

# THE SECRET SHARPER

BASED ON THE NOVELLA BY JOSEPH CONRAD



A  
**DNAWORKS**  
*Dialogue and Healing through the Arts*  
PRODUCTION

# THE SECRET SHARER

DEvised FROM THE NOVELLA

BY JOSEPH CONRAD

A DNAWORKS Production

Co-created by

Daniel Banks

Kwesi Johnson

Adam McKinney

Ken Norris

Giovanni Ortega

and Papi Salgado

## ABOUT THE SECRET SHARER

DNAWORKS is adapting Joseph Conrad's 1909 novella *THE SECRET SHARER* as a devised, ensemble performance integrating dance, music, sound, text, and video projection. Considered an early Queer text, the story focuses on two characters, each a prisoner of secrets: a ship's captain and a stowaway accused of murder on his own nearby ship. The captain surreptitiously rescues this man and the two men develop a silent intimacy in the proximity of the captain's quarters, sharing the experience of being outsiders in danger among the societies of their ships.

*THE SECRET SHARER* is performed in an open-concept space with audiences co-creating the environment and the text—in an extension of DNAWORKS's community storycircle practice, audience members will share their stories during the performance, interspersed at critical moments in the narrative.

*THE SECRET SHARER* is an exploration of fragility, tenderness, and intimacy in times of personal duress and societal discrimination—the narrative of a silent, shared connection between two outsiders in the face of violence. In response to

an increase in both hate crimes and the visibility of LGBTQ2SPIAA+ youth suicides worldwide, *THE SECRET SHARER* offers Queer-normative spaces of belonging for resiliency and healing.

## WHY THE SECRET SHARER NOW?

Each of the ensemble members holds a story of resilience in the face of danger and violence; we had someone or something to hold onto to get us through and to bring us to a healthy relationship with ourselves and our identities. Conrad's tale is unique in its narrative of resiliency, homo-sociality, and closeness. It sits on many people's bookshelves as the companion piece to *Heart of Darkness*, yet few people know it. The story itself transcends color, ethnicity, geography, culture, and time, as DNAWORKS's version will demonstrate. It is a gripping narrative with healing powers.

The project is a meditation on self, survival, otherness/strangeness, and healing. With the piece, we ask: What secrets are we forced to hold and why? What is the cost of hiding one's identity? What constitutes personal freedom?

## THE SECRET SHARER PROCESS

As part of the process of developing the piece, the ensemble is embarking on a listening tour, holding storycircles in potential tour locations to hear local LGBTQIP2SAA+ narratives—especially from teens and young adults—about their life experiences. These stories impact our composition and storylines.

In addition, all DNAWORKS events include a community storycircle, organically emerging from the creative offering. With *THE SECRET SHARER*, we integrate audience stories into the narrative, redefining the text at every showing and making it a performance in and of that location.

Of primary importance throughout the whole process, from development to performance, is to create a healing space that reflects resilience—for the company, for the audiences, and for the nation. In the words of co-creator Giovanni Ortega regarding our first developmental workshop, we found "healing through honesty and vulnerability."





Fall 2023—Choreography Auditions  
Spring 2024—Designer Residency  
Summer 2024—Technical Residency and Premiere  
August 2024—Begin touring

## RESIDENCY AND PRODUCTION NEEDS

### General

*THE SECRET SHARER* is a company of minimum six people (five performers and one production stage manager + potential designers) for developmental residencies, and a touring company of seven for the production.

We are seeking both developmental and performance residency opportunities, along with co-commissioning and development funds. Please contact us for more details: [info@dnaworks.org](mailto:info@dnaworks.org).

### PERFORMANCE NEEDS

*THE SECRET SHARER* requires a flexible space with no risers or stage, and with the audience on the same level as the performance (or with the audience and performance on the stage itself). The audience defines the perimeter of the playing area.

We are creating a version of *THE SECRET SHARER* that happens in a fully functioning theatre with theatrical lighting, projection, and sound elements, as well as other versions that can happen in function halls, community spaces, retrofitted spaces, and outdoors, with minimal design elements in place.

### COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

With the community storycircles we attempt to balance artist and audience voices and create a space for community members to learn more about one another. In *THE SECRET SHARER* we explore a deeper level of engagement—how audiences can co-create the performance with us, with their stories woven through the event in real time, co-authoring the performed text in a different way each performance. The co-witnessing of stories offers an opportunity to deepen inter-/intra-group understanding and progress.

In service of our mission, dialogue and healing through the arts, we have led workshops around the world—with as many as one hundred participants, sometimes in languages we do not speak—during which people share openly. We understand how to create a space of respectful listening and sharing. With *THE SECRET SHARER*, we marry our workshop and performance techniques.

## SUPPORT

*THE SECRET SHARER* has received funding from: Academy for the Visual and Performing Arts, Texas A&M University; Alternate Roots; Amphibian Stage Productions; ArtsEmerson; Grambrindi Davies Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation; MAP Fund Award; National Endowment for the Arts; New England Foundation for the Arts; and Network of Ensemble Theaters.

## TIMELINE

We are developing *THE SECRET SHARER* through a series of developmental residencies:

August 2019 — Two-week residency at Amphibian Stage Productions, Fort Worth, TX, USA

March 2020—Ten-day residency, Espace Tycheco, Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada

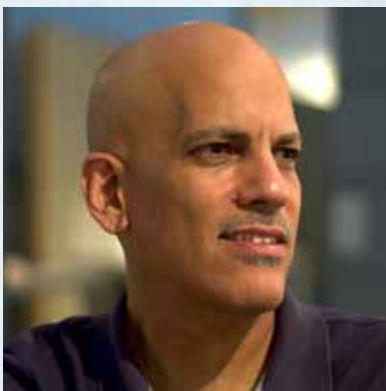
August 2020—One-week virtual developmental workshop

July 2022—Two-week residency at the Academy for the Visual and Performing Arts, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, USA

March 2023—Two-week virtual Music and Dramaturgy residency

July 2023—Two-week residency Tanzraum Wedding, Berlin, Germany

## ABOUT THE ENSEMBLE



### **DANIEL BANKS (Director/Performer/Co-Creator; DNAWORKS Co-Founder and Co-Curator)**

Daniel Banks has directed at such venues as National Theatre of Uganda; Belarussian National Drama Theatre; Market Theatre Lab (Johannesburg, South Africa); Playhouse Square (Cleveland, OH); Bay Area Playwrights Festival (San Francisco, CA); NYC and DC Hip Hop Theatre Festivals; Oval House and Teatro Technis (London); Bishop Arts Theatre Center (Dallas, TX); and HERE Arts Center, John Houseman Theatre, and Queens Theatre in the Park (NYC). He worked as choreographer/movement director at Shakespeare in the Park/NY Shakespeare Festival, Theatre for a New Audience, Maurice Sendak's *The Night Kitchen*, Singapore Rep, and La Monnaie (Brussels).

Current projects: *The Real James Bond... Was Dominican* by/with Christopher Rivas (touring); *Dreaming Emmett* by Toni Morrison, a lost play about Emmett Till that has not been produced since 1986; *Hollow Roots* by award-winning playwright and DNAWORKS Ensemble member Christina Anderson; and *The Secret Sharer* (recipient of the 2019 MAP Fund Award), an adaptation of Joseph Conrad's novella, considered an early Queer text, exploring fragility, tenderness, and intimacy in times of personal duress and societal discrimination.

Daniel served on the dramaturgical team for Camille A. Brown & Dancers (*Black Girl: Linguistic Play* and *ink*). He is founder of the Hip Hop Theatre Initiative, promoting youth self-expression and leadership. He is Associate Director of Theatre Without Borders and a recipient of the Sallie B. Goodman Retreat at McCarter Theatre (Princeton, NJ), and Theatre Communication Group's Alan Schneider Director Award. Daniel is editor of *Say Word! Voices from Hip Hop Theater* and co-editor of *Casting a Movement: The Welcome Table Initiative*.  
[www.danielbanksdirector.com](http://www.danielbanksdirector.com)



### **ADAM W. MCKINNEY (Co-Choreographer/Co-Creator; DNAWORKS Co-Founder)**

Adam is a former member of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, B ejart Ballet Lausanne, Alonzo King LINES Ballet, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and Milwaukee Ballet Company. He served as a U.S. Embassy Culture Connect Envoy to South Africa through the U.S. State Department to engage communities through dance. Other select awards include New York University's President's Service Award for dance work with populations who struggle with heroin addiction, a Jerome Foundation Emerging Choreographers grant, a National Artist Teacher Fellowship for DNAWORKS's "The Borders Project," and a School of American Ballet National Teacher Fellowship. He is the Co-Founder and Past President of Tarrant County Coalition for Peace and Justice, an organization created to honor victims of oppression and reflect more accurately on the history of racial terror violence in Tarrant County, Texas. Named one of the most influential African Americans in Milwaukee, WI by St. Vincent DePaul, McKinney holds a B.F.A. in Dance Performance from Butler University and an M.A. in Dance Studies with concentrations in Race and Trauma theories from NYU-Gallatin. Adam is Co-Founder of DNAWORKS, an arts and service organization dedicated to dialogue and healing through the arts, engaging topics of representation, identity and heritage. McKinney is the Artistic Director of Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre.





**KWESI JOHNSON (Co-Choreographer/  
Performer/Co-Creator)**

Kwesi is a Creative Director and Movement Specialist – moving people bodies, minds, and attitudes. He has over 20 years of professional industry experience as an award-winning choreographer, dance teacher and producer. His work is the intersection of dance, physical theatre, visual storytelling, spoken word, and street culture. He is a pioneer of the now global, Hip Hop Theatre. Kwesi is also influenced by digital innovation, creative placemaking, and how this can create community cohesion.

He is co-founder of a creative agency, The Cultural Assembly, and Founder and Artistic Director of Kompany Malakhi. He is a graduate of the Institute of Leadership and Management and served as Creative Associate at the Young Vic Theatre in London. In the arts he develops and delivers his own bespoke events and projects and is interested in the intersection of live, site-specific, and live-streamed performance. [www.kwesijohnson.net/](http://www.kwesijohnson.net/)



**KEN NORRIS (Composer/  
Performer/Co-Creator)**

Ken Norris is a sought-after soloist with the Hamburger Polizeiorchestra, Hessischer Rundfunk

Bigband, and Jazz Baltica (Germany); the Creat Vocal Jazz Festival, Les Printemps de Bourges Festival, Les Nuits du Jazz de Nantes, and the International Voice and Guitar Competition (France); and at the Dubai Music Festival (UAE) as well as numerous other festivals worldwide.

The range of his musical experience and proficiency includes improvised vocal ensemble work, the spontaneous vocalese, arrangement for choir, libretto development for operatic works, poetry, text writing and analysis, and electronic music. He is fascinated by the changing position of the singer in the evolving world of jazz and jazz-related music. Ken has twice before collaborated with Daniel Banks and DNAWORKS— Composing *Mixtries* at the Experimental Theatre Wing, NYU; and contributing compositions to DNAWORKS's touring production *HaMapah/The Map*. He received his Bachelor's degree at Yale University and continued his studies in Music at American School of Modern Music in Paris (France). Currently, Ken is Professor Vocal Jazz studies at the Hochschule für Musik & Theater Hamburg (Germany). [www.ken-norris.com/](http://www.ken-norris.com/)



**GIOVANNI ORTEGA (Associate Director/  
Performer/Co-Creator)**

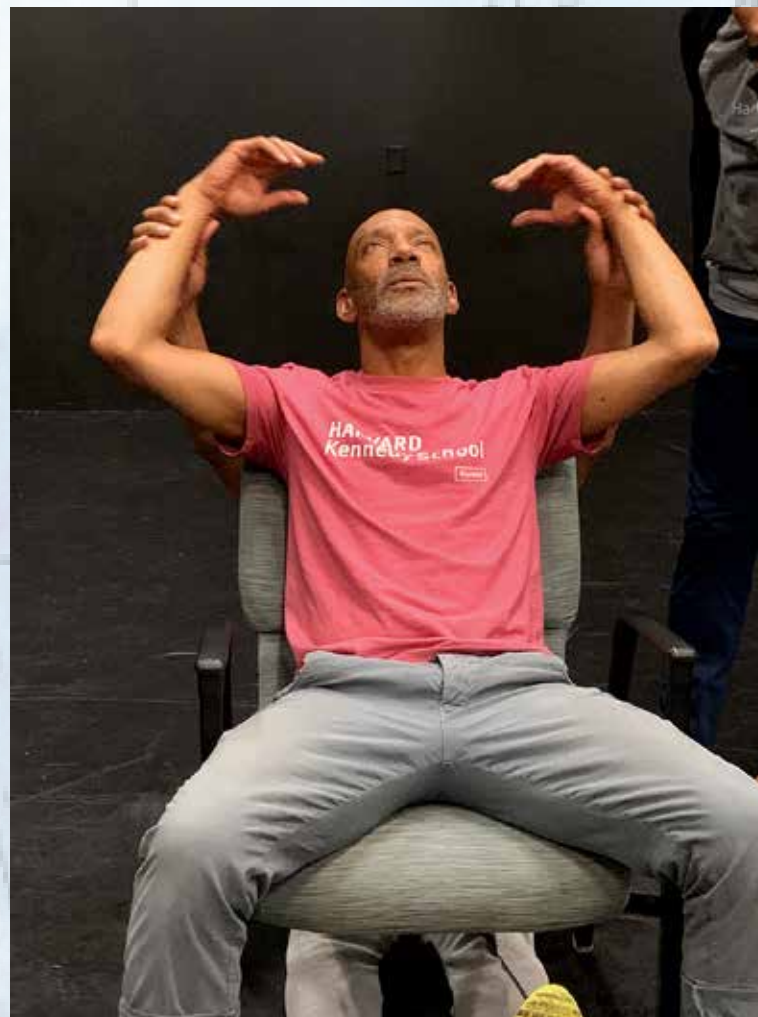
Giovanni Ortega (AEA, SAG-AFTRA, SDC) was a resident scholar at Playwriting Australia's National Play Festival and an artist-in-residence for Philippine-Australian Arts, Culture and Innovation Central. In addition, he is a visiting director in Singapore at the Haque Centre of Acting and Creativity where he devised *The Trilogy of the Body Series*. In Los Angeles, Giovanni was commissioned to write *ALLOS, the Carlos Bulosan Story* and *Criers for Hire*, East West Players' highest grossing world premiere play. Directorial works: *The Hotel Play* (AD, Center Theatre Group/ Playwrights' Arena), *La Madre de Todos los Exilios* (La Casa Tercer Acto, Bogotá), *Mama Bares* (East West Players). *Upon the Fragile Shore* was

screened for the LA Asian Pacific Film Festival 2016. He also originated the role of President Marcos in *Imelda, The Musical* (East West Players) and appeared in *Romance of Magno Rubio* (LA Weekly award nomination), *Dogeaters*, & *The Refugee Hotel* (CTG). [www.giovanniortega.com](http://www.giovanniortega.com)



**PAPI ALEXANDRO SALGADO (Stage Manager/-Co-Creator)**

Papi studied American Sign Language Interpreting at Tarrant County College, Fort Worth, TX. There he fell in love with interpreting theater and making it accessible for the Deaf/Hard of hearing/Deaf Blind community! For fun he volunteers for a Deaf photographer competition named Click Click Crop. He is a community worker with experience in education, interpretation, and translation, a founding member of COMAL Language Justice Collective, as a Language justice advocate and mentor he works hard to make a difference in this world, break down language barriers and volunteer with local LGBTQIA+ organizations whenever possible.





## DNAWORKS

DNAWORKS is an arts and service organization dedicated to dialogue and healing through the arts. Founded in New York City 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 theatre, dance, film, writing, and art installation. DNAWORKS is based in Fort Worth, TX, New York, NY, and Pittsburgh, PA. 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 thirty-nine states and eighteen countries. The organization believes that art = ritual = healing = community and that this philosophy and practice lead to a more peaceful world.

DNAWORKS has toured *HaMapah/The Map*, a devised multi-media, genealogical dance journey about McKinney's African American, Native American, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jewish heritages nationally and internationally, including Saratoga Springs Arts Festival (NY), Revolutions Theatre Festival/Tricklock Theatre (Albuquerque, NM); Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (Boise, ID); Miteu Festival (Ourense, Spain); Passing the Flame, DAH Teatar's 20th Anniversary (Belgrade, Serbia); La MaMa's Spoleto Open Festival (Italy); and numerous college campuses. DNAWORKS also premieres new work, including: the world premiere of *Cascarones* by Irma Mayorga at Teatro Paraguas (Santa Fe, NM); *What We Are Saying*, a devised dance-theatre performance with Ethiopian-Israeli Beta Dance Troupe (Haifa); *Breaking Our Silence*, a devised ensemble piece with LGBTQQ2SPIAA+ poets, with Poetic Theatre, the Wild Project (NYC); *At Sunset*, a trio for two dancers and a drone, *Dance Canvas* (Atlanta, GA); *Hollow Roots* by Christina Anderson; and *The Real James Bond...Was Dominican* by and with Christopher Rivas, currently touring.

DNAWORKS has received funding from Alternate Roots, Asylum Arts, Grambrindi Davies Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation, Hi-ARTS, Ignite/Arts Dallas, MAP Fund, Mid-America Arts Alliance, National Endowment for the Arts, Network of Ensemble Theaters, New England Foundation for the Arts, North Texas Community Foundation, Rainwater Charitable Foundation, Sallie B. Goodman Retreat at McCarter Theatre, Santa Fe Arts Commission, Stanley and Marion Bergman Family

Charitable Fund, Tecovas Foundation, Texas Christian University, Trust for Mutual Understanding, and U.S. Embassies and Consulates in Azerbaijan, Benin, Ghana, Hungary, Israel, Mexico, Poland, South Africa, and the U.K. In 2010 DNAWORKS received Black Theatre Network's Presidential Pathfinder Award.

## WORKSHOPS OFFERED BY THE SECRET SHARER ENSEMBLE

### “Curating Community Storycircles”

with Members of the Ensemble  
Members of *THE SECRET SHARER* ensemble will lead a storycircle for community leaders and members based on revolutionary artist John O'Neal's method. Participants will then have a close look at the storycircle process and protocols and begin to practice leading storycircles, themselves.

### “Devising Theatre for Community Connection”

with Daniel Banks

Explore the relationship between art-making and community building and the power of personal experiences and stories as source material for devising performance.

### “Map of My Body” with Giovanni Ortega

Participating artists will deepen their understanding and use of acting and movement techniques in representational and devised theatre to instill depth and breadth in the portrayal of believable characters whether they are based on reality or imagination.

## Other Workshop Options:

- “Acting through Action”  
with Daniel Banks
- “Contemporary Dance Fusion”  
with Kwesi Johnson
- “Creative Session in Hip Hop Theatre”  
with Kwesi Johnson
- “(Im)printing the Voice”  
with Ken Norris

## USEFUL LINKS

[www.dnaworks.org](http://www.dnaworks.org)

[www.dnaworks.org/secretsharer](http://www.dnaworks.org/secretsharer)

[www.facebook.com/dnaworkssecretsharer/](https://www.facebook.com/dnaworkssecretsharer/)

**For more information, please contact  
[info@dnaworks.org](mailto:info@dnaworks.org)**

**DNAWORKS's approach and expertise permitted us to feel deep compassion, connection, and interdependence amongst participants. They created a space that allowed for healing, connection, and love, which is often missing for LGBTQ+ people. What a magical, love-filled experience for all of us here at River of Pride and the community we serve.**

**Zivi Richard, MSW, Past President,  
River Of Pride / Rivière De Fierté  
Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada**

**The event was truly transformative to all those it touched, and the relationships developed in that residency have continued in the months since, with new engagements planned for coming years.**

**Dr. James Ball, Director  
Academy for the Visual & Performing Arts, Texas A&M University**

**In 2019 I had the distinct privilege of attending an open rehearsal of THE SECRET SHARER as it was being developed at Amphibian Stage. This powerful work incorporates music, movement, and a hauntingly poetic text and transports you to a distinctly lyrical world of tenderness and beauty that makes you long to stay in it forever.**

**Kathleen Culebro, Artistic Director,  
Amphibian Stage Productions, Fort Worth, TX**