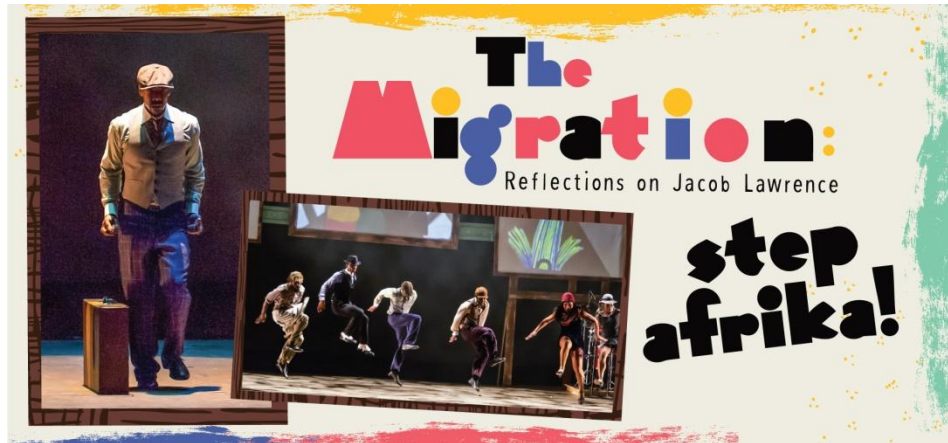


The New Victory Theater Presents
STEP AFRIKA! in



**THE MIGRATION:
REFLECTIONS ON JACOB LAWRENCE**

New York Premiere November 10 - 26

New York, NY (October 10, 2017)--A beat for every brushstroke, **Step Afrika!** brings to life **Jacob Lawrence's *The Migration Series***, the landmark collection of paintings about the exodus of millions of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North. Fusing body percussion and contemporary dance with live gospel, jazz and blues, **Step Afrika!** uses uniquely American art forms to tell this uniquely American story in ***The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence*** at The New Victory Theater from November 10 - 26, 2017.

Projecting more than 20 images from the epic 60 paintings by renowned American artist Jacob Lawrence, ***The Migration*** uses *The Migration Series* as both inspiration and backdrop, incorporating these bold, colorful artworks onto the stage. West African dance, South African gumboot and African American percussive traditions of patting juba, hambone and ring shouts give way to contemporary African American stepping. Sounds of live drumming, as in "Go West: circa 1890;" African American spiritual, as in "Wade Suite;" or American jazz, as in "Trane Suite;" accompany the powerfully percussive, full-length multimedia performance. A rich narrative of music, history and movement, ***The Migration*** is **Step Afrika!**'s masterpiece.

"***The Migration*** is much more than a performance for me—it is a percussive tribute to our ancestors who left one world behind with the hopes of creating a new one. My hope is that we never look at a migrant in the same way again for within each and every one of us is a migration

story,” says C. Brian Williams, founder and executive director of **Step Afrika!**, the world’s first professional company dedicated to the tradition of stepping.

Blending percussive dance styles practiced by historically African American fraternities and sororities with traditional African dance song and storytelling, **Step Afrika!** has earned three Washington, D.C. Mayor’s Arts Awards: Outstanding Contribution to Arts Education (2005), Innovation in the Arts (2008) and Excellence in an Artistic Discipline (2012). In February 2016, **Step Afrika!** performed at the White House for President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama’s Presidential Black History Month Reception. **Step Afrika!** is also featured in the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture with the world’s first interactive stepping exhibit.

Step Afrika!’s *The Migration* features images from The Phillips Collection’s acquisition of *The Migration Series*. Painted in 1941 by Jacob Lawrence, who was just 23 years-old at the time, *The Migration Series* is a collection of 60 paintings depicting the Great Migration. Upon the series’ completion, Lawrence received unprecedented national exposure when *Fortune* published 26 panels of the work and, later that year, he became the first black artist represented by a New York gallery. Interest in the collection was intense and in 1942 Lawrence broke barriers again when New York’s The Museum of Modern Art and Washington, D.C.’s Phillips Memorial Gallery (now The Phillips Collection) each agreed to purchase half of *the series*. MoMA bought the even-number paintings, and the Phillips Collection acquired the odd.

The Migration is directed by Jakari Sherman and features choreography by Makeda Abraham, Mfoniso Akpan, Aseelah Shareef and Delaunce Jackson for “Go West;” David Pleasant for “Drumfolk;” Charise Pinkston, Kirsten Ledford, LeeAnet Noble and Paul Woodruff for “Wade Suite;” Jakari Sherman, Mfoniso Akpan, Aseelah Allen and Kevin Marr for “Trane Suite;” and Jakari Sherman for “Chicago.”

The cast of *The Migration* includes Mfoniso Akpan, Christopher Brient, Dionne Eleby, Delaunce Jackson, Joe Murchison, Ronnique Murray, Anesia Sandifer, Jakari Sherman, Brittny Smith, Jordan Spry, Kara Wade, Ta’Quez Whitted and musician Lionel D. Lyles II. Harlan Penn is Scenic Designer and Kenann Quander is Costume Designer. Sound Design is by Patrick Calhoun, Light/Project Design is by John D. Alexander and the Sound Engineer is Cory Raynor.

About Step Afrika!

Founded in 1994 by C. Brian Williams, Step Afrika! is the first professional company dedicated to the tradition of stepping. It now ranks as one of the top ten African American dance companies in the United States. Step Afrika! promotes stepping as an educational tool for young people, focusing on teamwork, academic achievement and cross-cultural understanding. The Company reaches tens of thousands of Americans each year through a 50-city tour of colleges and theaters and performs globally as Washington, D.C.’s one and only Cultural Ambassador.

About Jacob Lawrence

Jacob Lawrence (September 7, 1917 - June 9, 2000) was celebrated for his work portraying African American life and the African American experience. He, like so many portrayed in *The Migration Series*, moved from the South to the North at an early age. Coming of age during the Harlem Renaissance, he honed his skills at Utopia House, a settlement where he met his mentor Charles Alston, and at the Harlem Art Workshop at the 135th Street New York Public Library. Under Alston’s guidance, the encouragement of sculptor Augusta Savage and the influence of Charles Seifert’s captivating lectures on pan-African history at the Harlem YMCA,

he shifted from painting scenes of Harlem life to painting African American history in 1937. Following his series on Toussaint L'Ouverture (1938), Frederick Douglass (1939) and Harriet Tubman (1940), Lawrence embarked on his most ambitious series, exploring the Great Migration. In addition to his work and achievements as an artist, Lawrence was also an art educator. He taught at Black Mountain College in North Carolina, the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine and the New School for Social Research in New York. In 1971, Lawrence became a professor of painting at the University of Washington in Seattle. He continued to draw and paint in preparation for another series of works up until his death in Seattle in 2000. Lawrence's works are in the permanent collections at Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art, The Whitney Museum, the Brooklyn Museum, The Phillips Collection, Philadelphia Museum of Art and Reynolda House Museum of Art, among others.

Learn more about *The Migration: Reflections On Jacob Lawrence* on the [New Victory website](http://NewVictory.org) at NewVictory.org.

Public Performance Schedule: 16 performances

Friday, November 10 at 7pm
Saturday, November 11 at 2pm / 7pm
Sunday, November 12 at 12pm / 5pm
Friday, November 17 at 7pm*
Saturday, November 18 at 2pm / 7pm
Sunday, November 19 at 12pm / 5pm
Friday, November 24 at 2pm / 7pm
Saturday, November 25 at 2pm / 7pm
Sunday, November 26 at 12pm / 5pm

*sign-interpreted performance

The Migration has a running time of 80 minutes with one intermission and is recommended for ages 7 and up.

Ticket Information

Tickets for *The Migration* start at \$16. Tickets are available online (NewVictory.org) and by phone (646.223.3010). Through October 8, the box office window will be at the **New 42nd Street Studios** (229 West 42nd Street), a half block west of The New Victory; please visit <http://www.newvictory.org/boxoffice> for operating hours. Beginning October 9, The New Victory Theater regular box office window at 209 West 42nd Street will be open Sunday and Monday from 11am-5pm and Tuesday through Saturday from 12pm-7pm.

About The New Victory Theater

The New Victory Theater brings kids to the arts and the arts to kids. Created in 1995 on iconic 42nd Street, this nonprofit theater has become a standard-bearer of quality performing arts for young audiences in the United States. Reflecting and serving the diverse city it calls home, The New Victory is committed to arts access for all students, teachers, kids, families and communities of New York to experience and engage with the exemplary international programming of theater, dance, circus, puppetry and more on its stages. A leader in arts education, youth employment and audience engagement, The New Victory Theater has been honored by the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities with the 2014 National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Award, by Americans for the Arts with a National Arts Education Award, and by the Drama Desk for "providing enchanting, sophisticated children's

theater that appeals to the child in all of us, and for nurturing a love of theater in young people."

About The New 42nd Street

Founded in 1990, The New 42nd Street is an independent nonprofit organization charged with the continuous cultural revival of 42nd Street between 7th and 8th Avenues, building on the foundation of seven historic theaters to make extraordinary performing arts and cultural engagement part of everyone's life. The New 42nd Street fulfills this purpose by ensuring the ongoing vibrancy of 42nd Street's historic theaters; supporting performing artists in the creation of their work at the New 42nd Street Studios and The Duke on 42nd Street; creating arts access and education at The New Victory Theater, New York's premier theater for kids and families; and through the New 42nd Street Youth Corps, its model youth development initiative, which pairs life skills workshops and mentorship with paid employment in the arts for NYC youth. Inspired by the city it serves, The New 42nd Street is committed to the transformational power of the arts.

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