

# thINKIngDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Johanna Austin

## Defying the Odds and Inspiring Possibility with Almanac Projects

by Caitlin Green

Almanac Projects' *Helpful Hints for Strength and Health for Busy People* thrills with awe-inspiring ambitions that strike a balance between several seemingly impractical pairings. The contradictory couplings in question include capitalism and wellness, aging and acrobatics, and identities that when paired, can be fundamentally controversial – Black woman and white man. While these intersections of gender and race cause lots of curiosity and discourse, in *Helpful Hints*, Rhonda Moore and Ben Grinberg play into identity politics to portray a mutually supportive, light-hearted, and humorous depiction of risky stunts that require them to give each other their undivided attention, communication, and trust.

Thirty-five year old Ben Grinberg is a white, Jewish, queer man and co-founding director of Almanac Projects. Sixty-nine year old Rhonda Moore, is a Black woman, adjunct professor at Temple University, and former founding member of Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. Together they demonstrate skill that flaunts their balance, flexibility, strength, and proficiency in partnership.

Supported by The William Penn Foundation, Grinberg and Moore have been awarded six-figure funding to develop their work into an impact project that engages elder BIPOC communities in movement and creation workshops. The workshops will culminate in 10 intergenerational duets between elder participants and independent artists who will co-create a performance piece from their personal definitions of strength and health. The full works are set to premiere in spring of 2027.

In The Louis Bluver Theatre at the Drake, Moore and Grinberg team up as “ease” and “pleasure” to remind us to take care of ourselves... but quickly remember, no one has time for that. Still they insist we try. Using a self-help booklet, they sarcastically offer ways we can multitask to make it happen, meanwhile demonstrating acro stunts that scream “don’t try this at home.” Their tone is commercial, presenting as salespeople pointing to the irony of self-care in the midst of late-stage capitalism.

Chanting “self control, will power, good judgment, quick thought,” as call and response, Grinberg and Moore work through several nail-biter lifts and stunts. They start, sometimes successful on the first attempt; “will power” one would say. Other times heavy breathing, squealing, releasing, resetting, “good judgment,” the other would mutter. Then grunting and squeezing their way to a successful lift on a second or third try, “self control.” “Quick thought” would initiate the start of a new trick. The evening is filled with a collection of high-risk and well-acclaimed acrobatics that Moore and Grinberg accomplish.

By the end of the performance, Grinberg and Moore successfully defy any odds against them. Their chemistry and expertise demonstrate skill and partnership that no age limit or stereotype could negate. This display of health and strength through partnership is a wonderful reminder of possibility. *Helpful Hints for Strength and Health for Busy People* is an example that beating the odds and defying expectations is within reach.

[Helpful Hints for Strength and Health for Busy People, Almanac Projects](#), The Louis Bluver Theatre, Sept. 23-27.

Homepage and Article Page Image Description: *Rhonda Moore stands with her arms outstretched in a low “V” position looking directly at the camera. Ben Grinberg stands behind her with his arms outstretched in a high “V” position looking at the camera. Grinberg wears a green sleeveless top, and Moore is wearing a long-sleeve black button-down under a light-brown jumpsuit. They stand in front of a gray backdrop.*

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