

David Roussève/REALITY

Halfway to Dawn

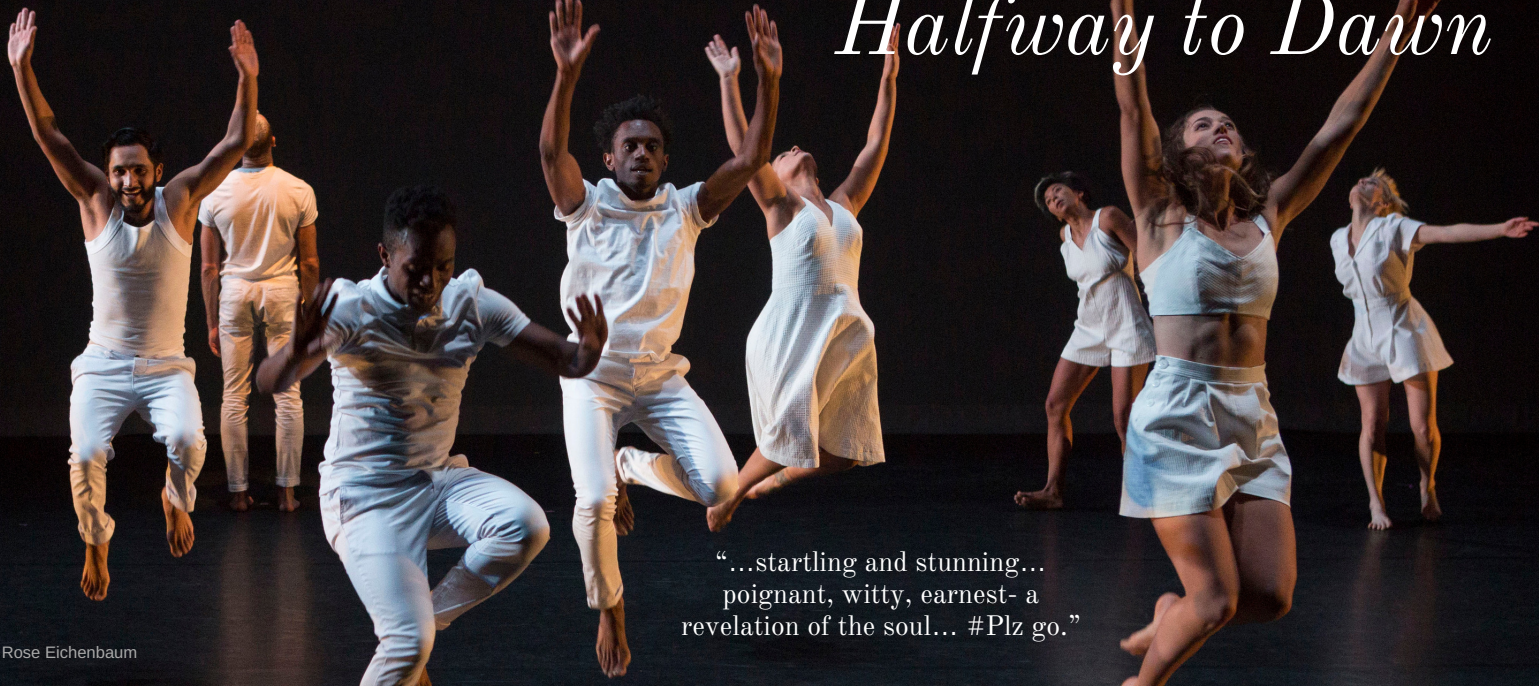
"One day some breakthrough string-theory of the heart is sure to explain why beauty and damnation can be perceived at the same moment, why grief and joy can hit you at once. Until then, David Roussève's dance-theater... offers a succinct and lyrical look at how the highs and lows of life collide."

Sarah Kaufman,
The Washington Post



photo: Rose Eichenbaum

Halfway to Dawn



“...startling and stunning...
poignant, witty, earnest- a
revelation of the soul... #Plz go.”

photo: Rose Eichenbaum

Commissioned by:

ArtPower, University of
California San Diego

Contemporary Arts Center
New Orleans

Kelly Strayhorn Theater,
Pittsburgh

Krannert Center for the
Performing Arts,
University of Illinois,
Urbana-Champaign

NC State LIVE, Raleigh

REDCAT, Los Angeles

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Written/choreographed/directed by David Roussève and performed by the wildly diverse nine-member company REALITY, *Halfway to Dawn* redefines 'biography' as the intersection of fact, conjecture, comment, abstraction, and fantasy; as it seeks to uncover the complicated emotional 'truths' of gay, African American jazz composer Billy Strayhorn's life while creating a dialogue on urgent social 'truths' of our own. Though instrumental to the creation of the most important body of work in American music history, Strayhorn (1915-1967) remains largely unknown. As Duke Ellington's main arranger/writing partner, he wrote/co-wrote signatures like "A Train", "Satin Doll", and "Lush Life". But gay, out, and living in Harlem in the 1940's-60's, Strayhorn chose to lead a remarkably private life, allowing Ellington to take the spotlight and much of the credit for their joint oeuvre.

Issues of fame, privacy, and creative authorship have never been more resonant than now, when popular culture has redefined fame - not art - as the goal itself, when social media over-sharing has obliterated privacy, and when digital platforms have further blurred the line between composing and arranging. A committed civil rights worker, Strayhorn is a supreme example of artist as activist. Informed by these undercurrents, *Halfway to Dawn* creates an abstract portrait by layering video-projected text conveying the biographical facts of Strayhorn's life, projected abstract video art exploring the emotional undercurrents of his journey, and expressionistic physical theater expanding the political urgency of his narrative into our own lives. Moveable screens are surfaces for the projection of historical footage that grounds the work in the Strayhorn era, even while lighting design moves the piece fluidly between past, present, and fantasy.

The core of *Halfway* is Strayhorn's music as interpreted through a dynamic dance vocabulary melding jazz, modern/postmodern, and social dance that is new to Roussève's choreography. A score including recordings from the '40-'50s of Strayhorn songs allows the famously private artist to emerge and "speak for himself" through his music. The songs are immersed within a larger sound design that—like the video element—references historical material, but ultimately creates a contemporary, abstract, and wholly original digital tapestry. This is Roussève's third project with Cari Ann Shim Sham* (video), Chris Kuhl (lighting), and Leah Piehl (costumes); and his second with Lucy Burns (dramaturgy), and d. Sabela Grimes (sound design).

Halfway to Dawn will have its world premiere at REDCAT in Los Angeles in October 2018 prior to performances at the *Next Wave Festival* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in December 2018.

Made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Halfway to Dawn is a National Performance Network (NPN) Creation Fund Project co-commissioned by REDCAT in partnership with ARTPower at UC San Diego, Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans, the Kelly Strayhorn Theater and NPN. (For more information: www.npnweb.org)

Halfway to Dawn will be created in part during a residency at the Pillow Lab at Jacob's Pillow Dance.

David Roussève

“...one of this country’s most inspired and inspiring dance makers.”

San Francisco Chronicle

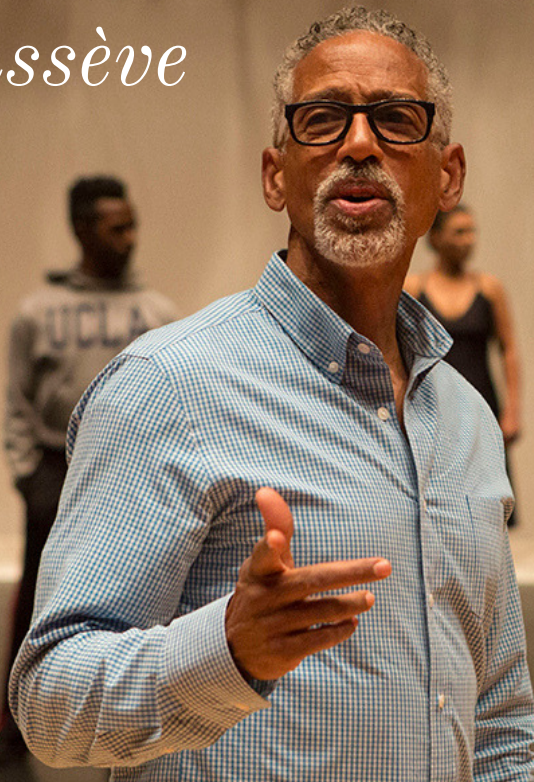


photo: Rose Eichenbaum

A magna cum laude graduate of Princeton University, Guggenheim Fellow **David Roussève** is hailed from coast to coast for his highly original form of expressionistic dance theater that masterfully blends elements of dance and performance art with African American traditional and pop cultures. As Artistic Director of the dance/theater company David Roussève/REALITY he has created fourteen full-length works that have toured throughout the U.S., Europe, and South America; including three critically and popularly successful commissions for the *Next Wave Festival* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

In 2017, David choreographed Kurt Weil's *Lost in the Stars* for director Anne Bogart, SITl company, and the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra. He also created the work *Enough?* for the San Francisco duet company RAWdance, a piece that asks whether dance can address social movements like Black Lives Matter. Other commissions include works for Cleveland's Dancing Wheels, Ririe-Woodbury; Cleo Parker Robinson Dance; Ballet Hispanico (in collaboration with salsa great Eddie Palmieri); Atlanta Ballet (with a live performance by the 100-member Morehouse College Glee Club); and Houston Ballet (with a live playing of Copland's *Appalachian Spring*). In 2006, Roussève spent seven weeks in Tashkent, Uzbekistan creating *Ecstasy of the Pomegranate* for Ilkhom Theater company.

David has created three short dance films, the most recent *Two Seconds After Laughter* was shot in Java and edited by Cari Ann Shim Sham*. *Two Seconds* screened at festivals in eleven countries and received or was a finalist for ten awards including four for Best Film. Roussève's other awards include a Bessie (New York Dance and Performance) Award, three LA Horton Awards, a Creative Capital Fellowship, the CalArts/Alpert Award in Dance, two Irvine Fellowships, seven consecutive NEA Fellowships, and First Place: Choreography at the IMZ Int'l Dance Film Festival. David's writing has been published in collections by Bantam Books and Routledge Press and he was twice a screenwriting Fellow in the Sundance Feature Film Development Lab. He recently completed the feature screenplay "Twit" based on the evening-length REALITY work *Stardust*, a coming of age story for the digital generation in which a gay adolescent communicates his inner terrain only through a series of tweets he is sending (but no one is reading) and through the dance fantasies that inhabit his mind.

David is Professor of Choreography in UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance, where he served as Chair from 2003-2006. For UCLA's School of the Arts and Architecture, David has served as Associate Dean (2014-2015), Acting Dean, and Interim Dean (2015-2017). He has also served on the faculties of Princeton University, Bates Dance Festival, Columbia College, Randolph-Macon, and UC Berkeley Extension. From 2004-07 David was the first artist to sit on the Board of Directors of the Association of Performing Arts Presenters.

Halfway to Dawn

Performance Calendar 2018-2019

March 29-April 7, 2018 (Development

Residency)

Jacob's Pillow

Becket, MA

September 10-15, 2018 (Technical Residency)

NC State LIVE

Raleigh, NC

October 4-7, 2018 (World Premiere)

REDCAT

Los Angeles, CA

October 26, 2018

Open Spaces 2018

Gem Theater

Kansas City, MO

November 9, 2018

ArtPower

University of California, San Diego

San Diego, CA

December 5-8, 2018 (New York Premiere)

Brooklyn Academy of Music *Next Wave Festival*

Brooklyn, NY

(press announcement May 22, 2018)

February 1-2, 2019

Kelly Strayhorn Theater

Pittsburgh, PA

March 2, 2019

NC State LIVE

Raleigh, NC

March 30, 2019

Moss Arts Center

Virginia Tech University

Blacksburg, VA

April 5-7, 2019

Contemporary Arts Center New Orleans

New Orleans, LA

April 13, 2019

Northrop Auditorium

University of Minnesota

Minneapolis, MN

September 13, 2019

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Urbana, IL

