

**MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH**

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***THE BREAK/S:  
A MIXTAPE FOR THE STAGE***

Thursday–Saturday, March 26–28, 2009



Photo by Bethanie Hines

**Museum of  
Contemporary  
Art**

**CHICAGO**

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# MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH— *THE BREAK/S: A MIXTAPE FOR THE STAGE*

By Marc Bamuthi Joseph  
for the Living Word Project  
Directed by Michael John Garcés

## Performed by

Marc Bamuthi Joseph  
DJ Excess  
Tommy Shepherd (aka Soulati)

*Dramaturgy* by Brian Freeman  
*Video and co-set design* by David Szlasa  
*Lighting and co-set design* by  
James Clotfelter

*Choreography* by Stacey Printz  
*Documentary films* by Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi  
*Musical score composed* by  
Ajayi Lumumba Jackson

*Arrangements and remixes* by DJ Excess  
and Soulati

*Artistic consultation* by Jeff Chang

## Executive producer:

MAPP International Productions  
*Production support:* Kelvin Productions, LLC  
*Technical supervisor:* Pamela Traynor  
*Stage manager:* Rebecca Cullars  
*Audio/video technician:* Bill Toles

“Record Stacks” was composed by Soulati,  
“Gravity Can’t Help Me Now” was com-  
posed by DJ Excess.



The MCA presentation of *the break/s* is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.



MCA backstage hospitality is generously provided by Whole Foods Market.

World premiere productions of *the break/s: a mixtape for the stage*: 2008 Humana Festival of New American Plays at Actors Theatre of Louisville, Kentucky (March 11–29, 2008) and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota (April 10–12, 2008)

Lead commissioning and development support: Actors Theatre of Louisville; the Walker Art Center, with support from a Joyce Award; National Black Arts Festival; and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

*the break/s* was developed during residencies at Actors Theatre of Louisville; Painted Bride Art Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; University of Wisconsin at Madison; Walker Art Center; and Z Space in San Francisco, California.

The project has received generous support from The Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Emerging Playwrights 2006 Initiative; The National Endowment for the Arts; Zellerbach Family Foundation; Creative Capital; The James Irvine Foundation; Rockefeller MAP Fund; and Association of Performing Arts Presenters Ensemble Theatre Collaborations Grant Program, a component of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation Theatre Initiative. It was commissioned by Youth Speaks through the East Bay Fund for Artists (EBFA) at the East Bay Community Foundation. Support for the EBFA comes from the Ford Foundation’s Leveraging Investment in Creativity (LINC) Initiative, The James Irvine Foundation, The Surdna Foundation, The Wattis Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and the East Bay Community Foundation.



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Marc Bamuthi Joseph extends special thanks to: The Youth Speaks/Living Word Family, Erica Geller, Chinaka Hodge, Mai-Lei Pecorari, Danny Hoch, Faustin Linyekula, Ken Foster, Claire Verlet and the Centre National de la Danse, the entire staff at MAPP International Productions, and Willie Ney.

To increase appreciation of *the break/s: a mixtape for the stage*, the MCA organized these intimate opportunities for audience members to engage with the artists.

On Saturday, February 28, the MCA presented *New America: Marc Bamuthi Joseph and Jeff Chang in Conversation*. Reflecting on their creative trajectories, Bamuthi and journalist Jeff Chang discussed their experiences working for change through youth and community organizing, media justice, culture, the arts, and hip-hop activism. Stephanie Shonekan, Black World Studies Director at Columbia College, facilitated their dialogue.

On Monday, March 23, at Little Black Pearl (1060 E. 47th Street), Bamuthi discussed the globalization of hip-hop from his perspective as a member of the generation that came into adulthood during the movement's initial rise in the US. Earlier that day, he led the second of three training and creative sessions with youth who are participating in Brave New Voices Chicago 2009, the five-day festival produced by Bamuthi as part of Youth Speaks, the nation's leading spoken word organization based in Oakland, California.

On Tuesday, March 24, the Chicago Cultural Center (72 E. Randolph Street) hosted Bamuthi for a talk on his unique dual-career experience as a performance artist and artistic director of Youth Speaks. He provided insight into the infrastructure of the arts and its role in affecting political and social policy. This event was co-organized with the Administration and Policy Department at the School of the Art Institute.

### Thursday, March 26

First Night postshow talk

Audience members are invited to stay for a talk with Marc Bamuthi Joseph and collaborators immediately following the performance.

### Brave New Voices Chicago 2009, July 14–19

Join us for Bamuthi's annual touring festival that celebrates the power of youth and culture. More than 500 Teen Poetry Slam champions are convening from 40 states to build community and hone their craft as participants in this national competition as well as master workshops led by renowned poets and writers. The festival also features many free public events at the MCA, The Merle Reskin Theatre, the Chicago Theater, parks, cafes, and other sites. Highlights include music concerts, graffiti mural bouts, and dance performances by leading hip-hop artists.

Crowning Brave New Voices week is *Life is Living*, a full day of interdisciplinary, intergenerational, eco-equity performance events. *Life is Living* is part of Bamuthi's year-round, national, eco-empowering campaign run by his theater company, the Living Word Project, which is spawning a new form of green spoken stories to represent changing perspectives on what it means to be environmentally just.

For the Brave New Voices Chicago 2009 schedule, visit [youthspeaks.org](http://youthspeaks.org) later this summer.

# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

## **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**

is an educator and performer, and the artistic director of the Living Word Project, a theater company dedicated to the aesthetics of post-hip-hop performance. In fall 2007 Bamuthi graced the cover of *Smithsonian* magazine after being named one of America's Top Young Innovators in the Arts and Sciences. He is a National Poetry Slam champion, Broadway veteran, GOLDIE award winner, featured artist on Russell Simmons's *Def Poetry* on HBO, and inaugural recipient of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship.

Bamuthi entered the world of literary performance after crossing the sands of "traditional" theater, most notably on Broadway in the Tony Award-winning *The Tap Dance Kid* and *Stand-Up Tragedy*. His evening-length works have been presented throughout the United States and Europe and include *Word Becomes Flesh*, which was part of the MCA's spring 2006 season, as well as *Scourge*, *De/Cipher*, and *No Man's Land*. His work has been made possible by several prestigious foundation awards, including grants from the Ford Foundation, the Center for Cultural Innovation, Creative Capital, the National Performance Network Creation Fund, the Wallace A. Gerbode Foundation, the Creative Work Fund, the Rockefeller MAP Fund, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Hewlett Foundation, and a Dance Advance award from the PEW Foundation.

As a nationally recognized educator and essayist, Bamuthi has lectured at more than 100 colleges and universities, been a commentator on National Public Radio, and held adjunct professorships at Stanford University, Mills College, and the University of Wisconsin. Bamuthi is an artist in residence at ODC Theater; Yerba Buena Center for the Arts; and Intersection for the Arts, all in San Francisco, California. He is most proud of his proj-

ect Youth Speaks, for which he mentors 13–19-year-old writers and curates the Living Word Festival for Literary Arts. His next performance project, *red black and green: a blues*, documents the eco-equity movement toward green-collar jobs in black neighborhoods.

## **DJ Excess**

is a pioneer in the world of scratch music, an innovation that melds standard music production with turntabling. He is part of the world-renowned DJ crew Ned Hoddings and the up-and-coming crew The Crate Bullies. DJ Excess made his MCA debut in 2006 with fellow New York native IXL as Hop-Fu, a multimedia project combining hip-hop music with kung-fu films created by John Carluccio and Barry Cole. Other scoring projects include *No Condition Is Permanent* and *Apostrophe* for the graffiti collective The Barnstormers. His studio production credits include mix CDs and vinyl "bringles" (break record/singles) released through his record label Styluswars; scratches created for Pepsi International, *Sesame Street*, and Schieffelin & Somerset (Hennessy Cognac); and music featured in the 2004 Showtime series *Street Time*, and the 2005 Playboy video game *The Mansion*.

Excess has performed throughout North America, Asia, and Europe. He won the 1999 International Turntablist Federation East Coast Advancement Class Championships and the 2000 US Advancement Class and Western Hemisphere Scratching Championships. He has been featured in *URB* magazine's "Next 100" issue, *Newsweek*, *Scratch*, *The Source*, *XXL*, and *Fader*.

## **Tommy Shepherd (aka Soulati)**

is an actor, playwright, b-boy, rapper, drummer, and beatboxer. As an actor he appears on the children's cooking show *Doof* and toured internationally



Photo by Umi Vaughan

with Marc Bamuthi Joseph in *Scourge*. He scored the music of Donald Lacy's *Color Struck* and is cofounder of the hip-hop band Felonious: onelovehiphop, which performs internationally and also develops theatrical productions. Shepherd is a longtime Hybrid Resident Artist at Intersection for the Arts in San Francisco, California, which presented his first one-act solo performance work, *The MF in ME*, at its Grounded Festival of New Works. He is also a member of resident theater company Campo Santo. With Intersection for the Arts, he has acted and composed the live score in *Hamlet: Blood in the Brain* by Naomi Iizuka with Campo Santo; was sound designer and composer with Howard Wiley for *A Place To Stand*; was musical director and live vocal musician for, as well as acted in, *a fist of roses* by Philip Kan Gotanda with Campo Santo; and acted, beatboxed, and composed with Scheherazade Stone of the live score, for *Domino* with Campo Santo. He has performed with Erika Chong Shuch's ESP Project in San Francisco for her dance theater performances *one window* and *51802*, and collaborated with Dan Wolf on the work *Stateless*, which toured Europe in 2008.

### **Michael John Garcés**

is artistic director of Cornerstone Theater Company in Los Angeles. His directing credits include *Someday* by Julie Marie Myatt for Cornerstone Theater; *The Falls* by Jeffrey Hatcher (The Guthrie Theater/Cornerstone Theater); *dark play, or stories for boys* by Carlos Murillo and *Finer Noble Gases* by Adam Rapp (Actors Theatre of Louisville, Humana Festival); *Light Raise the Roof* (New York Theatre Workshop) and *Snapshot Silhouette* (The Children's Theatre Company) by Kia Corthron; Teo Castellanos's solo performance *N.E. 2nd Avenue* (Miami Light Project and subsequent engagements); and *The Cook* by Eduardo Machado (Hartford Stage and INTAR); as well as plays

at Second Stage, Woolly Mammoth, the Atlantic Theater Co., The Cherry Lane, Repertorio Español, the Huntington Theatre Company, Florida Stage, Playwrights Horizons, and Yale Repertory Theatre.

Cornerstone Theater recently produced Garcés's play *Los Illegals*, created in residence with day laborers and domestic workers. His other playwright credits include *tostitos* (Ensemble Studio Theatre 2008 Marathon); *points of departure* (INTAR); *Acts of Mercy* (Rattlestick Playwrights Theater); *audio video* (The Directors Project); *agua ardiente* (The American Place Theatre); and *Stations*, a collaboration with composer Alexandra Vrebalov (Rhode Island Civic Chorale and Orchestra). Garcés is the recipient of the Princess Grace Statue and the Alan Schneider Director Award. He serves on the Executive Board of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers, and is a resident playwright at New Dramatists in New York.

### **Brian Freeman**

is a playwright, dramaturge, theater director, and actor. He has taught theater, playwriting, and performance at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, California Institute for the Arts, San Francisco Art Institute, and Colorado College, and is a visiting artist at University of California, Los Angeles's Department of World Arts and Cultures. His work has been published in the anthologies *West Coast Plays*; *Out, Loud and Laughing*; *Colored Contradictions: Contemporary Black Plays and Performance*; and *Staging Gay Lives*. His play *Civil Sex* was published in *The Fire This Time: African American Plays for the 21st Century* by T.C.G Press. Freeman's awards include a Bessie, a California Arts Council Playwriting Fellowship, and the CalArts Alpert Award in Theater. In his role as dramaturge, he developed *Crossing America* by Keith Adkins; *The Gibson Girl* by Kristen Greenidge;

*The Watts Towers Project* by Roger Guenvere Smith; *Slide/Glide the Slippery Slope* by Kia Corthron; *Live From the Front* by Jerry Quickley; *Last Rites* by Letta Neely; *Mother's Milk* by Wayne Harris; *Aesop: Alive and Well* by Diane Ferlatte; *Dreaming Backwards* by Diane Ferlatte, Anita Jones, and Rhodessa Jones; *The Sweetest Taboo* by Ricardo Braccho; *Perfect Courage* by Rhodessa Jones, Bill T. Jones, and Idris Ackamoor; *Ashes to Ashes* by Marijo; *The Gospel According to Wayne* by Wayne Corbett; *Sapelo: Time is Winding Up* by Diane Ferlatte; *I Think It's Gonna Work Out Fine* by Ed Bullins and Cultural Odyssey; and *The Rent Party* by Cultural Odyssey.

### **David Szlasa**

is committed to producing art and directing artists with a conscious desire to affect social change. He created, directed, and produced the interdisciplinary performance works *Dissection* (1997); *Light* (2000); and *GADGET* (2006), an immersive, media-based performance developed through a series of original interviews with living members of the Manhattan Project. He is developing his new work, *My HOT Lobotomy*, as part of STREAM/fest, a program of Counter Pulse Theater in San Francisco, California. Szlasa is managing director and part of the curatorial team at the Z Space Studio in San Francisco, an organization dedicated to the development of new theater by Bay Area artists. Szlasa was production manager and designer for Theater Artaud in San Francisco, and from 2002–2004 he served as production manager and designer-in-residence at the Culture Project @ 45 Bleecker, where he opened *The Exonerated* (Obie Award), Sarah Jones's *Bridge and Tunnel* (Lortel Award), and Red Bull Theater's *Pericles*, among others.

As a designer Szlasa has collaborated with Bill "Crutchmaster" Shannon for the past six years on work performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival,

Walker Art Center, The Kitchen, and Sydney Opera House. In 2001 he traveled to the Harare International Festival of the Arts in Zimbabwe with Universal Arts's *the Beat*. His other design credits include Rennie Harris Puremovement's *Facing MeKka* (lights), Synaesthetic Theatre's *The Trial of K* (set), Deb Margolin's *Index to Idioms* (lights and video), Marc Bamuthi Joseph's *Scourge* (video), and Encore Theater's *Five Flights* (lights). Szlasa is production designer for Sara Shelton Mann's *Telios/Telios* and *Inspirare*. He holds a bachelor of fine arts degree from Tisch School of the Arts; a master of arts degree in New Media and Performance from the Gallatin School, New York University (NYU); and taught design for Playwrights Horizons Theater School, a division of NYU.

### **James Clotfelter**

is a New York–based lighting designer committed to the creation of collaborative and socially conscious work. He is resident lighting designer and production manager for Miro Dance Theatre (*Hurdy Gurdy* and *Lie to Me*); resident lighting designer for Gas & Electric Arts (*Anna Bella Eema*, *Voices Underwater*, and *Quicksilver*); and an artistic associate with Pig Iron Theatre Company of Philadelphia. He is a cofounder of Mlab, a laboratory for innovation and design technologies in the live arts. Mlab recently created the visual design for *Color-ography: The Dances of Jacob Lawrence* with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company and is currently working with Rennie Harris on a series of new works. Through Mlab, Miro Dance Theatre collaborated with Prism Quartet on the creation of the performance/installation work *Pitch Black*, which premiered at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. Clotfelter's independent collaborations include work with Pig Iron for *Chekhov Lizzardbrain*, *Mission to Mercury*, and *365* (featur-

Photo by Umi Vaughan



ing Cynthia Hopkins); Rainpan 43 for *machines machines machines machines machines machines*; Johannes Wieland for *Progressive Coma*, and *New You!*; and The Living Word Project (Marc Bamuthi Joseph) for *Scourge*. Past collaborations include work with Rennie Harris, Reggie Wilson, Antony Rizzi, Bill Shannon, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Phrenic New Ballet, and Deeply Rooted Dance. Clotfelter received a bachelor of fine arts degree in Lighting Design from Tulane University.

### **Stacey Printz**

is a Bay Area–based choreographer, dancer, and educator and artistic director of the Printz Dance Project (PDP). Printz received degrees in sociology and dance from the University of California, Irvine. In addition to teaching at San Francisco Dance Center in California, she has been on the faculty at St. Mary's College, Sonoma State University, and Rochester Contemporary Art Center.

She has taught master classes and workshops for universities and studios across the United States and the Netherlands as well as Belgium, Russia, Lithuania, and Ireland. Founded in 1998, her company has home seasons at the Cowell Theater in San Francisco and has toured extensively through California and nationally, notably in New York, Memphis, Arizona, and Colorado as well as Lithuania, Russia, and Ireland. Printz has choreographed for many companies in California and received numerous awards and grants from the Zellerbach Family Foundation, the W&F Hewlett Foundation, Fort Mason Foundation, and a New Work Fellowship from the Marin Arts Council among others. Printz contributed choreography for Marc Bamuthi Joseph's *Scourge* and is creating work with live music and spoken word honoring Intersection for the Arts's 40th anniversary. For more information, visit [printzdance.org](http://printzdance.org).



### **Ajayi Lumumba Jackson**

is a musician, composer, producer, and educator. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in classical bassoon performance and is recognized for performance of Haitian and West African percussion and trap drum. He is musical director for various performance artists as well as dance and theater companies, and on the faculty of the Oakland Public Conservatory. He is director of the Haitian folkloric dance company Neg Diaspora and operates Oaklion Productions, a film score and commercial production house. His credits include Marc Bamuthi Joseph's *Scourge* and *Word Becomes Flesh*. He has composed for and/or performed with Deep Waters Dance, Anne Bluethenthal and Dancers, New World Ballet, L.E.E.Movement, Traci Bartlow and Dancers, Dimensions Dance Theater, Ase Dance Collective, Petit la Croix, Lauryn Hill, the Black Eyed Peas, Zion I, E. W. Wainwright, Prince Lawsha, John Santos, Omar Sosa, Faye Carrol, and Adam Rudolph, among others. He is composing for the projects *Beauty The Beast* and *Bopha*.

### **Eli Jacobs-Fantauzzi**

is a graduate of University of California, Berkeley, and holds a Master of Arts from the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. Before graduation, he won the prestigious juried Student Filmmaker Award from the Pan African Film Festival for his documentary *Inventos: Hip-Hop Cubano*, a film he shot, directed, edited, and produced. Jacobs-Fantauzzi has traveled extensively in the Caribbean and Africa, and produced and directed several shorts and music videos, including the award-winning music video from Ghana, *Besin*. His first film, *i of MOTION us of MOVEMENT*, chronicled the life of four women hip-hop artists in the San Francisco Bay area. His film *Inventos*, the first in-depth look at hip-hop culture in Cuba, premiered in Havana and at the H2O International Film Festival in New

York in 2003. Jacobs-Fantauzzi has been featured in *Anthem* magazine, *NRG* magazine, and *Libertad Journal*. *HomeGrown*, his documentary on hip-hop in Ghana is currently in production. As a filmmaker, he couples a dedication to craft with commitment to social justice and awareness.

### **Kelvin Productions (Vincent J. Demarco)**

is a full-service production company based in Brooklyn, New York. Its theater credits include *The Screwtape Letters* (FPA/Aruba Productions); *The 51st (dream) state, blessing the boats*, and *Low: Meditations with the Goddess* (MAPP), *Fantasy Traveller* (CAMI); and *Cookin'* (RFPNY). The firm was production supervisor for Classical Theatre of Harlem productions from 2006 to 2008. It also supervised Seaside Summer and the MLK Concert Series in Brooklyn. Its artist roster includes Anita Baker, John Legend, Liza Minelli, Natalie Cole, and LL Cool J.

### **Pamela Traynor**

lives in New York City, where she works as a production/video specialist. Her credits include *Power to Pleasing: The Sex Lives of Teenage Girls*, *The Wedding Channel*, *Eat-Drink-Live 24-7-365*, *Pilobolus*, *Children of Children*, and the upcoming documentary *Our Children: Death Row*. For more information, visit [pamelatraynor.com](http://pamelatraynor.com).

### **Bill Toles**

is a musician, producer, filmmaker, and sound designer. He has collaborated as sound designer on Marlies Yearby and Craig Harris's *Brown Butterfly* (live in 5.1 surround); sound designer and composer for Sekou Sundiata's *blessing the boats*, which toured for five years; and composer for *The 51st (dream) state* by Sundiata, which premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 2006. He made his theatrical debut in 2003 at The Kitchen

in New York as a producer with Tracie Morris's one-woman show *Afrofuturistic*, which received NEFA/NDP funds.

### **The Living Word Project (LWP)**

is the resident theater company of Youth Speaks, Inc., a premiere youth poetry, spoken word, and creative writing program. The Living Word Project is committed to producing literary performance in the verse of our time. Aesthetically urban and pedagogically Freirean, LWP derives personally performed narratives from interdisciplinary collaboration. Though its methodology includes dance, music, and film, the company's emphasis is spoken storytelling. LWP creates verse-based work that is communicated through the body, illustrated by visual and sonic scores, and in communication with the important social issues and movements of the immediate moment. LWP is the theater's connection from Shakespeare's quill to Kool Herc's turntables; from Martha Graham's cupped hand to Nelson Mandela's clenched fist: a new voice for a new politic. Repertory works include *No Man's Land*, *Cause*, *Word Becomes Flesh*, *Scourge*, *In Spite of Everything*, and *War Peace*. For further information, please visit [livingwordproject.org](http://livingwordproject.org).

*Artistic Director*, Marc Bamuthi Joseph

*Producing Director*, Joan Osato

*Associate Artistic Director*, Chinaka Hodge

### **MAPP International Productions**

works in close partnership with diverse artists and arts organizers throughout the world to develop functional and sustainable environments in which artists can create, premiere, and tour performing arts projects. It provides support and opportunities for challenging artistic voices to be fully heard and engaged by bringing together arts, humanities, and public dialogue. MAPP International is codi-

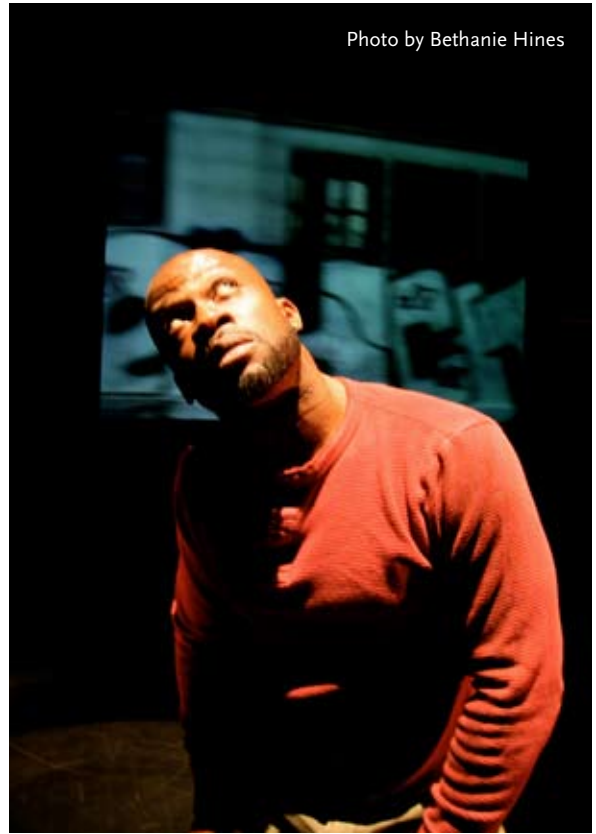


Photo by Bethanie Hines

rected by veteran arts producers and managers Ann Rosenthal and Cathy Zimmerman, who have developed 27 multidisciplinary projects and produced well over 50 multicity tours with American and international artists from 13 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean. Working on behalf of artists and their organizations, Rosenthal and Zimmerman have raised and managed more than \$3.5 million from foundations, corporations, government agencies, and co-commissioners for the realization and distribution of new work.

For more information about *the break/s*, contact:

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