

2022 *Kweli*  
International  
Literary Festival

#KweliLitFest 22  
Closing Event  
September 1st, 2022  
MoCADA



*A Note on the Cover*

Nina Viola Stevenson Howell (Abner's wife).  
Rio Cortez's great-grandmother.

# Program Schedule

## #KweliLitFest22 Closing Event

*Thursday, September 1st, 2022 | MoCADA*

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**6pm | Reception**

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**6:55pm | Introduction: Laura Pegram**

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**7pm | Rio Cortez on *Golden Ax*, moderated by Tyehimba Jess**

Choreographer: Djassi DaCosta Johnson

Dancers: Rocka Jamez, Amina Konaté, Makeda-Lily Love-Roney

Bassist: Shayna Dulberger

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**8pm | Book Sale and Signing**

# Artist Bios



## Rio Cortez

she/her/hers | [riocortez.com](http://riocortez.com) | [@ohreallyrio](https://twitter.com/ohreallyrio)

Rio Cortez is the *New York Times* bestselling author of picture books *The ABCs of Black History* (Workman, 2020) and *The River Is My Sea* (S&S, 2024). Her debut poetry collection, *Golden Ax*, is available now from Penguin Poets.

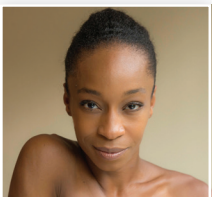
By day, Rio works in sales & marketing at HarperCollins, where she endeavors to amplify the voices and opportunities for BIPOC writers. Born and raised in Salt Lake City, she now lives, writes, and works in Harlem.



## Tyehimba Jess

he/him/his | [tyehimbajess.net](http://tyehimbajess.net)

Tyehimba Jess is the author of two books of poetry, *Leadbelly* and *Olio*. *Olio* won the 2017 Pulitzer Prize, the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, The Midland Society Author's Award in Poetry, and received an Outstanding Contribution to Publishing Citation from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association. It was also nominated for the National Book Critics Circle Award, the PEN Jean Stein Book Award, and the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award. *Leadbelly* was a winner of the 2004 National Poetry Series. *The Library Journal* and *Black Issues Book Review* both named it one of the "Best Poetry Books of 2005."



## Djassi DaCosta Johnson

Choreographer/ Creative Director

she/her/hers | [djassidacostajohnson.com](http://djassidacostajohnson.com) | [@djauniversal](https://twitter.com/djauniversal) [@filmingthemovingbody](https://twitter.com/filmingthemovingbody)

Djassi DaCosta Johnson is a native New Yorker, dancer, choreographer, filmmaker, photographer, writer, designer, Doula, Womb Healer and Activist. Ms. DaCosta Johnson received her BA in Anthropology and English from Barnard College while a fellowship student at Alvin Ailey. She has apprenticed, performed and toured with, Dance Brazil, Earl Mosley, Bill T. Jones, Hernando Cortez, Urban Bush Women, and was a soloist with MOMIX for a decade.

After living abroad in Brazil and then Italy for seven years working on film and television, Ms. DaCosta Johnson received her M.F.A. in Dance & New Media/ Technology from NYU Tisch in 2018 as a Dean's Fellow. Her work has been showcased in fashion and trade shows including Essence and Nike, and in fashion films and international festivals. Her choreography, photography and films have been displayed at Museums, Galleries and exhibitions internationally including Photoville (Brooklyn), National Museum of Women in The Arts, Brooklyn Museum, Shed Halle (Zurich), and throughout Italy.

Ms. DaCosta Johnson's work is rooted in access to the arts with dance as the engine—through bringing dance outside of the elite-concert walls in order to enliven people and spaces in collaboration with all aspects of art and towards elevation of the collective human spirit as a reminder of the magical physical and energetic vessels that we all are.

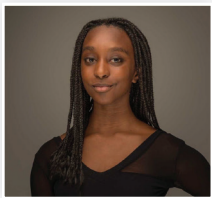




## Rocka Jamez

he/him/his | [@rockajamez](#) | [linkedin.com/in/rocka-jamez-4543681b1](#)

Born & raised in Crown Heights Brooklyn, NY. Rocka Jamez is a professional Dancer who specializes in free form contemporary infused with the studies of KRUMP. Playing a big role as a Street Dance Community Leader, he created a Dance platform that unites all Dance Cultures, called “Roundz Of Flame.” Over time, he has received major dance awards, features in *The New York Times* and *VOGUE* magazine, as well as a PUMA sponsorship. He was recently honored to perform a dance piece for “Rihanna” at Parsons School Of Design | The New School Awards | with his brothers (Dance Trio) “The NUU Knynez.” Rocka is a person who likes to inspire children, and he travels abroad to teach dance to youth in Bali, Indonesia, Africa, Sweden & Berlin, Germany. His goal is to open schools that specialize in all the different street dance styles, fundamentals and history.



## Amina Konaté

she/her/hers

Amina Konaté is from La Rochelle, France, where she began dancing at the age of 5. She first studied at the Conservatoire of Music and Dance of La Rochelle, and after graduating from high school in 2019, Amina joined the Rudra Béjart School, in Switzerland. There, she discovered modern dance through the Graham technique, and two years later, came to New York, in 2021. After attending the Ailey School for one year, Ms. Konaté spent the last summer dancing in Philadelphia as a Philadanco 2 member as well as in Brooklyn, with Jamel Gaines Creative Outlet, marking her start as a freelance dancer.



## Makeda-Lily Love-Roney

she/her/they | [@makedalilyloveroney](#)

Makeda-Lily Love-Roney (she/her/they) is a fourth generation artist from unseated Lenape Nation land known as New York. She’s a life, body, & energy alchemist, creative, dance artist, model and Body Alignment/Pilates coach. Makeda has worked/performed with BalletNext, Nimbus Dance Works and nia love | Blacksmith’s Daughter, Urban Bush Women, Liz Lerman, Debbie Allen and others.

She’s currently a freelance dance artist, nia love’s teaching/choreographic assistant and movement collaborator of 10 years and the Producer & Co-Host of *New York Times*’ featured Black Dance Stories.

Makeda has been featured in *The New Yorker*, *Cake* and *Whiskey Magazine*, *A Ballerina’s Body Book*, *KT-LA Debbie Allen’s Hot Chocolate Nutcracker Excerpt*, *Ritual: Short Film*, and more.



## Shayna Dulberger

she/her/hers | [@shaynadulberger](#) | [facebook.com/sdulberger](#)

Bassist Shayna Dulberger has been an active performer in New York City since 2001. She has played in many ensembles including those led by William Parker, Ras Moshe, Jessica Pavone and Elliot Sharp. Dulberger draws inspiration from jazz, noise, punk, western and eastern classical music. In every performance she pushes herself into the unknown whether through composed or improvised. Dulberger (b. 1983) is from Mahopac, NY. She attended Manhattan School of Music Preparatory Division in High School and was awarded a Bachelor of Music from Mason Gross School of The Arts Conservatory, Rutgers University of New Jersey where she majored in Jazz Performance. “Shayna Dulberger is an integral part of that generation who has made the commitment to unlocking further mysteries inside the tone world.” William Parker

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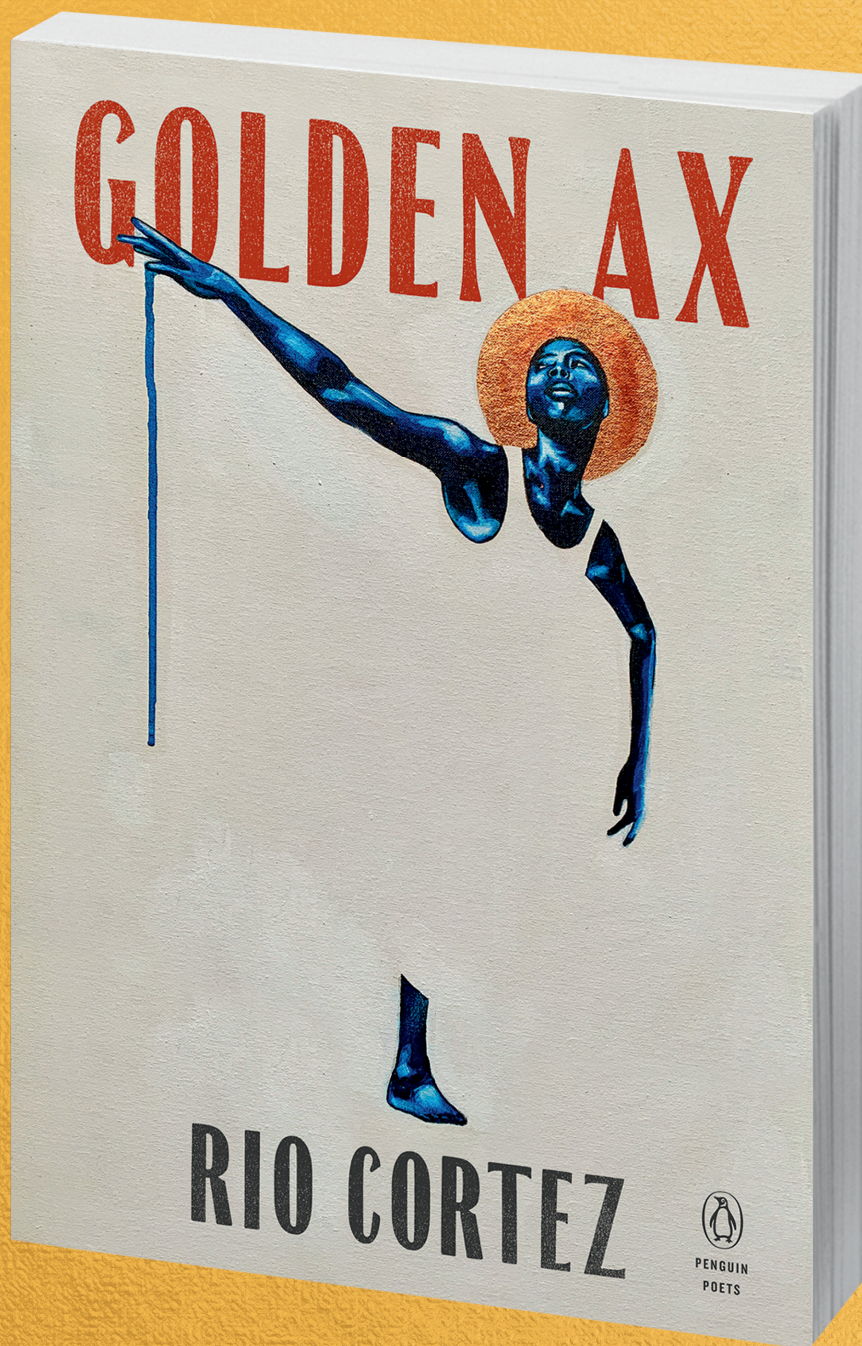
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