

thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo by Steven Pisano

Garlic and Power at Out-FRONT! Fest.

by Rachel DeForrest Repinz

[Angie Pittman](#) and [Kyle Marshall Choreography](#) offer a skillfully layered evening of dance at [Out-FRONT! Fest.](#), curated by Pioneers Go East Collective and presented in partnership with the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM) and Judson Church. Using distinct aesthetic approaches, both choreographers center their works on themes of power, labor, resistance, and truth.

Opening the program with *Black Life Chord Changes*, a solo work developed over five years, Pittman brings a cool elegance to BAM's Fisher Hillman Studio. Pittman, simultaneously casual and deeply intentional, enters in silence. With energized palms they scan the space, waiting in the quiet before swiftly moving into the next moment. *No...* they utter between movements, first softly then expanding into soulful song, *I know I've been chaaaanged!* Pittman alternates in and out of sung and spoken text throughout the work, interweaving their live vocalizations with recorded sound scores. Their movement score brings together folk traditions of liturgical dance, soul line dance, and [Umfundalai](#), within a postmodern performance structure.

Black Life Chord Changes is separated into two distinct parts: "Day" and "Night." A recorded score of alien-like sounds and flashing lights transitions Pittman from the soft soulful undulation of "Day" into the stark intensity of "Night." Pittman re-enters with a long black cape, trading in the soft and supple sways of "Day" for a more rigid approach as they run through the space with their cape flowing behind.

"Night" unfolds into a story of vampire folklore. *Shadows and possibility...* Pittman remarks before jumping into a witty analysis of their self-proclaimed favorite vampire film, *Blade*. The story of *Blade* emerges clearly in this section of *Black Life Chord Changes*, bringing together themes of Black identity, resistance, and multiplicity. *Black labor is sacred and our defiance is holy*, Pittman declares as they put the final touches on an assemblage of silver, garlic, and wooden stake – the necessary tools for killing a vampire.

Kyle Marshall's NYC premiere of *Joan* delivers a bright and powerful Modern dance quartet set to a bold string score. *Joan* bursts into the studio with a bright momentum. Dancers Justin Daniels, Taína Lyons, Kellee Smith, and Sydney Worthy enter one by one, flowing between each side of the stage with a soft yet commanding athleticism. They transition seamlessly from dynamic, fast-paced grand allegro phrases to gentle, flowing undulations, showcasing a deep embodiment of Marshall's vocabulary.

Joan oscillates between duets, solos, and group work, held together by Julius Eastman's score "The Holy Presence of Joan d'Arc." Both Eastman's score and Marshall's choreography follow the story of Joan d'Arc, a female warrior who God calls to lead her army to victory against an occupying oppressor. Marshall reinterprets the story to remember the history of the Maroons, Seminoles, and other revolutionary peoples who fought for their freedom against slavery and colonial rule.

Pulling from ballet and modern techniques, Marshall skillfully blends more traditional phrase work with intentional moments of stillness and quotidian gesture. Dancers soar through the studio, pulsing in and out of the space with strength and an unmistakable softness. Moving effortlessly through a series of unison jumps, turns, and extensions, Daniels and Lyons stand out for their distinctive stage presence and enduring solo moments throughout the work.

In this split bill, Pittman and Marshall showcase the richness and diversity of contemporary dance in a program that is both thought-provoking and exciting. Still basking in the residual brightness of Marshall's work, audience members prepare to depart. As they exit, each one grabs a bulb of garlic off a nearby table – a playful and symbolic parting gift from Pittman's vampire-killing essentials, leaving a lasting, tangible memory of the evening.

[Out-FRONT! Fest.](#), A BAM and Judson Church production with support from JanArtsNYC and APAP, BAM Fisher Hillman Studio, Jan. 11, 2025.

Homepage Image Description: A dancer stands in a wide lunge with arms reaching wide and palms facing upward as if she is scooping the air above her. She wears a geometric red and grey leotard with black pants and a line of white face paint framing her chin. She is doused in a deep red light.

Article Page Image Description: Angie Pittman stands with her hands in her pockets looking downward. She wears black sunglasses with her locs tied into a high ponytail. Pittman is doused in a textured golden amber light.

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