paula Josa-Jones, with whom Kairos Artistic Director DeAnna Pellecchia has worked extensively. The evening-length piece conceived by Josa-Jones and co-choreographed with Pellecchia for KAIROS explores costumes and clothing as both covering and habitat, and how both actual and metaphorical layers aid humans in hiding or revealing themselves. Josa-Jones opens the show with a new solo work, CAVALLUS.

WHEN: Fri. Oct. 14, 2022, 7:30 pm; and Sat. Oct. 15, 2022, 3 pm and 7:30 pm

WHERE: Boston University Dance Theater, 915 Commonwealth Ave. in Boston

TICKETS: \$20-25 and available on Eventbrite [here](#) and the KAIROS Dance Theater [website](#).

COVID: Mask-wearing is optional in the Boston University Dance Theater.

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MEDIA INFORMATION

Advance interviews with Pellecchia and Josa-Jones are available for media, along with photos, video and performance review tickets. Contact **John Michael Kennedy** at jmk@jmkpr.com / 781-620-1761.

-> WATCH VIDEO OF FULL PERFORMANCE: [CLICK HERE](#)

husk/vessel

Paula Josa-Jones/Performance Works
with
KAIROS Dance Theater

husk/vessel asks how we shape images of self and other, and how our environments, including dress, affect our perception and movement. Our intention was to explore the fabric as both a part of and separate from ourselves, and the shifting emotional tones of that malleable relationship. We see the fabric as that which can contain and carry us and is also an expression of our inner materials – skin, fascia, muscle, bone - revealing the somatic and poetic dimensions of what holds and separates us.

husk/vessel is a collaborative group work that explores costume as both covering and habitat that conceals and reveals both dancer and dancing, simultaneously limiting and expanding the possibilities for movement. Each dancer moves within a unique garment-world of their own, exploring gradual and abrupt transformations as soloists in a common space, and as an ensemble creating a sense of tribe and relatedness among the performers.

husk/vessel

bio

Led by Artistic Director/Choreographer **DeAnna Pellecchia**, **KAIROS Dance Theater** creates innovative live performances that promote art as a threshold for communication and social change. The work aims to redefine the role of art in culture by speaking to social issues and working toward rewriting culturally defined narratives. KAIROS' immersive, multi-sensory performances blend dance, visual art, performance art, film, fashion, live music, and theatrical lighting design. This layering of genres and exchanging of disciplines creates an intense feast of images and senses, dynamic movement pictures, and commanding visual landscapes. By stripping away layers to expose their truest selves, the dancers do not just dance, they reveal and embody story-telling as a catalyst, inviting us all to embrace our deepest humanity. KAIROS brings to life stories, myths and memories that speak to the deep, human truths we all experience. KAIROS performances have been featured as 'Critics' Picks' eighteen times by the Boston Globe; presented regionally and internationally at galleries, museums, theaters, and site-specific venues throughout New England, NYC, Korea, France and Russia; and funded by Boston Foundation, Boston Cultural Council, Boston Dance Alliance, New England Foundation for the Arts, Somerville Arts Council, Boston Center for the Arts, The Gardner Museum, and Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy. www.kairosdancetheater.org



bio

PAULA JOSA-JONES is a dance artist, choreographer, author, visual artist and movement educator and therapist known for her visually rich, emotionally charged dance theater. Her work includes choreography for humans, inter-species work with horses, dancers and riders, film and video. Josa-Jones has been called "one of the country's leading choreographic conceptualists" by the Boston Globe and the Village Voice describes her work as "powerful, eccentric, and surreal". Much of Josa-Jones's solo work arises from her own experience of being gender non-conforming, and movement explorations of the deeply complex architecture of identity and expression.

From Paula:

"My dancemaking is rooted in the embodying practices of Authentic Movement, somatic inquiry, Body-Mind Centering, and Deep Listening. I see improvisation as a political act and passionate gesture. I want to know more about what the body desires, what it demands, where it takes us and how often we do not go along for the ride; about finding and losing oneself in the movement and the moment."

www.paulajosajones.org



solo improvisations









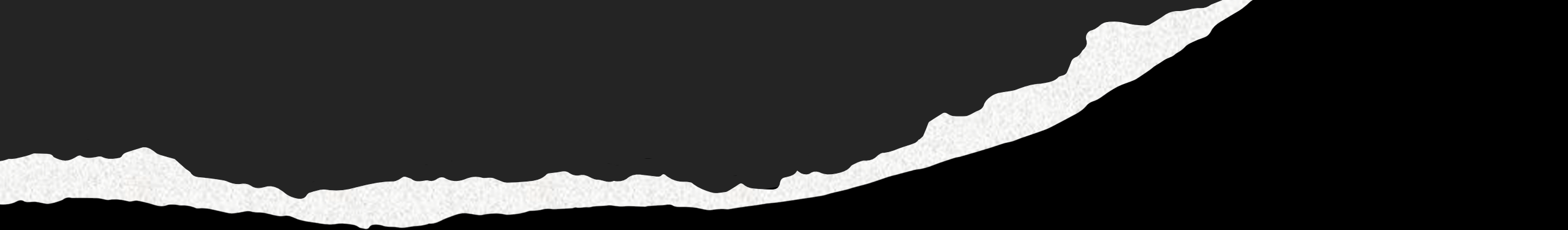












duet





costume concepts







information



For details or to book a performance:
Contact Artistic Director DeAnna Pellecchia
or
Paula Josa-Jones/Performance Works
kairosdancetheater@gmail.com
pjj@paulajosajones.org