

Tulane professor of dance to perform at festival in South Africa

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Performer Rachel Abrahams (left), and Tulane assistant professor of dance Leslie Scott (not pictured) will present a work Scott choreographed, “hymn + them,” at the JOMBA! International Dance Festival in Durban, South Africa, on Aug. 31. (Photo provided by Leslie Scott)

Tulane Assistant Professor of Dance Leslie Scott will perform her work, *hymn + them*, at the JOMBA! International Dance Festival. The performance will take place in Durban, South Africa, on Aug. 31.

This isn't the first time that Scott has flown across the globe for her work. As the founder of BODYART, a contemporary dance company, Scott has traveled the world organizing dance festivals, choreographing pieces and presenting her work. She has also led creative entrepreneurship workshops for artists and taught at leading universities and institutions across the country.

Scott's *hymn + them* is a multimedia, contemporary dance work that explores the identities of Midwestern American women in society. Using Dorothy's journey to Oz, Scott shares her own experiences growing up in Kansas and her expectations around traditionally gendered issues, including marriage, having children and maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

The piece originally began in 2018 as a research residency at Tulane University. For 10 days, Scott

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worked with set and costume designer Hannah Lax and performers Rachel Abrahams and Johnathan Bryant to create the piece. The focus of their research was the relationship between viewership, memory and the pairing of movement with sensory experiences. To incorporate sensory elements, Scott provided viewers with specific wines and foods during parts of the performance.

“There’s something about feeling it [food] with your hands when you’re watching a work and seeing how it connects later,” said Scott. “The idea that memory can be connected to both taste and smell — and involving those senses in performative acts — can have a lot of value.”

Since the piece’s premiere last November, *hymn + them* has continued to open doors for Scott. Alongside being invited to JOMBA!, Scott will perform in the Dominican Republic at EDANCO International Dance Festival this October, and she will teach contemporary dance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

Despite her busy schedule, Scott is already starting a new research residency. Beginning this month, she and Tulane Assistant Professor Monica Payne will work for 10 days developing their new piece, *Still as Oak*, which will explore themes of the “unburied” in the antebellum South. The goals of the residency are to investigate existing collaboration structures between co-directed dance and theater works and determine alternative ways in which they can be expanded.

“This [residency] is coming out of our desire to work together, to really find collaborative structures that make sense, and to make work that is speaking to the South,” said Scott. “We’re both so excited to be here, and we want to both contribute to the community and tell stories that resonate with that community.”

Scott and Payne’s residency will culminate in an open showing on Aug. 14 at Hotel Peter and Paul.