

**PURPLE MOON DANCE PROJECT**

*Jill Togawa, Artistic Director*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Purple Moon Dance Project presents**  
***TransMissions -***  
***origins, re/generations & community –***

**Two evenings of dance & music celebrating ancestral wisdom & spirit:**  
**May 26<sup>th</sup> & May 27<sup>th</sup> -**

On May 26th and May 27<sup>th</sup>, the **Purple Moon Dance Project**, under the leadership of **Jill Togawa**, Artistic Director, will present “***TransMissions - origins, re/generations & community***” at the Zeum Theatre, Yerba Buena Gardens, located at 221 4<sup>th</sup> St. at Howard, San Francisco, California. The two evenings of dance, music and art celebrating ancestral wisdom & spirit will include three premieres: a solo work by **Jill Togawa** (*A Tribute to Ojii-chan Saburo Sugita*) with set art piece by **Ellen Reiko Bepp**; a new collaboration by **Togawa and Frances Sedayao** (*Questions of Opening to Life*); and a new work by **Arisika Razak and the Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company** (*We are the Ones*), with special guest vocalist, **Melanie DeMore**. The program will also include Mexica-Aztec ceremonial dance pieces performed by four generations of **Danza Xitlalli** performers; selected works by the **Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company**; and music by **Francis Wong** and **Jimmy Biala**, with Francis’ daughter, **Megumi Hatta-Wong** and son, **Kenjo Hatta-Wong**. Light design for the production will be provided by **Stephanie Johnson**. The **Purple Moon Annual Silent Auction** will take place on both evenings. A reception will follow the Friday show. Funding support provided by: San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco Grants for the Arts/Hotel Tax Fund, Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Zellerbach Family Fund and the Purple Moon Galaxy. Tickets: \$23 Door/ \$15 Advance/ \$12 Group (10 or more in advance). Student Rate: \$12 Door (with ID) Online tickets at [www.manja.org](http://www.manja.org). For information, call (415) 552-1105 or visit [www.purplemoondance.org](http://www.purplemoondance.org).

**About the Program:**

“*TransMissions – origins, re/generations & community*” will be an evening of dance & music celebrating the amazing ways that “we are all connected to our present and to each other through our ancestors,” explains Purple Moon Dance Project’s Artistic Director, Jill Togawa. “Sometimes these connections are direct and obvious, but often they may seem non-existent until we look beyond our surface differences. Knowing where we come from, we see that we do not live our lives in isolation. We see that we are much more than our personal experiences,” Togawa continues. These concepts naturally connect and enliven the wide ranging cultural offerings for the evening.

Through solo, collaborative, traditional, multi-generational and cross-cultural works, *TransMissions* will honor the interplay of ancestral wisdom and spirit: affirming and rediscovering origins; re/generating and reinventing traditions; building and sustaining strong communities:

**\* Premiere: Solo piece by Jill Togawa – “A Tribute to Ojii-chan Saburo Sugita: grandfather/painter/singer/musician/activist,”** with set art piece by **Ellen Reiko Bepp**; – Togawa’s homage to her grandfather, a second generation Japanese American whose legacy as an artist, and community/cultural activist inspired many of his family members, including his daughter, redress leader

Lillian Nakano; and his grandson, the late Glenn Horiuchi (musician/composer). Sugita was a pioneer in promoting the *nagauta* style of Japanese shamisen music in Hawaii. He was interned at Heart Mountain and Jerome, two American concentration camps during World War II.

**\* Premiere: Jill Togawa and Frances Sedayao – “Questions of Opening to Life”** As two long-time Purple Moon artists, Sedayao and Togawa collaborate on this work, exploring the shifting dynamics and patterns of the mentor/mentee relationship, the role of teacher, elder, spiritual guide, student of/for life, and as giver/receiver of life’s wisdom and jubilation.

**\* Premiere: Arisika Razak with Destiny Arts Youth Performing Company. Special guest vocalist: Melanie DeMore.** “We are the Ones,” a collaborative work by Razak and the 17- member teen ensemble, celebrates history, spirit and destiny, integrating ancestral hopes and dreams with today’s visions for liberation. The Company will also perform “Tomorrow is Today,” with poetry by Rhummanee Hang; and “Black Bird,” (solo).

**\* Danza Xitlalli Mexica Azteca Dance Group** Continuing its mission to preserve and disseminate the rich spiritual, cultural and artistic heritage of the Mexica people from Mexico, four generations of dancers will perform traditional ceremonial pieces including: A *copal* (incense) offering to the four directions, with the music of the *huehueltl* (standing wooden drum), and *ateocoli* (conch shell) to unite all the performers and the audience, asking permission from our ancestors for guidance and blessings; *Iztacuauhtli*, the white eagle dance for community vision; and *Xiutecutli*, the fire dance – to maintain the fire in our hearts to continue traditions.

**\* Musical works by Francis Wong (flute/sax) & Jimmy Biala (percussion), with Francis’ daughter: Megumi Hatta-Wong (clarinet) & son, Kenjo Hatta-Wong (coronet).** “From the Americas & Beyond” Collaborative works integrating jazz, Latin and Asian musical traditions, tracing back to stories and memories of Shanghai, Bahia, Pangasinan, Havana and more. An exploration of cultural roots -- remembering and recreating for the next generation -- represented by Megumi, 11 years old, and Kenjo, 8 years old -- to carry on the spirit.

### Artist Bios

**Jill Emiko Togawa**, Artistic Director of PMDP, is a Japanese American Yonsei (fourth generation Japanese American, born and raised in Honolulu. She received a B.A. in Dance from the University of Hawai’i, is a certified teacher of the Alexander Technique and as been working for almost thirty years, as a dancer and choreographer in New York, Oklahoma, the Bay Area and Hawaii. Her early formal training includes Ballet and Modern (Graham, Limon, Cunningham). As she began to explore the integration of her different cultural backgrounds she returned to her practice and study of Hula, and has also trained in Middle Eastern, Butoh, Indonesian and Japanese folk dance. Prior to founding Purple Moon, she was the Assistant Artistic Director of Unbound Spirit, the resident company of Asian American Dance Performances in San Francisco. Independently, her work has been presented by BRAVA! for Women in the Arts; by jazz composer Glenn Horiuchi, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Japanese American internment; Unbound Spirit; and the SF Lesbian and Gay Chorus. As founder and artistic director of Purple Moon Dance Project, Togawa’s work has been presented nationally, in Canada and Asia. The New York Times described Ms. Togawa’s work as “radiant” and “filled with a quiet joy.” The Los Angeles Times described her work as “creating a lush sensuality.” Togawa is also a dedicated educator, a three time recipient of Error! Bookmark Not Defined - Artist in the Communities Awards; and was selected by the Gaea Foundation for a Sea Change Residency Award for her work combining art and activism. She currently directs PMDP’s community arts and health program, Healing Body/Movement for women living with life threatening illnesses.

**Purple Moon Dance Project** was founded in 1992 by Artistic Director, Jill Togawa. Through collaboration between women artists from diverse disciplines and cultural backgrounds, and the creation of work which uniquely reflects the experience of lesbians and women of color PMDP fosters a greater appreciation of American cultural diversity. Through its performance and educational activities in the San Francisco Bay Area, nationally and internationally, Purple Moon's vision is to contribute to social change, peace and healing in our society through the art of dance.

**Frances Gay Teves Sedayao** (Dancer/PMDP Core Artist) is a 27 year old native of the Philippine Islands and began her dance and martial arts training at CSU Hayward in 1996. She has danced and performed since throughout the Bay Area, studied at the Alvin Ailey School in NYC, and toured locally and nationally with Pilipino composer and recording artist, Joey Ayala and Pearl Ubungen Dancers and Musicians. She has also worked with NUBA Dance Theatre, Dandelion Dancetheater, Veronica Combs' Liquid Fire Project, Anne Bluethenthal, Laura Ellis, Robert Henry Johnson, Paufve Dance, Nina Haft & Company, Facing East Dance & Music, among others.

**Danza Xitlalli** is a Mexica-Aztec ceremonial dance group formed in 1981 by Capitana Generala Macuilxochitl Cruz-Chavez from the city of Ixmiquilpan, in the Mexican state of Hidalgo. The group's purpose is to preserve and disseminate the rich spiritual, cultural and artistic heritage of the Mexica people from México. The group consists of 35-40 women, men and children from San Francisco and other Bay Area cities. They are joined periodically during the year by their Jefe General, Don Pedro Rodríguez, originally from the city of Celaya, in the state of Guanajuato. Don Pedro has been living this dance tradition for over 50 years and is a descendant of the group founded in 1906 by the late Jefe General Gabriel Osorio.

**Arisika Razak** (Dancer/PMDP Core Artist) is a 56 year old African-American midwife, healer, performance artist and educator. Her work is equally based in the paradigm of women's empowerment that arises out of female embodiment, and her 30 year study of diverse spiritual systems from around the world. She dedicates her work to reclaiming the power and sacredness of the female body, and to bringing to dance the power of Spirit. Ms. Razak has performed nationally and internationally, as a solo dancer, choreographer and guest lecturer, including the National

Women's Music Festival; Women of Power Conference, Switzerland; Atlanta Earth Expo; West Coast Lesbian Festival, and breast cancer and midwifery conferences throughout the U.S. Her work is featured in the films: "Place of Rage" and "Fire Eyes," and she currently directs the Integrated Health Studies Program at the California Institute of Integral Studies.

**Destiny Arts Youth Performance Company** is a multicultural group of teens who create original performance art pieces that combine hip-hop, modern, and aerial dance, theater, martial arts, song and rap. The productions are a dynamic, creative forum for the young people to express their fears, hopes and strategies for confronting challenging personal and social issues. The company has performed all over the Bay Area since 1993, for over 20,000 Bay Area audience members and is a program of the Oakland-based Destiny Arts Center, which seeks to create a culture of peace through movement arts education and violence prevention training for children and youth. The Performance group is directed by Sarah Crowell, Executive Director of Destiny Arts, recipient of nine California Arts Council Artist-in-Residency grants. Crowell has taught dance, theater, youth leadership, meditation and choreography in Bay Area schools since 1990. [www.destinyarts.org](http://www.destinyarts.org)

**Melanie DeMore**, guest vocalist, is a core member of Linda Tillery's renowned Cultural Heritage Choir (CHC) since its inception in 1992. The Choir's repertoire includes spirituals, work songs and slave songs, what Tillery has called "survival music," reconceptualized for contemporary education and inspiration. In addition to songs and chants, delivered through such stylistic forms as call-and-

response, multi-layered harmonies, and repetitive verse, the *CHC* repertoire includes intoned sermons, folk tales, polyrhythmic percussion, and dance.

**Francis Wong** (saxophone/flute/composer) has been performing, composing and arranging music for the past 20 years. He has been a Meet the Composer New Resident; a California Arts Council Artist in Residence) at the Donaldina Cameron House; and is currently an artist in residency with Gen Taiko. He leads the ensemble Gathering of Ancestors and is a frequent collaborator with musicians Tatsu Aoki, William Roper, Jon Jang, and poet Genny Lim. As a saxophonist, he is recognized as carrying on the legacy of that instrument in American music, owing a particular debt to the work of John Coltrane, Sonny Rollins and the contemporary master, David Murray. In addition to the African American masters, he is inspired by the late Native American saxophonist Jim Pepper and the respected Persian American saxophonist and scholar Hafez Modirzadeh. San Francisco Examiner critic Philip Elwood has named Wong "...among the great saxophonists of his generation." Francis' 11-year old daughter, **Megumi Hatta-Wong** (clarinet) and 8-year old son, **Kenjo Hatta-Wong** (coronet) have been pursuing their instruments under the guidance of their dad. They have performed at various community festivals.

**Jimmy Biala** – Percussionist, son of Hermie and Gloria Biala from Pangasinan, Philippines, has collaborated with multidisciplinary artists since 1993. He currently teaches Cuban and Brazilian percussion at Santa Clara University's School of Performing Arts and teaches music to youth and adults throughout the San Francisco Bay Area. Jimmy is the recipient of a 1998 Downbeat Magazine Jazz Recording and Performance award and has performed new multidisciplinary works in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York and Seoul, Korea in collaboration with dancer/choreographer Lenora Lee. He also directs the SambAsia samba school, a unique drumming and dance ensemble based in the Japantown and Chinatown communities of San Francisco.

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### **Photos:**

Electronic files attached or mailed separately. Please call if there are problems opening them.

#### Photo Credits:

- Bob Hsiang for Jill Togawa in white (as labeled );
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