

**Meredith Monk
&
Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble**

**2010-2011
COMPANY INFORMATION**

PIECE: *Songs of Ascension* a new work by Meredith Monk in collaboration with Ann Hamilton

NUMBER OF PEOPLE: 12 performers and 6 crew – Total 18

SET UP: One day before first performance

STAGE SIZE: Proscenium opening 36' wide; 16' wing space left and right; 40' from plaster line to rear theatre wall including on-stage crossover; Orchestra pit with lifts or platforms for leveling.



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: *Songs of Ascension* explores the spiritual, vocal and physical notions of ascension across geography and time. This new evening-length work – a combination of Meredith Monk's pristine music and iconoclastic theatricality and artist Ann Hamilton's raw, sensuous visual elements – refocuses perceptions of music-theatre. The otherworldly sounds of Monk's Vocal Ensemble, a string quartet led by violinist Todd Reynolds and a chorus of local singers create an exquisite music and performance event.

A monumental tower designed by visual artist Ann Hamilton is one of several inspirations for *Songs of Ascension*. With evocative video images that rotate throughout the theater and innovative sound design by Jody Elff, Monk and Hamilton recast theater spaces in dynamic and subtle ways that augment the relationship of performer to audience. The sound design emulates the enveloping acoustics of Hamilton's tower, turning the theater itself into a resonant chamber. Processional transitions through the audience evoke a physical as well as spiritual transformation. These explorations have helped to fuel a dynamic musical and visual language into an unparalleled theatrical experience, that is customized for every space it's performed in. *Songs of Ascension* has been conceived as a continuous composition, a departure from the collaged or episodic structures Monk has utilized in her recent works. The choreography uses various motifs of procession and circumambulation – such as those aligned with spiritual rituals. The image of perpetual motion, with one figure moving throughout the production, heightens the work's evocation of trance or transcendence.

Since the project's insemination, Monk has worked to include a string quartet as part of the musical landscape. Her previous work composing for Kronos Quartet and the New World Symphony has fed the pallet for *Songs of Ascension*, alongside her music for voice and untraditional instrumentation, performed by herself, the Vocal Ensemble and chorus, including the Eastern Asian drone instrument, the Sruti. In March 2008 Monk worked with the Elysian Quartet while in residence in Dartington, England. Returning to New York for further development, Monk has worked closely with her Vocal Ensemble and renown violinist Todd Reynolds' string quartet, to complete the compositions and choreography, as well as with the talented costume designer, Yoshio Yabara. In June 2008, Meredith Monk & Vocal Ensemble were in residence at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis to develop the staging and refine the project, culminating in preview performances. In October 2008, *Songs of Ascension* premiered at Stanford Lively Arts in California, followed by an acclaimed run at Cal Art's Redcat Theater in Los Angeles. In the spring of 2009, *Songs of Ascension* went to The Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, and will have its New York premier in BAM's Next Wave in the fall of 2009.

260 WEST BROADWAY, SUITE #2, NEW YORK, NY 10013 T 212.904.1330 F 212.904.1305 WWW.MEREDITHMONK.ORG

MEREDITH MONK, Artistic Director • LINDA S. GOLDING, Chair and President • ARBIER. THALACKER, Treasurer • HARUNO ARAI, Secretary
MICKI WESSON, President Emerita • CATHY APPEL • ROBERT GRIMM • SALI ANN KRIEGSMAN • LINDA R. SAFRAN
BARBARA G. SAHLMAN • CAROL SCHUSTER • FREDERIEKE SANDERS TAYLOR • OLIVIA GEORGIA, Executive Director