

Master koreografi  
Thomas Prestø

## DE MAN DEM



# DE MAN DEM

## **The title:**

DE MAN DEM is a term used in Caribbean patois that means “the men”. The definite form used here indicates and often adheres to the notion of “real men” and is exclusively used to communicate that you are speaking of Caribbean men specifically. In the Caribbean, the expression usually also carries with it associations of a certain “aura”, posturing, and even sexual prowess.

The notion is also a play on the English word “demand” and points to what is social, racially, and culturally demanded or expected of the Caribbean man. In Norwegian the title becomes three pronouns: De, man and dem. Pronouns being markers of identity and othering.

## **Socio-ritual space:**

DE MAN DEM draws heavily on Caribbean social and ritual form. The performance draws from these socio-ritual forms in order to shape rhythm in conversation, dialogue and movement. Through Caribbean dance forms, spoken word, interviews and rhythm the performance explores some expressions particularly associated with Caribbean masculinities as they play out on young Caribbean-Norwegian males.

DE MAN DEM builds on interviews/conversations with 45 black male youth, as well as more than 15 Caribbean male and 10 female elders, who have generously been a part of the process of bringing the identitywork to life.

In DE MAN DEM we amplify the critique directed at KHIO through the decolonial art placed on the school stairs in August 2019; seek to diversify and nuance the #metoo discourse; and need to fill the void of underrepresentation of students from Oslo East and People of Colour in the dance department, KHIO, and society at large.

We are trying to inject, if just for one performance, perspectives that are lacking. DE MAN DEM is all of this, more and so much less. We are performing ourselves and our brothers, into a space where we are missing. We are a grain of sand placed in an empty room, in hopes of filling it.





## **Dancers:**

### **Wolman Michelle Luciano**

Born in the Dominican Republic, Luciano moved to Norway at the age of one. He has lived in both Norwegian and Caribbean spaces and identifies as a Caribbean and as a Norwegian. Luciano is principle dancer and soloist in Tabanka Dance Ensemble as well as Head of Technique responsible for the technical training of new recruits. Luciano has been instrumental in building Tabankas ManHood project ([www.manhood.no](http://www.manhood.no)) and is central in training youth workers in this methodology.

### **Joel Ramirez**

Born in Norway to a Dominican mother and a Tanzanian/Somalian father Joel possesses one of the complex identities shared by many Caribbean males, as the Caribbean is a site for much ethnic mixing and hybrid identities. Joel himself identifies predominantly as Caribbean, Dominican and Norwegian. He is the Assistant Choreographer in Tabanka and is doing his own project linked to masculinity as well. Joel has been instrumental in building Tabankas ManHood project ([www.manhood.no](http://www.manhood.no)) and is central in training youth workers in this methodology.

### **Victor Olivares Pedersen**

Victor Olivares Pedersen is Norwegian and Cuban, and identifies as a Norwegian-Cuban male, navigating a Norwegian space, embracing his Caribbean identity, both in cultural heritage, identity and in the way he wishes to move, through dance and through the world.

Victor is currently in the third year of his Bachelor in Jazz at KHIO. Victor is also a member and solist in Tabanka Dance Ensemble, having taken a dual education also in Africana movement and the Talawa Technique ®.

Through the work with his company Tabanka Dance Ensemble, he explores and face issues of marginalized identities, body-memory, body-politics, and political and cultural agency relating to Black performances and immaterial cultures. He seeks to be a prolific artist who creates much-needed multi-diasporic conversations on the prejudiced mechanisms of representation and segmentation of cultures.

## **The Movement Material**

The performance will kinaesthetically build on the following elements: the Talawa Technique - a dance technique for African and Caribbean kinesthetic movement, and Caribbean retentions of Yoruba and BaKongo dance and Philo-Mythological traditions, in combination with an exploration of the body language used by the Caribbean dancers when engaging with other Caribbean males in Norway.

Specific attention will be given to traditional rhythmic play and treatment of rhythm as oral tradition and/or “text”. In the creation process, to dance rhythmically will be treated as dancing lyrically. We will seek to use rhythm specifically as an artistic tool in a way not much present in the Norwegian arts field. Polyrhythmic approach to body, representation, and movement will be dominant in the performance.

## **The Choreographer**

Thomas “Talawa” Prestø is the founder and artistic director of Tabanka African & Caribbean Peoples Dance Ensemble. The company and its associated movement technique, the Talawa Technique, has been 21 years in the making. Thomas draws from African and Caribbean cultural traditions of community and of art belonging to the community. In his perspective, Tabanka is the vessel, receptacle, and owner of his art and artistic practice. In his mind there is no real distinction between himself as an artist and the community that he creates for, and within. This affects how he creates, how he views himself, and also how he engages with the Oslo National Academy of the Arts master in choreography program. This is also linked to Thomas’ cultural upbringing and Caribbean deep cultural entry into the danced arts.

## **Intergenerational voices (video)**

Akhenaton de Leon

Founder and CEO of Organisasjonen mot Offentlig Diskriminering.

Peer-Emil Charles-Harris

Dentist and owner of Bogstadveien Tannlegesenter. Thomas Prestø uncle.



## Contributors

Choreography and Artistic Direction: Thomas Prestø

Creating Dancers and interpreters: Joel Ramirez, Victor Olivares Pedersen, Wolman Michelle Luciano

External mentor: Funmi Adewole

External eye: Deise Nunes

Costume: Mo9k

Lighting design: Agnethe Tellefsen, William Østby

KHiO technical staff: Kjetil Skåret, Ellen Christiansen, Olaf Stangeland, Håvard Hiller, Signe Vasshus, Marius Arne Larsen, Ragnar Berntsson

Foto: Stephen Hutton, Sigrun Drivdal Johnsen

**Time:** Thursday 4th April 19:15  
Friday 5th April 12:15  
Friday 5th April 17:00  
Monday 8th April 18:15

Duration about 1 hour

**Place:** Loftet 2

*Photographing or other recordings during the performance is not allowed.  
Ticket booking [www.khio.no](http://www.khio.no). Free admission.*

**Academy of Dance**

Head of the Master's programme in Choreography: Per Roar  
Dean: Suzanne Bjørneboe

**Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo**

Fossveien 24  
0551 Oslo  
[www.khio.no](http://www.khio.no)