



For Immediate Release  
October 15, 2020

## **PEAK PERFORMANCES LAUNCHES REIMAGINED *PEAK JOURNAL* IN A VIRTUAL, MULTIMEDIA FORMAT**

***PEAK Journal* Takes on a New Form in PEAK's Move Online, Opening the Publication up to More Experiential and Exploratory Pieces, Beginning with Works from Jeanine Durning, Simone Forti, and Rashaun Mitchell**



*Rashaun Mitchell*

**PEAK Performances** today launches the reimagined version of its innovative *PEAK Journal* as an [online, multimedia publication](#). For four years, the journal has thoughtfully responded to themes arising in PEAK's seasons at the **Alexander Kasser Theater at Montclair State University**, considering and expanding the discussions the live works create—and sparking entirely new ones. As this pandemic era has necessitated innovation and hybridity to keep performance alive, in the absence of a season *per se*, *PEAK Journal* has likewise been given a new form to best reach audiences, deepening and extending the crucial, stirring conversations performance evokes. Moving online and to longer-form commissions creates room for more experiential forms, with artists able to incorporate varied media in their work.

The first three works published in the online journal are by acclaimed dance artists **Jeanine Durning** ("[To Return: a difficult transcendence](#)"), **Simone Forti** ("[Poems from the Lockdown](#)"), and **Rashaun Mitchell** ("[A Score for Survival While Black](#)"). Their writing, here, interacts—and is brought into new dimensions—with media including photography, video, audio, and illustrations by the authors.

In developing ideas with artists for the pieces that would launch the online journal, **Editor Claudia La Rocco** kept coming back to three questions, given a particular urgency amidst this rapidly morphing moment of disease and political horror—as well as momentous social uprising and reckoning. *What is necessary to say now? What shouldn't wait? Whose voices do we feel the need to hear?* These were paired with the desire, expressed to the first three artists La Rocco commissioned for the online journal, to create "something experiential, something felt." [A note from La Rocco](#) introducing the reimagined publication begins, "It has fast become a cliché in 2020 to say that last year, last month, last week, yesterday feel already like another lifetime, another world. I suppose this is always the case, but it seems inescapable now: no avoiding how changeable, how tenuous, this and we all are...What do I remember of who and where I was in early May, when I sent invitations out to Jeanine, Rashaun, and Simone? I was wanting something made of time and space, something embodied ... perhaps this is why the first people I thought of were dance artists."

La Rocco describes typically beginning the process of creating the *PEAK Journal* with a "free-ranging conversation" with **Executive Director of Arts + Cultural Programming/PEAK Performances Jedediah Wheeler**, discussing ideas and questions underlying his live programming decisions—a loose back-and-forth that yields new ideas and invitations from there. This time, their conversation moved towards working in a form that responds to the uncertainties of when live audiences would return to the theaters (including the Kasser)—a form that itself is suffused with elements of performance.

La Rocco says, "Jed has always been adamant that my editorial approach not involve a 1:1 relationship between the programming and the journal, but that the connections be more tangential and oblique, which is right up my alley." The journal's new virtual home has led these conversations to evolve in even more fluid directions. Adds La Rocco, "Maybe because I am a writer who grew up in the performing arts, I have long been interested in the idea of page as stage. I am always looking to be held by art, no matter the form: to be in a world, an experience, a mystery, a consciousness. Moving the journal online has allowed us to think about media components that haven't been possible in previous years."

## **ABOUT THE EDITORS**

### **Claudia La Rocco (Editor)**

Claudia La Rocco's work explores hybridity and improvisation, moving between poetry, prose, and performance. Her books include the selected writings *The Best Most Useless Dress* (Badlands Unlimited), *the chapbook I am trying to do the assignment* ([2nd Floor Projects]), and the novel *petit cadeau* (published in print, digital, and live editions by The Chocolate Factory theater). With musician/composer Phillip Greenlief she is *animals & giraffes*, an experiment in multidisciplinary improvisation that has released the albums *July* (Edgetone Records) and *Landlocked Beach* (with Wobbly; Creative Sources). She edited *I Don't Poem: An Anthology of Painters* (Off the Park Press) and *Dancers, Buildings and People in the Streets*, the catalog for Danspace Project's PLATFORM 2015, for which she was guest artist curator. She has been a columnist for *Artforum*, a cultural critic for WNYC New York Public Radio, and from 2005-2015 was a critic and reporter for *The New York Times*; her writings have been widely anthologized, including in *Imagined Theatres: Writing for a theoretical stage* (Daniel Sack, ed. Routledge) and *On Value* (Ralph Lemon, ed. Triple Canopy). La Rocco has received grants and residencies from such organizations as the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Creative Capital/Warhol Foundation, and Headlands Center for the Arts. She is editorial director of Open Space, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's live and online commissioning platform, and teaches writing at the University of the Arts' Dance MFA program. Her *Quartet* is forthcoming from Ugly Duckling Presse's 2020 Pamphlet Series, and she is at work on her second novel, *The Ongoing Sea*.

### **David DeWitt (Senior Editor)**

David DeWitt spent almost 20 years as an editor at *The New York Times*, including many years working on the Arts desk handling articles in dance, theater, music, and other forms. He also wrote film, theater, and television reviews for the paper and last year taught creative nonfiction through Syracuse University. David is a member of the Screen Actor's Guild and Actors Equity.

## **ABOUT PEAK PERFORMANCES**

PEAK Performances is a program of the Office of Arts + Cultural Programming at Montclair State University and has been honored by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts with previous Arts Citation of Excellence and Designation of Major Impact. Programs in this season are made possible in part by the Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund, PEAK Patrons, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Aaron Copland Fund for Music.

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