



Daniel Banks, Ph.D.
Co-Founder and Co-Curator
Andrés Franco
Executive Director

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For Immediate Release

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DNAWORKS Announces New Leadership: Andrés Franco Named Executive Director

**Troy Lambert, Sarita Ocón, and Seema Sueko
Join Co-Founder Daniel Banks as Co-Curators**

(Fort Worth, TX/Pittsburgh, PA - August 15, 2023) DNAWORKS has announced the appointment of **Andrés Franco** as the organization's first-ever Executive Director. In addition, three new Co-Curators will join Co-Founder **Daniel Banks: Troy Lambert, Sarita Ocón, and Seema Sueko.**

"We are thrilled to welcome Andrés Franco as our first Executive Director," shares Banks. "Andrés is a visionary leader, thinker, and artist, and will be a valuable co-creator in this next phase of DNAWORKS's journey. That his arrival coincides with the formation of the Co-Curator team is beautiful and powerful synergy as DNAWORKS seeks to expand and transform existing models of leadership and art-making."

As Executive Director, Franco is responsible for overseeing the programs, operations, fundraising, and finances of DNAWORKS, which is currently based in both Fort Worth, TX, and Pittsburgh, PA, and presents its programs worldwide. Franco, who immigrated to the U.S. in 2000 from Colombia, is an arts administrator and artist committed to social justice, which makes him uniquely qualified for this position. Most recently, Franco served as the Executive Director of City of Asylum in Pittsburgh, where he led a complex operation that manages the largest exiled writer residency program in the world, presents more than 160 free arts and culture programs annually, and operates eight apartments as well as a bookstore, restaurant, and reading garden. Prior to that, he served as the Resident Conductor for the Pittsburgh Symphony and Fort Worth Symphony Orchestras, and Music Director of the Signature Symphony.

"I am honored to join DNAWORKS as its inaugural Executive Director," said Franco, who began his job on July 17. "I am excited to work with the Co-Curators, Advisory Board, and staff to build



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on the extraordinary vision that DNAWORKS has embodied for more than 17 years. As we explore and co-create a new organizational model, we envision a field that is more transparent, equitable, and healthy for all involved — artists, audiences, and organizational partners.”

Co-Curators Lambert, Ocón, and Sueko will collaborate with Banks to develop new works and initiatives for DNAWORKS, each working outside of their individual arts specialties to purposefully broaden their artistic visions and experience. The co-curators will be involved in the creative planning, development, and oversight of individual projects that further DNAWORKS's mission and goals.

“The Co-Curators come from multiple disciplines and have spanned DNAWORKS's nearly 18 years,” explains Banks. “One Co-Curator has been part of the company since the very beginning, one in our orbit for five years, and one very new to us — all with aligned values and aspirations for arts and humanity. As Co-Founder Adam W. McKinney moves to his new role as Artistic Director of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, we are thrilled to welcome this inspiring and world-making team.”

The Co-Curators look forward to this new model of shared leadership, explaining: “The co-curation team is an experiment in a wall-less organization focused on connecting art and people in a variety of ways. We are honored to be part of this work-in-progress, testing and evolving ideas and opportunities for artistic expression together, with a larger goal of contributing to building healthier communities.”

DNAWORKS creates interdisciplinary, social justice performance, film, and installation art to catalyze community dialogue and healing through the arts. *HaMapah/The Map Dance-on-Film*, its adaptation of the dance-theatre production *HaMapah/The Map*, has won awards at such festivals as the Paris International Short Festival, the Berlin Short Film Festival, and the LGBTQ Unbordered International Film Festival, among others. DNAWORKS's current production-in-progress, *The Secret Sharer*, is a 2023 NEFA National Dance Project finalist and past recipient of NEA and MAP Fund awards. *The Real James Bond... Was Dominican* will be performed this November at Arts Emerson/Emerson College's Paramount Center in Boston.
www.DNAWORKS.org

Biographies

Andrés Franco (*Executive Director*) is a nonprofit executive and orchestral conductor. He is the inaugural Executive Director of DNAWORKS, an organization dedicated to dialogue and healing through the arts. Andrés currently serves on the Exposure Advisory Committee of the Pittsburgh Foundation and the WQED Community Advisory Board. A frequent guest conductor in the United States, Europe, and South America, Andrés has appeared with the symphonies of



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Dallas, Detroit, Fort Worth, Houston, Indianapolis, Omaha, and St. Louis; worldwide, he has conducted the Orquesta Sinfónica de Castilla y León, Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Perú, Bogotá Philharmonic, Medellín Philharmonic, and EAFIT Symphony Orchestra. He has also appeared at the Cabrillo, Grant Park, OK Mozart, Oregon Bach, Round Top, and Texas Music festivals. Andrés formerly served as Resident Conductor of the Pittsburgh Symphony, Music Director of the Signature Symphony, and Executive Director of City of Asylum and Caminos del Inka. A native of Medellín, Colombia, he now resides in Pittsburgh with his wife, Victoria Luperi, Associate Principal Clarinet and Principal E-flat with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra.

Daniel Banks, Ph.D., (*Co-Founder/Co-Curator*) is a director, deviser, dance dramaturg, and community organizer. He has directed, led workshops, and/or instigated projects in 39 states and 23 countries at such venues as the Belarussian National Drama Theatre, the NYC and DC Hip Hop Theatre Festivals, The Market Theater Lab (South Africa), McCarter Theatre Center, National Theatre of Uganda, the Oval House and Theatro Technis (U.K.), PlayMakers Rep, Playhouse Square, and The Public Theater.

Daniel served as choreographer/movement director for productions at New York Shakespeare Festival/Shakespeare in the Park, Theatre for a New Audience, Singapore Repertory Theatre, La Monnaie/De Munt (Belgium), and Salzburger Landestheater (Austria), as well as for Maurice Sendak's *The Night Kitchen*. Daniel served on the dramaturgical team for Camille A. Brown & Dancers' *Black Girl: Linguistic Play* and *ink* (touring) and directed DNAWORKS touring productions *HaMapah/The Map*, choreographed and performed by DNAWORKS Co-Founder Adam W. McKinney; *Hollow Roots* by Christina Anderson; and *The Real James Bond... Was Dominican* by and with Christopher Rivas. He is a newly appointed Adjunct Professor in the M.F.A. Directing Program at Carnegie Mellon University.

Daniel is Co-Convener and Board Chair of Transform 1012 N. Main Street, the project to repurpose the former Ku Klux Klan Auditorium in Fort Worth, TX, into The Fred Rouse Center for Arts and Community Healing. He serves on the Drama League's Directors Council and the National Cabinet of the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, and is Associate Director of Theatre Without Borders. Daniel is the 2020 recipient of Theatre Communications Group's Alan Schneider Director Award. He is represented by Michael Moore Agency.

Troy Lambert (*Co-Curator*) is an artist-educator and blerd. He is a Supplemental Instructor and Learning Facilitator in the SEEK Department at CUNY's John Jay College of Criminal Justice and completed two years as an Adjunct Thesis Writing Advisor in the M.A. Applied Theater Program at CUNY's School of Professional Studies. Troy conducts, coordinates, and designs research reports for city, state, and federal agencies, and CBO/NGO, leading to increased funding, legislation, and culturally competent services for marginalized and underserved communities



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across New York state. His paintings have appeared in independent feature films including Rodney Evans' *Brother to Brother* and *The Happy Sad*. He is currently working on a graphic novel following several generations of nomadic Black space pirates. Troy earned a B.F.A., Carnegie Mellon University; M.F.A., Yale University; and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture as a Camille Hanks-Cosby Fellow. Most recently, he is the lead illustrator of *The Queen's English: The LGBTQIA+ Dictionary of Lingo and Colloquial Phrases* by author Chloe Davis.

Sarita Ocón (*Co-Curator*) is an actor, producing artist, and activist. Theatrical credits include performances with American Conservatory Theater, Arizona Theatre Company, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, BRAVA Theater Center, California Shakespeare Theater, Gala Hispanic Theatre, Huntington Theatre Company, Los Angeles Theatre Center, PlayMakers Repertory, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Round House Theatre, San Francisco Playhouse, ShadowLight Productions, South Coast Repertory, Teatro Visión, TheatreWorks Silicon Valley, among others. Awards: Theatre Communications Group Fox Foundation Resident Actor Fellowship, Akonadi Foundation *Beloved Community Award*, Center for Cultural Innovation *Investing in Artists Award*, California Arts Council *Local Impact Award*, and the RHE Charitable Foundation Artistic Fellowship. Sarita received her B.A. from Stanford University, and is an Associate Artist with Oakland Theater Project, a company member of HERO Theatre, and an inaugural member of the Cal Shakes Artist Circle (2021-2023).

Seema Sueko (*Co-Curator*) grew up in Honolulu with a Pakistani father and a third generation Kona-Japanese-American mother. She received her Master's Degree in International Relations from University of Chicago. Between 2004 and 2020, Seema served as Deputy Artistic Director of Arena Stage in Washington, DC; Associate Artistic Director of The Pasadena Playhouse in Pasadena, CA; and Co-Founder and Executive Artistic Director at Mo`olelo Performing Arts Company in San Diego. Currently, she is studying Solidarity Economy and exploring ways to make theater that maximize social profit. She received the Theatre Communications Group's Alan Schneider Director Award in 2022 and balances work as a freelance theater artist and consultant with caregiving for her parents. Seema is a Co-Curator with DNAWORKS as well as an "Immortal" with Kaimera Productions. Currently, she is adapting the novel *Song of the Exile* by Hawaiian writer Kiana Davenport into a play with jazz music, and coming up, she is directing the world premiere of *Something Moving: A Meditation on Maynard* by Pearl Cleage at Ford's Theatre in DC. Seema volunteers as board president of Stage Directors and Choreographers Foundation (SDCF) and as a member of the executive board of the union, SDC. She believes that, in addition to having one's basic needs met, art, exercise, and love are daily essentials. More information about Seema's work can be found at www.seemasueko.com. She is represented by Max Grossman at A3 Artists Agency.



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About DNAWORKS:

DNAWORKS is a Fort Worth, TX- and Pittsburgh, PA-based arts and service organization dedicated to dialogue and healing through the arts. Founded in 2006 by Daniel Banks and Adam W. McKinney, DNAWORKS centers Global Majority and LGBTQQ2SPIAA+ voices and experiences to create more complex representations of identity, culture, class, and heritage through dance, theatre, film, writing, and art installation. DNAWORKS has led its award-winning programming and performances, promoting dialogue-based social justice action and community building, with arts, educational, and community organizations in 39 states and 18 countries. The organization believes that art = ritual = healing = community and that this philosophy and practice lead to a more peaceful world. DNAWORKS was founded to create performance works that are liberatory, adhering to the motto: “Slow life, slow art.” By moving mindfully, and compassionately, DNAWORKS endeavors to create resilient, healing spaces—for the company, its audiences, and the planet.

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