

# HIGHLY REGARDED LAGUNA DANCE FESTIVAL MARKS ITS 10<sup>TH</sup> SEASON SEPT. 4–14

*Top companies here in September include Ballet Memphis, BODYTRAFFIC, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Stars of Dance: Misty Copeland of American Ballet Theatre, top dancers from New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, world premiere of collaborative “Ekphrasis”*

*Four distinct performances, Saturday night post-performance gala, master classes, free public shows, pre-show discussions celebrate organization’s milestone*

LAGUNA BEACH, Calif., August 13, 2014 – To mark 10 seasons of world-class dance presentation in intimate venues in this arts-centric seaside community, Laguna Dance Festival plans an ambitious September season schedule with a mix of popular and edgy dance companies, free public performances, a unique world premiere, and master classes. Audiences will experience three nationally noted companies – Ballet Memphis, BODYTRAFFIC, and Complexions Contemporary Ballet, duets by sought-after dancers from major American companies including red-hot Misty Copeland of American Ballet Theatre, and the premiere of *Ekphrasis*, a collaborative effort by three Laguna Beach arts organizations combining dance with original music and visual art. The four distinct performances will be presented onstage at Laguna Playhouse on Thursday through Saturday, Sept. 11, 12 and 13 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Sept. 14 at 2 p.m.

In addition to the four theatre performances, the festival includes pre-performance talks one hour before the Thursday, Friday and Sunday shows. In keeping with its mission of offering accessible dance education, Laguna Dance Festival will offer master classes on Sept. 6, 13 and 14.

**On Thursday, Sept. 11** at 7:30 p.m., [Ballet Memphis](#) will perform Julia Adam’s *Devil’s Fruit*, Trey McIntyre’s *In Dreams*, and Matthew Neenan’s *Party of the Year*. *The Washington Post* wrote, “(What) Ballet Memphis put onstage was more than a dance, it was an echo of human experience.” Critic Michael Uthoff wrote that the company is “imbued in classicism with a genuine point of view, attentive to the art form, its performers and more important, its audience.”

**On Friday, Sept. 12**, Los Angeles-based [BODYTRAFFIC](#) will perform three works, including *o2joy* by Richard Siegal and a piece called *and at midnight, the green bride floated through the village square...* by Barak Marshall. Founded in 2007 by Lillian Rose Barbeito and Tina Finkelman Berkett, the young company was named among *Dance Magazine*’s “25 to Watch” in 2013 and has surged to the forefront of the concert dance world. Critic Debra Levine in 2011 called BODYTRAFFIC “Los Angeles’ newest and best entry into the contemporary dance universe.”

**On Saturday, September 13** at 7:30 p.m., the first fully-produced, on-stage performance of *Ekphrasis* will take place as part of the festival’s Gala Performance. Laguna Dance Festival, Laguna Art Museum, and Laguna Beach Live! have joined forces to commission an original music-and-dance piece inspired by a work of art from the museum’s collection. Artists commissioned by the three organizations have worked closely to embrace the challenge of ekphrasis, the interpretation of a work of art in another art form. For this Laguna Beach world

premiere, choreographer Bernard Gaddis presents a new choreographic work to an original score by composer Alan Chan, both inspired by *Lotus Land*, a 1967 oil painting by Lee Mullican from Laguna Art Museum's permanent collection that will be on display at the playhouse. Mr. Gaddis, who was selected through a Laguna Dance Festival choreographic competition and commissioned to create the new piece, will bring dancers from his Las Vegas Contemporary Dance Theater. The performing musicians are from the USC Thornton School of Music; they include Hanbyul Jang, violin; Dongsoo Cha, violin; Corinne Sobolewski, viola and Ben Lash, cello.

In addition to the performance of the new *Ekphrasis*, Saturday's audience will experience the gala's featured company Complexions Contemporary Ballet performing *Innervisions*, choreographed to the music of Stevie Wonder, and a solo by the company's popular cofounder Desmond Richardson. They will also see several Stars of Dance audience favorites, returning as part of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary season: San Francisco Ballet's Cuban superstar Lorena Feijoo who will perform with her husband, Brazilian-born Vitor Luiz, and New York City Ballet's Spaniard Gonzalo Garcia paired with Misty Copeland, the sought-after American Ballet Theatre soloist who hails from San Pedro, Calif. Exclusively for Sunday matinee ticket holders, Copeland will be available to sign *Life in Motion: An Unlikely Ballerina*, her *New York Times* bestseller about her rise to become ABT's only African American soloist. Copies of the book will be available for purchase.

After the 10<sup>th</sup> season gala performance on Saturday, Sept. 13, audience members are invited to meet the choreographer, composer, dancers, and musicians at an artists' reception with food and wine at the Playhouse.

**The Sunday, Sept. 14** matinee performance will consist of Complexions Contemporary Ballet and the same lineup of Stars of Dance: Garcia with Copeland, and Feijoo with Luiz.

To whet audience appetites for world-class dance in small venues, on Sept. 4, Laguna Dance Festival will present **free performances** in conjunction with Laguna Beach First Thursdays Art Walk in the outdoor garden at Dawson Cole, 326 Glenneyre; the outdoor plaza area at GG's Bistro and Avran Art+Design, 540 South Coast Highway; and One Laguna, 225 Forest Avenue. Dance will be performed between 6:30–8 p.m. The four choreographers featured in a tribute to emerging Southern California female choreographers include Broadway and jazz sensation Saleemah E. Knight; the daring, innovative Josie Walsh and her work, "Shades of Red," two duets exploring the various states of passion; Jackie Kopcsak, using Baroque dance as an inspiration for creating contemporary movement performed by a small group of classically-trained dancers accompanied by a solo musician; and dancer, dance filmmaker and choreographer Lara Wilson's site-specific "Continual Arrival," which asks what choice a person has but to continue to come back to a moment, an idea, or a particular place.

To continue its mission of nurturing dance education, Laguna Dance Festival has a schedule of **master classes** for intermediate to advanced dancers ages 12 and older:

- Saturday, Sept. 6 from 10 a.m. to noon taught by Saleemah E. Knight at the Laguna Beach High School Dance Studio, 625 Park Avenue;
- Saturday, Sept. 13 from 10 a.m. to noon taught by Gonzalo Garcia from New York City Ballet at the Laguna Beach High School Dance Studio;
- Sunday, Sept. 14 from 10 a.m. to noon, taught by Desmond Richardson, founder and co-director of Complexions Contemporary Ballet at the Laguna Beach High School Dance Studio.

Laguna Dance Festival founder and artistic director Jodie Gates said, "It seems like just yesterday that a few of us were sitting around a living room table imagining what a major dance festival would look like in Laguna Beach. Now almost 10 years later, it is clear that with a strong

and passionate vision and support from the community we have created a thoughtful and much-anticipated annual event. I am thrilled about this year's curation of artists and companies and I love being a small part in making our community a better place by bringing the beauty of artistic movement to town. I look forward to the next 10 years!"

All ticketed performances will be held at the intimate, 420-seat Laguna Playhouse, 606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach. Tickets for the Sept. 11–14 performances are \$60 general admission, \$35 with valid student ID. Master class students may purchase class and performance packages for \$50 per person. Artists' reception tickets are \$75 each, with a specially priced package of Saturday performance and reception ticket for \$125, a value of \$135.

Tickets can be purchased at [www.lagunadancefestival.org](http://www.lagunadancefestival.org) or by calling the Laguna Playhouse box office, 949-497-2787. Box office hours are noon 5 p.m. Tuesday – Sunday, and until 8 p.m. on Playhouse performance days. For additional information, call the Laguna Dance Festival office at 949-715-5578.

### **About Laguna Dance Festival**

Since 2005, the dance festival has presented 35 companies, 55 performances, 30 master classes and more than 40 free events. Artistic director Jodie Gates, who founded the Laguna Dance Festival in 2005, is a former principal dancer with the Joffrey Ballet, Frankfurt Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet and Complexions Contemporary Ballet. Recently Ms. Gates was appointed vice dean and director of the prestigious USC Gloria Kaufman School of Dance and will be building bridges between the dance school and the Laguna Dance Festival in the coming years. The California native moved to Laguna Beach upon her retirement from dancing and, seeing dance as the missing piece in the mosaic of the city's artistic offerings, embarked on creating a dance festival. Companies presented by the Laguna Dance Festival since 2005 have included American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Aspen Santa Fe Ballet, Parsons Dance, CorbinDances, Diavolo, Trey McIntyre Project, Ballet West, Royal Ballet of Flanders, Oregon Ballet Theatre, BalletX, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Backhausdance, UCI Etude Ensemble, The Groovaloo, San Francisco Ballet, Les Ballet Grandiva, Sacramento Ballet, Breed, Los Angeles Ballet, ABT II, and Hubbard Street 2.

Noted American choreographer and artist Trey McIntyre noted, "Jodie Gates is a force in the dance world. Her clarity of purpose and understanding of what is possible in this medium was wise beyond her years and her peers. As her career has progressed, she has never stopped fulfilling that unique talent and the Laguna Dance Festival is a shining example of her contribution. I congratulate Jodie and her board of directors 10 dance seasons of a job beautifully done."

Dancer and choreographer [Desmond Richardson](#), co-founder and artistic director with Dwight Rhodin, remarked, "Dwight and I are so very proud of Jodi Gates and her fantastic board of directors. We know they will continue to strive for excellence. Jodi is an incredible performer and an inspiration to so many. Her consistent passion for the art of dance is continually infectious and invigorating."

*Orange County Register* critic Paul Hodgins wrote in September 2012, "Alone among O.C.'s home-grown dance events, the Laguna Dance Festival contains choreography that challenges as it entertains, performed by dancers who can present it persuasively and with virtuosity. Gates' festival, in its present form, is one of the can't-miss weekends on the local dance calendar."

Laguna Dance Festival's mission is to support and promote the development of dance creation, presentation and education, and to increase public appreciation of the art form in Orange County and beyond.

## **2014 LAGUNA DANCE FESTIVAL**

### **Complete Schedule of Events**

**Thursday, August 14** - *Ekphrasis*: Live! at the Museum – Workshop performance music and dance concert at Laguna Art Museum, 307 Cliff Drive, 7 p.m.

**Thursday, September 4** - Free performances at Laguna Beach First Thursdays Art Walk celebrates women dancemakers – Los Angeles women choreographers Saleemah E. Knight, Josie Walsh, Jackie Kopscak, Lara Wilson. From 6:30 to 8 p.m. in the outdoor garden at Dawson Cole, 326 Glenneyre; at the outdoor plaza area at GG's Bistro and Avran Art+Design, 540 South Coast Highway; and at One Laguna, 225 Forest Avenue.

**Saturday, September 6** - Master Class with Saleemah E. Knight at Laguna Beach High School Dance Studio, 10 a.m. to noon. 625 Park Avenue.

**Thursday, September 11** - Pre-performance talk at 6:30 p.m.; Ballet Memphis performance at 7:30 p.m.

**Friday, September 12** - Pre-performance talk at 6:30 p.m.; BODYTRAFFIC performance at 7:30 p.m.

**Saturday, September 13** - Master Class, taught by Gonzalo Garcia at Laguna Beach High School Dance Studio, 10 a.m. – noon. 625 Park Avenue.

**Saturday, September 13** - Laguna Dance Festival's 10th Anniversary Gala Performance: world premiere of *Ekphrasis*, a collaboration between Laguna Dance Festival (choreographer Bernard Gaddis), Laguna Beach Live! (The Thornton Quartet from USC), and Laguna Art Museum (*Lotus Land* by Lee Mullican from its collection), plus Complexions Contemporary Dance, Stars of Dance from American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet and New York City Ballet, 7:30 p.m.; Post-performance Artists' Reception at Laguna Playhouse.

**Sunday, September 14** - Master Class taught by Desmond Richardson, founder and co-director of Complexions Contemporary Dance, at Laguna Beach High School Dance Studio, 10 a.m. – noon

**Sunday, September 14** - Pre-performance talk at 1 p.m., Stars of Dance from American Ballet Theatre, San Francisco Ballet and New York City Ballet, Complexions Contemporary Dance, 2 p.m. Exclusive book signing for matinee ticket holders after the performance by ABT's famed Misty Copeland.

*All ticketed performances will take place at Laguna Playhouse, 606 Laguna Canyon Road.*

*\$60 general admission, \$35 with valid student ID*

*Master class package – performance and class: \$50 per person. Artists' reception tickets \$75;*

*Saturday performance and reception ticket package \$125*

*Tickets: [www.lagunadancefestival.org](http://www.lagunadancefestival.org) or Laguna Playhouse box office, 949-497-2787. Box office hours are noon 5 p.m. Tuesday – Sunday, and until 8 p.m. on Playhouse performance days.*

*Laguna Dance Festival office: 949-715-5578.*

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