

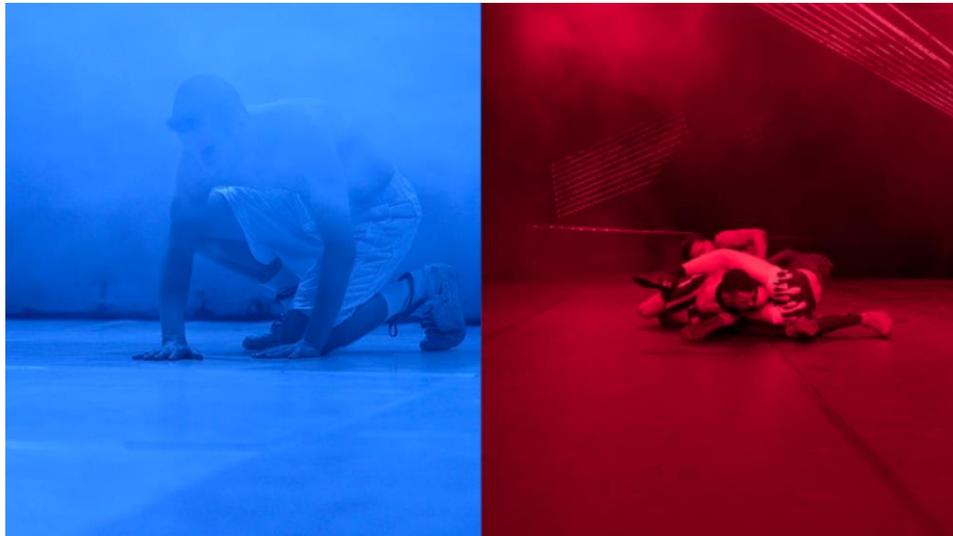


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 14, 2019

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On the Boards Artist Denied Visa – Choreographer Ligia Lewis is re-making and dancing in the work herself to bring *Sorrow Swag* to Seattle audiences.



SEATTLE - For Immediate Release:

This weekend, May 16–19, On the Boards is presenting *Sorrow Swag* and *minor matter*, parts one and two of a triptych created by award-winning choreographer, Ligia Lewis. Last week, the soloist originally slated to perform *Sorrow Swag*, was denied his O-1B, I-129 Petition for a Non-Immigrant Worker.

An O-1B, I-129 Petition, issued by U.S. Customs & Border Protection, allows a nonimmigrant worker to come to the United States temporarily to perform services or labor, or to receive training.

Despite On the Boards, and this artist, meeting all the criteria for this kind of professional travel, the dancer, whose name we choose not to disclose (as to save him future travel complications), was denied. U.S. Customs & Border Protection questioned

the artist's starring/critical roles, and sufficient recognition of their achievements. The artist in question has performed all over the world, in this and other works. His own work has been shown in theaters, galleries and online. He has performed and collaborated with other artists and choreographers including Simon Vincenzi, Mike Figgis & Zack Winokur, Jose Vidal, and Vera Tussing. He has worked with the artist Tino Sehgal since 2012.

On the Boards Artistic Director Rachel Cook stated,

“We are living in challenging political times where the movement of bodies around the world is being contested by our government. The openness and porousness of our borders are increasingly tighter and more restrictive. Every time an international artist is presented at On the Boards, we go through a lengthy paperwork process, pay fees for consulate appointments, solicit letters of support from high-profile national colleagues to make a case for the need of their visit, as well as seeking advice and aid of immigration attorneys. We had letters of support from national colleagues. We crossed our T's, dotted our I's – and still, denied.”

As she is no longer able to present the original performer in the role, Lewis will be creating an altogether new adaptation of *Sorrow Swag* for On the Boards' audiences. It will feature the choreographer herself, and her brother Twin Shadow. *Sorrow Swag* uses the core elements of performance—light, sound, the theater space, and the body—to explore race, representation, abstraction, and gender. The performers Lewis selects to be included in her works are a crucial element of the pieces themselves. The piece was choreographed for a male dancer. Ligia Lewis is a Dominican-American woman, based in Germany. This central fact changes the work but allows the artist to explore—and On the Boards audiences to experience—something new.

This new iteration of *Sorrow Swag* necessitates changes in this weekend's schedule. Ticketholders coming to Thursday evening's performance will see *minor matter* instead of *Sorrow Swag*. Saturday and Sunday ticket holders will experience both *Sorrow Swag* and *minor matter* with a musical interlude by Twin Shadow. A free screening of *Sorrow Swag* as it was presented at the Hebbel Am Ufer, in Berlin will be shown before and after all performances.

In a program note for the weekend, On the Boards Executive Director Betsey Brock shared,

“The United States government has made it impossible for an artist, one who has held a significant role in Ligia Lewis's works, to enter the country and perform his role. We are responding, and committed to making art happen, even in the face

of obstacles - in that spirit, Ligia will generously create a Sorrow Swag for us. What we're doing is an experiment. It might not work. It has always been this way here, but sometimes it is a bit more pronounced than others.”

The version of *Sorrow Swag* to be presented at On the Boards will be a new one, a unique performance that Lewis will create with the tools of contemporary performance and using the “jaw of the proscenium” to the fullest of its acoustic and visual potential.

On the Boards’ updated schedule for this weekend’s events:

Thursday, May 16

- 8 PM *minor matter*
- Free screening of *Sorrow Swag* begins at 7:00 PM
- Artist conversation to follow

Friday, May 17

- 8 PM *minor matter*
- Free screening of *Sorrow Swag* begins at 7:00 PM
- Artist conversation to follow

Saturday, May 18

- 7:30 PM *Sorrow Swag* in collaboration with Twin Shadow + *minor matter* in succession (audience is permitted to come and go during the interlude)
- Free screening of *Sorrow Swag* begins at 6:30 PM

Sunday, May 19

- 5 PM *Sorrow Swag* in collaboration with Twin Shadow + *minor matter* in succession (audience is permitted to come and go during the interlude)
- Free screening of *Sorrow Swag* begins at 4:00 PM

Tickets are available at ontheboards.org.

Ticket holders with questions may contact:

On the Boards’ box office, boxoffice@ontheboards.org

On the Boards’ Artistic Director, Rachel Cook, Rachel@ontheboards.org

On the Boards Executive Director, Betsey Brock, Betsey@ontheboards.org

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