



# Ethiocolor

Fri, Sep 29, 2023 at 8 pm  
The Nimoy

**CENTER  
FOR THE ART OF  
PERFORMANCE  
UCLA**

# WELCOME

## TO THE 2023-24 SEASON

UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) is dedicated to the advancement of the contemporary performing arts in all disciplines — dance, music, spoken word and theater, as well as emerging digital, collaborative and cross cultural platforms — by leading artists from around the globe.

Our mission aligns with UCLA's mission of education, research and civic engagement by providing cultural and experiential programs that provoke inquiry and facilitate connection and creativity.

**[cap.ucla.edu](http://cap.ucla.edu)**




# CAP UCLA'S new home for live performance

It's an honor and a privilege to welcome you to CAP UCLA's stunning new home for the performing arts: the UCLA Nimoy Theater. Through our diverse programs, and by providing vital opportunities for artists and partner organizations to develop contemporary work, The Nimoy is poised to make a lasting contribution to the performing arts, UCLA and our Los Angeles communities.

The Nimoy's inaugural season launches with an interdisciplinary array of projects by influential and groundbreaking local, national and international artists. Together they will share their unique perspectives and crucial visions, creating an opportunity for our audiences to see the world in different and extraordinary ways.

This is your invitation to experience the beauty of sitting in a dark theater, among strangers or loved ones illuminated by the possibilities of the imagination. In this shared space, through the power of the arts, our ideas are challenged and our horizons are broadened — we are transformed.

I look forward to seeing you at The Nimoy!



Edgar Miramontes

*Executive and Artistic Director*







Photo by Miki Mac

**CAP UCLA Presents**

# **Ethiocolor**

**Fri, Sep 29, 2023 at 8 pm**  
**The Nimoy**

**Program duration: 75 minutes**

**No intermission**

**Please join us for a discussion with the artists after the performance**



Ethiocolor is part of Center Stage, a public diplomacy initiative of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs with funding provided by the U.S. Government, administered by the New England Foundation for the Arts in cooperation with the U.S. Regional Arts Organizations. General management is provided by Lisa Booth Management, Inc.

**Melaku Belay:** Artistic Director, choreographer, dancer

**Wude Tesfaw:** Vocals

**Asnake Gebreyes:** Vocals

**Elias Ahmed:** Vocals

**Habtamu Yeshambel:** Masenqo & Vocals

**Sentayehu Tadesse:** Krar

**Robel Solomon:** Bass Krar / Vocals

**Meselu Abebaye:** Kebero / Percussion

**Emebet Woldetsdik:** Dancer

## **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

### **GET UP, MAKE PEACE: MELAKU BELAY AND ETHIOCOLOR PUT GROUND-SHAKING ETHIOPIAN TRADITIONS ON THE MAP**

A central figure in Ethiopian arts, Melaku and his ensemble are dedicated to traditional instruments and dances come to the U.S. to transfix and transform with seismic live performances.

They call Ethiocolor founder and leader Melaku Belay a “walking earthquake.” By sheer force of will, turning shimmying shoulders into blazing ecstasy, he’s helped put Ethiopia’s 2000-year-old Azmari culture on the world map. The winner of a long list of international accolades, the most prominent contemporary interpreter of Ethiopia’s eskista, a rhythmic, shoulder-shimmying dance, Melaku draws tens of thousands to Fendika, the independent arts center he founded in Addis Ababa, every year.

It’s easy to see why: It’s impossible to tear yourself away once Belay leaps into motion, once Ethiocolor lays down sophisticated yet instantly intoxicating grooves that make traditional instruments (krar, bass krar, masenko, kebero drums) hit as hard as any funk band. It’s the palpable joy in

every second, when it's clear everyone on stage and around it are exactly where they want to be.

There's a powerful reason behind the tranced-out sets and packed rooms. Ethiocolor uses traditions to heal, to re-engage with some of Ethiopia's deep roots in fractious times. That's why Melaku is adamant that these dance and music forms cannot be allowed to die out. As he puts it, "When I'm sad or missing justice, I heal myself with dance and music. I want people to know about the best things we can give to the world. The world only knows about hunger and war here. But I love my country and I understand how much we have, in our history and our modern culture."

Ethiocolor has become a sought-after collaboration partner, and groups like Debo Band and Holland's post-punk legends The Ex have clamored to record and tour with them. Thanks to these international connections, the group has performed everywhere from Dubai to Copenhagen. Melaku has even been honored as a TED Fellow in 2022. Yet none of this reduces the core calling Melaku and Ethiocolor feel in their work: to bridge, to heal, and to fan the embers of neglected cultural traditions into full-on flames.

"The rhythmic virtuosity of Mr. Melaku was often astounding ... Simply to see him sway his body to the music was a marvel: the angle of his out-held elbows, the pliancy of his spine, the rhythmic point of those shoulders all made their sensuous contributions. A happily superlative artist." Alastair McCaulay, *New York Times*

## **LIFE-SAVING DANCE**

Melaku's enlightened advocacy and international reputation belie his extremely humble beginnings. Melaku was homeless

as a child. He made eskista his solace, a path through difficult circumstances. The fast-paced, shoulder-shaking wonder of a dance is integral to religious festivals and other major events. As Melaku danced at these gatherings, recounted in his recent TED Talk, he dreamed of a day when he could share dances like eskista with people everywhere.

That dream began to materialize in 2009, when Melaku founded his own group and cultural center under the umbrella of Fendika as a center for Azmari culture and the arts. From the start, he was determined to work differently than many of the other ensembles around him. Established dance companies regularly fired female dancers the moment they got pregnant or underpaid older dancers, even if still in the prime of their artistic abilities. Female performers faced frequent harassment.

Melaku was determined to do something else. Fendika pays performers regular salaries and programs Azmari performances all year round. And he recruits and guides others like him whose working-class or poor roots might have precluded a career in the arts. “Some of the performers started working as cleaners and waiters, then became pros. I did the same thing,” Melaku reflects. “Now they are going to the U.S. I’ve helped shape them and I’m proud of it.”

## **THE FIGHT FOR TRADITION**

Dance is everywhere in Ethiopia, Melaku notes, in every community among the 80 ethnic groups in the country. But it’s radically underappreciated: “Dance is never accepted as art in Ethiopia,” Melaku opines. “There’s no platform to protect the dance traditions. Everything has to be done independently, and

there is zero support from the government. I got really angry about that. I decided to start fighting for art.”

Part of this fight meant learning just what was out there and why people danced. Melaku knew he needed to experience this for himself. He set out on long journeys through rural Ethiopia, searching high and low for opportunities to find and absorb new dance forms.

This discovery process often took the form of a dialog with traditional dancers he met on his travels. “I danced my dance, but then I’d see one of them doing a dance and I’d ask, why are you dancing?” he recalls. “I love the countryside people. They are very generous and welcoming. It’s natural for them to give without expectation. They’d say, ‘Oh, it’s for this holiday or celebration. We do this ceremony with dancing, dance this way, with our hips and shoulders.’ I would interview them about what their dances and songs meant. Dances were about everything: hunting and the hero, about farming, about so many things I found! In my mind, I’m cooking all this, researching.”

This research turns into living, breathing music and dance. Melaku and Ethiocolor will improvise around Oromo dances, alternating between rhythmic trembling and high-stepping leaps. They skip and shimmy at effusive, breakneck speed in dances from the Gurage. The community sources become fuel for a non-stop creative fire, one sometimes carefully fed, sometimes stoked high in the moment. Even the least rhythmically inclined viewer may struggle to sit still in the face of Ethiocolor’s gleeful intensity.

## **GET UP AND MAKE PEACE**

Melaku loves dance of all kinds – he often lays down DJ sets to get people on the floor – but he wants to make dance that



strikes at the soul. “Many contemporary dance pieces are beautiful concerts where you sit for one hour. That’s good but that’s not what we do. We love to move people, to get them to stand up and go for it,” he explains. “You need to mesh the soul and the movement. When you feel the music, you can find everything inside. Everything you can find through the voice, beat, instrument, movement, costume design. You can take it everywhere and exchange with people. It can mix with anything, any energy.”

Melaku sees this as the antidote to division, strife, and violence—or at least part of it. Dance and music are valuable tools to bind wounds and close divisions in fractious times. “As much as I can, I want to heal, to build a bridge, person to person,” he states. “I want to make peace with art, not fight with it. To make our world peaceful, we need to make peace with art.”

Its biggest foray into America to date, Ethiocolor is touring the U.S. as part of Center Stage, the cultural exchange program that has connected performing artists from abroad with American communities since 2012. Six other music, theater, and dance ensembles from South Africa, Ethiopia, and the Philippines will also make independent tours or hold in-depth residencies with the program, promoting global ties and engaging with audiences on stage, off stage and online. Visit [centerstageus.org](http://centerstageus.org) for more information.



Photo by Kerstin Ehrnlund



# Edgar Arceneaux

*Boney Manilli*

Oct 5 - 7 at 8 pm  
REDCAT

Written and directed by multimedia artist Edgar Arceneaux, *Boney Manilli* is a dark musical comedy on aging, recovering the past, confronting family trauma and learning to let go. The work centers on a retired singer/actress experiencing dementia and her failed playwright son unable to finish his play about Milli Vanilli.

**“To tell a story is one thing, but to paint the picture of identity and infamy within its true reality is Arceneaux’s artistry at its best.” – *Flaunt***

[cap.ucla.edu/boney-manilli](http://cap.ucla.edu/boney-manilli)



# UCLA NIMOY THEATER

CAP UCLA has a new home for live performance  
in Westwood!

Located near the UCLA campus on Westwood Boulevard,  
The Nimoy is a reimagining of the historic Crest Theatre as a  
flexible, state-of-the-art performance space.

This dynamic and intimately scaled venue immerses audiences  
in a profoundly engaging experience of live performance —  
while providing contemporary performing artists from Los  
Angeles and around the world expanded opportunities to  
develop and present new work.

**[cap.ucla.edu/nimoy](http://cap.ucla.edu/nimoy)**



# LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We at UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance acknowledge the Gabrielino/Tongva peoples as the traditional land caretakers of Tovaangar (the Los Angeles basin and South Channel Islands).

As a land grant institution, we pay our respects to the Ancestors (Honuukvetam), Elders (Ahihirom), and relatives/relations (Eyoohinkem) past, present and emerging.

# There is no room for racism, intolerance, or inequity.

## Anywhere

Not on our stages, in our offices, on our loading docks, in the box office lines, or on the dance floor.

## With anyone

Not with our staff, crew, artists, volunteers, ushers, audiences or fans.

We uphold and embrace principles of antiracism, equity, diversity and **AUTHENTIC** inclusion as integral to our mission.

We must **EMPOWER** the historically underrepresented.

We must **UPLIFT** excluded voices.

We must **RESIST** structural racism.

We will **COMMIT** fiercely to our responsibility to observe, absorb, consider, contemplate, endure, share and engage in this change.

We **STAND AGAINST** all forms of discrimination.

We will **STRIVE** to make our organization more equitable and inclusive.

As part of UCLA's School of Art & Architecture (SOAA), we – UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance (CAP UCLA) and Theater Management Services (TMS) – are committed to connecting and creating space for the arts and for all communities.

We acknowledge our organizations' histories as being predominantly white institutions. We are facing uncomfortable truths about systemic racism as we work to make the deep changes necessary to transform the organizational dynamics in our work culture and business practices and dismantle existing oppressive structures. We know there will be shortcomings, which we will face head on. We commit to continually addressing and adapting to changes as they arise. It is only in an improved, supportive work environment that everyone can be fully present, and respected as their true authentic selves.

*This statement was drafted by a committee of staff members from both the Center for the Art of Performance and Theater Management Services, from a variety of backgrounds, viewpoints and perspectives.*

Together we stand with UCLA's School of Art and Architecture's EDI statement.



# CAP UCLA COUNCIL LEADERSHIP

## CAP UCLA Executive Producer Council

The Executive Producer Council is CAP UCLA's philanthropic leadership group, which develops and contributes resources vital to CAP UCLA's programming and mission. The Council champions the creative development and presentation of live programs and public dialogue with contemporary performing artists by providing direct support for CAP UCLA's annual programming. The Council is engaged in dialogue about the artistic and curatorial practices that inform annual programs, long-term initiatives and collaborative planning efforts which stand at the heart of CAP UCLA's mission and public purpose.

## Design for Sharing (DFS) Council

The Design for Sharing Council is a group of dedicated supporters whose efforts help to resource the K-12 arts education programs of DFS.

[cap.ucla.edu/councils](https://cap.ucla.edu/councils)







## **Ann Carlson and inkBoat**

***These Are the Ones We Fell Among***

**Sat, Oct 7 at 8 pm**

**Sun, Oct 8 at 3 pm**

**The Nimoy**

Interdisciplinary artist Ann Carlson has created a duet inspired by the movements, myths, and metaphors of our non-human cousins faced with extinction. Performed by experimental dance and theater company inkBoat, this work juxtaposes elegance, humor, and grace with collective loss on our planet.

**“A captivating, haunting, and bizarre dreamscape – like Dr. Seuss meets David Lynch on the last days of a bankrupt circus.” – choreographer Sheldon B. Smith**

[cap.ucla.edu/ann-carlson](http://cap.ucla.edu/ann-carlson)

# CAP UCLA STAFF

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Production Manager: Bozkurt "Bozzy" Karasu  
Artist Liaison Manager: Zarina Rico Production Associate  
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Student Arts Coordinator: Theo Bonner-Perkins

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Audio/Video Supervisor: John Coleman  
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## Royce Hall Custodial

Custodian Supervisor: Ranoya Exum  
Custodian Lead: Delshena Murphy  
Custodian Lead: Montrell Calloway

## CAP UCLA Administrative Offices

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## General Questions

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(please allow 48 hours for a response)

## UCLA Central Ticket Office

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## Press Inquiries

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## Development Office

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[roycehall.org](http://roycehall.org)

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**UCLA's Center for the Art of Performance gratefully acknowledges our donors, sponsors and members whose gifts directly support the vitality of contemporary performing arts. Thank you!**

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[cap.ucla.edu/give-nimoy](https://cap.ucla.edu/give-nimoy)



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Become a member and support CAP UCLA's ability to engage, challenge, and captivate diverse audiences through the shared experience of extraordinary artistry and the exchange of ideas.

As a CAP UCLA member, we invite you to deepen your relationship with artists and ideas by attending special events and participating in activities with other arts enthusiasts, support the development of bold new work and help bolster contemporary performing arts in Los Angeles. And, enjoy priority access to discounted tickets and year-round savings from our dining, retail, and museum partners

**Become a member**  
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