BLACK GRACE

-- By special arrangement with the Laguna Playhouse --



LOS ANGELES BALLET



SYNCOPATED LADIES



FEBRUARY 22-25, 2024

LAGUNADANCE FESTIVAL

LAGUNADANCEFESTIVAL.ORG

WELCOME TO OUR 2024 DANCE FESTIVAL IN LAGUNA BEACH

We are thrilled to present an unforgettable weekend of dance.

This year, we are featuring three companies who have travelled from New Zealand and Los Angeles to be here with us at the Laguna Playhouse - Black Grace, Los Angeles Ballet, and Syncopated Ladies.

Over the weekend, there will be a chance to watch Black Grace rehearse, two masterclasses, and performances danced by exceptional artists, offering our audience the best of contemporary, ballet, and tap. Included in this weekend, you will also see a new work from our Founder & Artistic Director, Jodie Gates, in collaboration with our friends from Laguna Beach Music Festival, and performances from four of our 2024 Young Artist Scholarship Recipients.

We are grateful to all of you for supporting dance and for continuing to champion our mission here in Orange County. From your support, Laguna Dance Festival has been able to offer masterclasses, scholarships, and intensives as well as showcasing renowned artists at First Thursdays Art Walk. This celebration of dance is our way of celebrating you!

With Gratitude, the Laguna Dance Festival Team

LAGUNADANCE FESTIVAL TO THE POINT RATES FOILING REAL STATISTIC RIPS CUT IN THE POINT RATES FOILING REAL STATISTIC REAL STATISTIC RIPS CUT IN THE POINT RATES FOILING REAL STATISTIC REAL STATISTIC

JODIE GATES

FOUNDER & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Jodie Gates is a choreographer, director, arts educator, stager, and dancer. Formerly, she was the Artistic Director of Cincinnati Ballet and the Cincinnati Ballet Otto M. Budig Academy, as well as a principal ballerina with the Joffrey Ballet, Philadelphia Ballet, Frankfurt Ballet, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, and international guest artist.



She is Founder and Artistic Director of Laguna Dance Festival based in Laguna Beach California, and Founding Director of the University of Southern California's Glorya Kaufman School of Dance in Los Angeles. Jodie was a tenured Professor at the University of Southern California and University of California, Irvine. She is an accomplished choreographer, commissioned by several dance companies including Staatsballett Berlin, American Ballet Theatre, Ballet West, and Vail International Dance Festival, as well as choreographer for television commercials, a special event for singer/songwriter John Legend, and collaborated for a global ad campaign for Los Angeles Tourism. She is an artistic collaborator with William Forsythe, staging ballets for Forsythe Productions. She has staged ballets for Paris Opera Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Houston Ballet, Scottish Ballet, Teatro alla Scala Ballet, and Zurich Ballet among others.

Her performing career began with the Joffrey Ballet in NYC where she originated many roles and worked with a host of renowned choreographers. She is featured in several publications and has appeared in numerous television programs and festivals. Her guest appearances include galas at The Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg Russia; dancing Odette/Odile with Fernando Bujones in Swan Lake with Ballet de Monterrey Mexico; Juliet in John Cranko's Romeo & Juliet at Lincoln Center in New York City, The Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and The Music Center in Los Angeles. She appeared at festivals in Spoleto Italy, The Edinburgh Festival, The Nijinsky Festival in Hamburg, Germany, and The Melbourne Festival in Australia. She has danced at the Bolshoi in Moscow, Bockenheimer Depot in Frankfurt Germany, Theatre du Chatelet and Theatre des Champs-Elysées in Paris, among other established venues in the United States.

Jodie received a Psychology of Leadership Certificate from Cornell SC Johnson College of Business and studied with the Higher Education Leadership Program for Women at Bryn Mawr College. Honors include recognition for Arts Leadership by the American Association of University Women, Altria/ABT fellowship from American Ballet Theatre, and a recipient of the esteemed Jerome Robbins New Essential Works program. Most recently, she was awarded the distinguished 2021/2022 Residency Fellowship from The Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University. Her Fellowship acknowledged her most recent work addressing systemic racism and inequities within the culture of ballet.



LAGUNADANCE FESTIVAL JODIE GATES, FOUNDER & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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JODIE GATES

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The lodging establishments and the City of Laguna Beach
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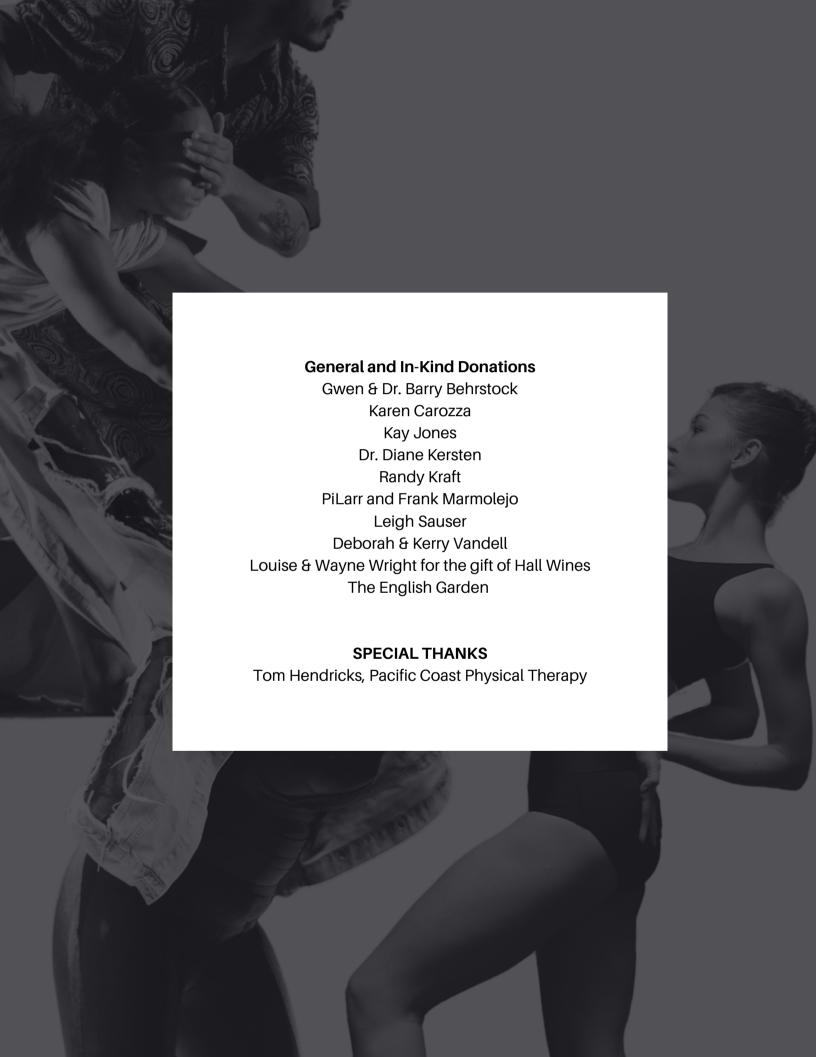
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LAGUNADANCE FESTIVAL JODIE GATES, FOUNDER & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

FESTIVAL EDUCATIONAL OFFERINGS



Black Grace, Photo by Neil Ieremia

Los Angeles Ballet, Photo by Jin Lee

FEBRUARY 24, 2024

12:00PM - 1:30PM

MASTER CLASS WITH BLACK GRACE COMPANY MEMBERS

FEBRUARY 25, 2024

10:00AM -11:30AM

MASTER CLASS
WITH LOS ANGELES
BALLET ARTISTIC
DIRECTOR,
MELISSA BARAK

ALL MASTERCLASSES TAKE PLACE AT LAGUNA BEACH HIGH SCHOOL

Your generosity is needed to continue providing these outstanding programs, including our Young Artist Scholarship, intensives, and masterclasses. Please join our list of patrons who help us cultivate the next generation of artists. Please consider making a contribution today.

LAGUNA DANCE FESTIVAL PRESENTS

BLACK GRACE

LOS ANGELES
BALLET



SYNCOPATED LADIES

ABOUT BLACK GRACE

Black Grace, New Zealand's leading contemporary dance group Motivated to provide a different perspective and a fresh voice in the dance scene, Neil leremia founded his own company, Black Grace, in 1995, with ten male dancers of Pacific, Māori, and New Zealand heritage. Drawing from his Samoan and New Zealand roots to create innovative dance works that reach across social, cultural, and generational barriers, Mr. Ieremia has changed the face of contemporary dance in New Zealand and turned Black Grace into one of the most recognizable and iconic cultural brands. His company tours the length and breadth of New Zealand, developing new audiences, and a new appreciation for dance. The work itself is highlight physical, rich in the story telling traditions of the South Pacific, and expressed with raw finesse, unique beauty, and power.

The Company features some of New Zealand's finest dancers and has toured internationally to Australia, Canada, Germany, Holland, Switzerland, Japan, Luxembourg, Scotland, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, and New Caledonia. In 2004, Black Grace made its USA debut, performing a sold-out season at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival with a subsequent return to the Festival in 2005. Since then, the Company has performed regularly throughout North America earning audience and critical acclaim. In 2009, Black Grace was presented with a resolution passed by Guam Legislator in recognition of their work with local communities and in 2010 saw the Mahor of Honolulu officially proclaim the 6th of February 2010 as "Black Grace Day". Black Grace received a Herlad Angel Award at the 2014 Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

BIOGRAPHIES

Neil Ieremia, Choreographer/Founding Artistic Director

Neil leremia is one of New Zealand's most accomplished choreographers, a creative entrepreneur and inspirational leader. Born in Wellington and of Samoan heritage, Mr. Ieremia was raised in a tough, working-class neighbourhood in a country focused more on sporting prowess and agriculture rather than creative expression. At the age of nineteen and with no formal training, Mr. Ieremia resigned from his banking job, left home, enrolled in a full-time dance programme and broke his parents' hearts. As a freelance professional dancer, Mr. Ieremia worked with many leading New Zealand choreographers as well as creating a number of commissioned works before founding Black Grace in 1995.

Numerous 'firsts' for a New Zealand choreographer include sell-out performances at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival (USA debut 2004 and 2005), a four-week season on New York City's 42nd Street, performances at the renowned Cervantino Festival in Mexico, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the 2010 Cultural Olympiad in Vancouver. Among his many other achievements, Mr. Ieremia has received a 2005 Arts Foundation of New Zealand Laureate Award, and the 2009 Paul D. Fleck Fellowship in the Arts from The Banff Centre, Canada. In 2015, Mr. Ieremia received a City of Porirua Anniversary Award and the Senior Pacific Artist Award from Creative New Zealand. In 2016, Mr. Ieremia was appointed an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for services to dance, and in 2021 received a KEA World Class Award. Neil and Black Grace received the inaugural Moana Creative Enterprise Award at the 2022 Pacific Business Trust Awards, sponsored by Creative New Zealand. Neil is an Honorary Member of Dance ICONS and Global Ambassador for What Dance Can Do.

JAX Messenger, Director of Design and Production

JAX maintains a successful career as a lighting professional. He has lit productions for such companies as Opera Philadelphia, Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo, The Washington Ballet, and The San Francisco Opera. As an assistant lighting director he has managed the creation of 4 operas for New York City Opera and 48 operas for The San Francisco Opera. As a lighting supervisor he has produced tours for Black Grace, The Washington Ballet and Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo in hundreds of venues around the world. For Black Grace, JAX has designed for *Crying Men, Kiona and the Little Bird Suite, O Le Olaga - Life, Fatu, Handgame* and *Paradise Rumour*.

Abby Ieremia, Rehearsal Director

Abby performed in Black Grace's project UrbanYOUTHMovement in 2002 and made her professional debut with the Company in 2003 for the premiere season of Surface. She has performed extensively with Black Grace throughout New Zealand, as well as on various international tours to North America, Europe, Asia, Mexico, Australia and New Caledonia. Abby has worked as the Rehearsal Director since 2007 and is also the Company's Producer, leading major performance programmes and international touring.

PERFORMERS

James Wasmer

Of Tongan and German descent, James returned to New Zealand from Germany to study Commerce at the University of Auckland. A change of heart took him to the New Zealand School of Dance where he studied Contemporary Dance before joining Black Grace in 2014, performing on international tours to Scotland, South Korea and the USA. James completed his Bachelor of Commerce in 2016 and was Assistant Producer of Black Grace's 20th Anniversary season, Siva. James has managed Black Grace since late 2016 and made his way back on stage for the 2021 production of The Outsiders' Ball and the 2022 USA tour.

Demi-Jo Manalo

Of Filipino and Malaysian heritage, Demi-Jo is originally from Australia and graduated from the New Zealand School of Dance in 2015 with a Diploma in Dance Performance. Demi-Jo made her professional debut touring with Black Grace to France and the Netherlands in 2016, performing in Human Language, Mother Mother and Gathering Clouds. Demi-Jo has also performed in Another Letter from Earth, As Night Falls and Crying Men, touring with the Company to Taiwan, the United States, UAE and throughout New Zealand.

Rodney Tyrell

Of Samoan descent, Rodney grew up in West Auckland and first discovered dance as a teenager, partaking in cultural performances and hip-hop. After graduating with a Bachelor in Performing and Screen Arts majoring in Contemporary Dance in 2015, Rodney made his professional debut on an international tour with Black Grace to the United States of America in 2017. Rodney has performed in As Night Falls, Pati Pati, Minoi, Mother Mother and Crying Men and Paradise Rumour.

Fuaao Tutulu Faith Schuster

Born and raised in Samoa, Faith's first experience in dance was with traditional Siva Samoa. Since moving to New Zealand in 2008, Faith has competed in numerous hip hop competitions and completed a Bachelor's Degree in Performing Arts and Screen Arts in 2019. Faith has taught at various dance academies and first worked with Black Grace in 2021 on The Art of Black Grace 1/5, a large-scale digital immersive experience. Faith has performed in The Outsiders' Ball and was rehearsal assistant for the Company's 2022 tour of the USA. Faith was cast in Neil Ieremia's latest full length work, Paradise Rumour, performing in the United Arab Emirates and Aotearoa.

Sione Fataua

A New Zealand born Tongan, Sione is from Christchurch and discovered dance at the age of 18. Moving to Auckland to pursue his newfound passion, Sione graduated in 2015 with a Bachelor of Performing Arts. After freelance dancing for various New Zealand choreographers, Sione made his debut with Black Grace in 2019, on a tour of the USA, performing in Kiona and the Little Bird Suite and Method. Sione has since performed with the Company throughout New Zealand performing in the Summer Coromandel Tour, Small Axe and Zombie Requiem, and in the United Arab Emirates performing in Paradise Rumour.

Vincent Farane

Of Samoan descent, Vincent graduated from the Manukau Institute of Technology with a Bachelor of Creative Arts – Performing Arts in 2019. Vincent has multiple interests alongside dance, also working in theatre, television, music and youth development, which has seen him perform throughout Europe, Asia and the Americas for various projects. Vincent first worked with Black Grace on the 2022 tour of the United States, subsequently joining the Company for the debut of Paradise Rumour in Sharjah, UAE.

Leki Jackson-Bourke

Leki Jackson-Bourke is an award-winning, multi-disciplinary creative/performing artist of Niuean, Tongan and Samoan descent. A graduate of the former Pacific Institute of Performing Arts in Auckland, Leki has worked freelance in the arts industry for over 10 years and has toured NZ, Australia, USA, Europe and the Pacific through multiple Pacific Theatre productions. In 2018, Leki choreographed Tick Tick Boom! for The Guerrilla Collection, a free Pacific festival produced by Neil Ieremia and Black Grace. Leki performed with Black Grace on the 2022 USA Tour of O Le Olaga – Life.

Ben Saveasoi

Ben is Samoan and was raised in Auckland. In 2022, Ben graduated from the University of Auckland with a Bachelor of Dance Studies. A freelance dancer within street dance and contemporary dance spaces, Ben has competed at Hip Hop International World championships as well as performing at Pacific Dance and Tempo Dance Festivals. In 2023, Ben auditioned successfully for Company B, a Black Grace initiative to give emerging dancers an opportunity working within a professional creative environment. Ben was then invited to join Black Grace, performing in (m) Orpheus, a collaboration with NZ Opera directed by Neil Ieremia.

FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CEO NEIL IEREMIA, ONZM

CHOREOGRAPHERNEIL IEREMIA, ONZM

PRODUCER/REHEARSAL DIRECTOR
ABBY IEREMIA

MANAGER JAMES WASMER

DAINES WASINER

PERFORMERS

JAMES WASMER

DEMI-JO MANALO

RODNEY TYRELL

FUAAO TUTULU FAITH SCHUSTER

VINCENT FARANE

SIONE FATAUA

LEKI JACKSON-BOURKE

BEN SAVEASOI

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JAX MESSENGER

TECHNICAL / STAGE MANAGER BRIAN FAIRBROTHER

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FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 23 | 7:30PM

BLACK GRACE CHOREOGRAPHER'S NOTES

Choreography | Neil Ieremia

Handgame

Handgame was choreographed in 1995 as part of *Relentless*, one of Ieremia's earliest full-length works which was based on child abuse. The creative process for this work began with company members sharing stories of abuse from their childhoods. Gesturing to parts of their bodies that were injured as children, Ieremia progressed this idea into a rhythmic piece, loosely utilizing aspects of fa'ataupati (Samoan slap dance).

Lighting Design | JAX Messenger

PAUSE

Kiona and the Little Bird Suite

Kiona and the Little Bird Suite is a collection of traditionally inspired works and excerpts from our repertoire over the last nearly three decades. It draws from works including *Relentless* (1996), *Fia Ola* (1998), *Surface* (2003), *Pati Pati* (2009), *Gathering Clouds* (2009) and *E Toa*, *E Toa* (2018). This work utilises body percussion influenced by traditional Samoan Sasa (seated dance) and Fa'ataupati (slap dance), and incorporates live drumming, singing and chanting.

"The mixture of both live and recorded sound is an acknowledgement of the meeting place of the old and the new, the traditional and contemporary."

- Faiumu Matthew Salapu aka Anonymouz

This work is an ode to my parents - Simanu and Kiona." - Neil Ieremia

Music | Tolo, Tete, Kaleve, and Agamalu by Te Vaka Lighting Design | JAX Messenger Costume Design | Tina Thomas Makeup Design | Kiekie Stanners

INTERMISSION - 15 MINUTES

Paradise Rumour (abridged)

Paradise Rumour is an extension of my 2009 work Gathering Clouds, a response to an economist's discussion paper, "Growing Pains: The valuation and cost of human capital and the impact of Pacific migration on the New Zealand economy". His controversial claims caused significant hurt within the Pacific Island community in Aotearoa, while emboldening those with more xenophobic views. The Human Rights Commission released a review of Dr. Clydesdale's paper titled "Pacific Peoples in New Zealand; review of the public controversy about a discussion paper on immigration policy and the economic contribution of Pacific migrants to New Zealand". It found that the paper was poorly researched and prejudiced, I couldn't help but feel that the damage had already been done.

The provocation for *Paradise Rumour*, was based on the central question of "how far have we really come since then?"

Paradise Rumour bounces back and forth through time and space, starting with the arrival of the missionaries to the Pacific, and collecting memories, visions, experiences both personal and collective.

Weaving together four separate parts of the same experience within the one person, the first dancer represents hope + resistance, the second sorrow + acceptance, the third control + release, and the fourth faith + crisis.

Serving as another source of inspiration is the following excerpt from a poem I wrote in 2008.

Here come the skybreakers, god traders
renovating my culture to fit in an apartment box
with a flat screen and a flat nose
dressed in white with black book measles, muskets and blankets
Flavour said 'fight the power'
hand vs. knife,
knife vs. gun,

gun vs. bigger gun vs. bigger bomb, vs. bigger budget vs. bigger dick, vs. nothing left to touch, feel, eat, see, or love

I who am

Must assimilate, replicate, dislocate, shut the gate so the sheep don't relocate to Australia, where the tax rate is lower,
human rights is slower
I will return to her someday
Samoa
I owe her

Thank you to Hoor Al Qasimi and Sharjah Biennial for commissioning this work. Fa'afetai tele lava.

-Neil Ieremia

Music | Faiumu Matthew Salapu aka Anonymouz Lighting Design | JAX Messenger Costume Design | Tina Thomas Makeup Design | Kiekie Stanners

ABOUT LOSANGELES BALLET

Los Angeles Ballet (LAB) is the leading ballet company in Los Angeles known for staging classical, contemporary, romantic and neoclassical ballets, for pioneering new works and for presenting relevant works by many of today's most innovative dance-makers. LAB's original production of The Nutcracker is an annual holiday favorite for Los Angeles residents and delights regional, national and international visitors.

Led by Artistic Director, Melissa Barak, and Executive Director, Brandon Lussier, LAB performs in multiple theater venues across LA County including The Broad Stage in Santa Monica, Royce Hall at UCLA, Redondo Beach Performing Arts Center, Pasadena Civic Auditorium and Dolby Theatre in Hollywood.

As part of its mission to expand people's knowledge of and nurture a love for ballet, LAB gives access to performances to the widest audiences possible by providing free tickets for thousands of residents in underserved communities in Los Angeles County through its arts education program, Power of Performance (POP!). In 2012, LAB launched a hands-on outreach program called A Chance to Dance (ACTD) that provides free ballet and movement instruction for all ages. Los Angeles Ballet was founded in 2004 by Thordal Christensen and Colleen Neary, Artistic Directors Emeriti and Julie Whittaker, Executive Director, Emerita.

BIOGRAPHIES

MELISSA BARAK, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Melissa Barak is an award-winning choreographer, former professional dancer with New York City Ballet (NYCB) and Los Angeles Ballet, and founder of Barak Ballet before becoming LAB's Artistic Director in 2022.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Barak began her ballet training at the age of eight at Westside School of Ballet in Santa Monica, California under the direction of Yvonne Mounsey and Rosemary Valaire. Her training continued in New York City at the School of American Ballet (SAB), the official school of NYCB. In 1998, Barak was invited to join NYCB where she performed in numerous works by George Balanchine and Jerome Robbins as well as originating roles in new ballets by Christopher Wheeldon, Elliot Feld, and Robert Garland among others.

Barak began exploring her choreographic talents throughout her time at SAB and NYCB. At the age of 21, she premiered her work Telemann Overture Suite in E Minor at the SAB June Workshop performance that quickly followed up with encore performances on NYCB the following season. Later that year another choreographic commission was offered by NYCB for their prestigious Diamond Project making her, at the time, the youngest choreographer to create an original work on the company. She has created new works for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Richmond Ballet, Dayton Ballet, American Repertory Ballet, Sacramento Ballet, Los Angeles Ballet, and Barak Ballet, a Los Angeles based contemporary ballet company she founded in 2013.

She has had the honor of choreographing on dance luminaries including Sara Mearns, Tiler Peck, Justin Peck, Benjamin Millepied, and Robert Fairchild. In 2009 and 2010, she was invited to return to the New York City Ballet where she created two more works, A Simple Symphony and Call Me Ben respectively. Her film and commercial credits include original choreography for Mattel's feature film Barbie in the Pink Shoes, Xayron in Hungary, Illusions in China, and a Samsung commercial working alongside director Mark Romanek. Melissa has been awarded the Mae L. Wein and Choo San Goh awards for Outstanding Choreography and has been named a Dance Magazine "Top 25 to Watch". She was also the inaugural recipient of the Virginia B. Toulmin Fellowship for Women Choreographers through Center for Ballet and the Arts at NYU.

PERFORMERS

SARAH-ASHLEY CHICOLA

This is Sarah-Ashley's first season with Los Angeles Ballet.

SIMON ZINABU COSTELLO

Simon Zinabu Costello received his initial training at the Southhold Dance Theatre in Indiana where he danced Hillarion in *Giselle*, Franz in *Coppelia*, Cavalier in *The Nutcracker*, and Prince Desire in *The Sleeping Beauty*. He received full summer scholarships to American Ballet Theatre, School of American Ballet, and Colorado Ballet. In 2015, he placed first in Pas de Deux and third in Classical variation at YAGP receiving a full scholarship to train at Palucca University of Dance in Dresden, Germany. He has worked with Erica Fischbach, Matthew West, Jock Soto, and Carlos Acosta among others. Simon danced with Colorado Ballet for five seasons and most recently with Chadash Contemporary Dance Movement.

BRIGITTE EDWARDS

Brigitte Edwards began her dance training at the age of 6 at California Ballet School in San Diego. While dancing at CBS, she spent five summers training at the School of American Ballet, in New York City, from 2011-2015. She was offered a position to join the California Ballet Company in 2014 and danced as a member of the Corps de Ballet for two years. After competing and placing in the Youth American Grand Prix in 2016, Brigitte was invited to join Ballet West as a trainee. Brigitte was promoted to Ballet West 2 in 2018 where she performed in many classical and contemporary works, including featured roles in Balanchine's *Walpurgisnacht*, Nicolo Fonte's *Piece of My Heart*, and Elena Kunikova's *Divertimento*. Brigitte also teaches ballet at local studios in addition to studying to receive her bachelor's degree in business.

ABIGAIL GROSS

This is Abigail's first season with Los Angeles Ballet.

KATE INQUE

Kate joined LAB in 2020 and danced the featured roles of Aurora and Princess Florine in The Sleeping Beauty, Marie in *The Nutcracker*, Nichette in Val Caniparoli's *The Lady of the Camellias*, and in productions such as *Bloom* by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, as well as Christopher Wheeldon's *Morphoses* and *Fool's Paradise*. She trained in the Professional Division at Pacific Northwest Ballet and at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet under the directorship of Marcia Dale Weary and Darla Hoover. Her early training includes Palos Verdes Ballet and Etoile Ballet School in Osaka, Japan. She was awarded second place at the Crea Ballet Competition in Hamamatsu, Japan in 2017.

JULIANNE KINASIEWICZ

Julianne grew up in Portage, Indiana and has been dancing with Los Angeles Ballet since 2018.

LILLY LEECH

Lilly Leech (she/her) started her ballet training at Milwaukee Ballet School under School Director Rolando Yanes and then Ballet Chicago under Daniel Duell and Patricia Blair. Lilly went on to earn a degree of Bachelor of Science in Ballet at Indiana University in the Jacobs School of Music. There she trained with faculty members Michael Vernon, Kyra Nichols, Sarah Wroth, Christian Claessens, Sasha Janes, and Carla Körbes. She attended summer programs at Chautauqua under Patricia McBride and Jean-Pierre Bonnefoux and Jacob's Pillow under Annabelle Lopez Ochoa.

SANTIAGO PANIAGUA

Santiago started dancing at the age of 8 through Boston Ballet's inner city outreach program 'Citydance.' He joined Boston Ballet School soon after and completed his training at 18. He then joined Philadelphia Ballet 2 and was promoted to Apprentice after two years. Santiago joined Los Angeles Ballet in 2021 and is currently dancing his third season with the company.

CESAR RAMIREZ CASTELLANO

Cesar Ramirez started his ballet training at Escuela Nacional de Ballet Fernando Alonso in Cuba under School Director Ramona de Saa. He also received his training from The Rock School for Dance Education under Bo and Stephanie Spassoff. Cesar has danced professionally with Ballet Nacional de Cuba and Los Angeles Ballet. He has had the pleasure of dancing to classical ballet repertoire and works by Christopher Wheeldon, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, George Balanchine, and Melissa Barak. Cesar is grateful to be dancing another season with the Los Angeles Ballet and the company's diverse repertoire.

MARCOS RAMIREZ

Marcos joined the National Ballet of Cuba at the age of 17. He joined LAB in 2020 and has performed the roles of Prince Desire in *The Sleeping Beauty*, The Cavalier Prince in *The Nutcracker*, Gustave in *Lady of the Camellias*, and other leading roles in contemporary pieces such as *Ghosts* by Christopher Wheeldon and *Bloom* by Anabelle Lopez Ochoa.

JACOB RAY

Jacob Ray is a professional ballet dancer and actor born in Irvine, California. He began his ballet training at the age of 11 at the Grand Rapids Ballet with artistic director, Patricia Barker. While there, Jacob joined the junior company under the mentorship of Attila Mosolygo. Jacob continued his training with Dmitri Kulev at the Dmitri Kulev Classical Ballet Academy in Laguna Hills, California. In addition to this Jacob trained in New York at the Bolshoi Ballet Summer Intensive in 2017 and 2018 on full scholarship, where he was invited to train year-round at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow, Russia. Jacob also competed at Youth American Grand Prix in Los Angeles winning 1st place in the Men's Classical Division (2017) and 2nd place for his contemporary piece, "The Highest Flood" in Denver, Colorado (2018). His Professional Ballet career began with the Colorado Ballet Studio Company in 2019. Jacob was promoted to Apprentice in the same year and was then promoted to Corps de Ballet. Jacob joined the Los Angeles Ballet in 2022.

JACOB SOLTERO

Jacob started dancing at the age of thirteen with Peninsula Dance Theater in 2016 in Bremerton, WA, where he trained for four years through his high school years. Throughout his school years, he trained on full-tuition scholarships during the summer at Pacific Northwest Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, and Chautauqua Institution. For two years, Jacob was a Professional Division student with Pacific Northwest Ballet for the years 2020-2022, where he got to perform with the company in a myriad of productions, such as George Balanchine's *The Nutcracker* and Kent Stowell's *Swan Lake*. Jacob joined Los Angeles Ballet in 2022 as a Company Member.

JONAS TUTAJ

Jonas grew up in Chicago Illinois and has been dancing with Los Angeles Ballet since 2022.





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MELISSA BARAK

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BRANDON LUSSIER

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SARAH-ASHLEY CHICOLA, SIMON
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ABIGAIL GROSS, KATE INOUE,
JULIANNE KINASIEWICZ,
LILLY LEECH, SANTIAGO PANIAGUA,
CESAR RAMIREZ, MARCOS RAMIREZ,
JACOB RAY, JACOB SOLTERO,
AND JONAS TUTAJ

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24 | 7:30PM BLACK GRACE & LOS ANGELES BALLET

Los Angeles Ballet

Tableaux Vivants

Choreography | Nicolas Blanc

Music | Jonny Greenwood

Dancers | Julianne Kinasiewicz and Jacob Ray with Kate Inoue, Marcos Ramirez, Brigitte Edwards, Jonas Tutaj, Sarah-Ashley Chicola, and Santiago Paniagua

Black Grace

Handgame

Choreography | Neil leremia

Lighting Design | JAX Messenger

Dancers | Ben Saveasoi, Demi-Jo Manalo, Fuaao Tutulu Faith Schuster, , James Washer, Leki Jackson-Bourke, Rodney Tyrell, Sione Fataua, Vincent Farane

Prelude, World Premiere

Choreography | Jodie Gates, in collaboration with the dancers

Cellist | Chia-Ling Chien

Music | J.S. Bach, Cello Suite No. 5 in C Minor: 1. Prelude

Lighting Designer | Catherine Pratt

Dancers | Andrea Yorita, Justin Pham, and Ryan Vyskocil

Prelude is made possible by the generosity of our underwriters and the Philharmonic Society, Laguna Beach Live! and the Laguna Dance Festival

Los Angeles Ballet

Reclamation (excerpt)

Choreography | Melissa Barak

Music | Ezio Bosso

Dancers | Abigail Gross, Lilly Leech, Simon Costello, Cesar Ramirez, and Jacob Soltero

Black Grace

Kiona and the Little Bird Suite

Choreography | Neil Ieremia

Music | Tolo, Tete, Kaleve, and Agamalu by Te Vaka

Lighting Design | JAX Messenger

Dancers | Ben Saveasoi, Demi-Jo Manalo, Fuaao Tutulu Faith Schuster, James Washer, Leki Jackson-Bourke, Rodney Tyrell, Sione Fataua, Vincent Farane

PRELUDE, A WORLD PREMIERE

Choreography | Jodie Gates

CHIA-LING CHIEN, CELLIST

Chia-Ling Chien was appointed as the Associate Principal Cello of the San Diego Symphony Orchestra in 2008 by Music Director Jahja Ling, and she joined the Orchestra in 2009.

Ms. Chien was born in Taipei, Taiwan, and began playing the piano at the age of six and cello at the age of nine. Her first public cello performance was a year later at the age of ten, soon followed by her first honor of winning first place of the National Taiwan Youth Cello Competition at the age of 12. Her awards include: four years as first prize winner in the Taipei Cello Competition; second prize winner of the National Taiwan Cello Competition; second prize winner of the International Taipei Chopin Piano Competition; The Best Bach Performance Prize for Strings at the Corpus Christi International Competition; winner of the Cleveland Institute of Music Concerto Competition; the Ellis A. Feiman Memorial Award in Cello; the Anna Sosenko Trust Foundation Award; and a Colburn Foundation instrument sponsorship.

As an active chamber musician and a recitalist, Ms. Chien has performed throughout the United States and Asia. Her festival appearances include the Pacific Music Festival; the Blossom Music Festival; the Aspen Music Festival and School; the Sarasota Music Festival; the Perlman Music Program; and La Jolla SummerFest. She has collaborated over the years with many musicians such as Gil Shaham, Vadim Repin, Itzhak Perlman, Augustin Hadelich, Olga Kern and Avi Avital.

Actively involved as an educator, Ms. Chien currently serves as Acting Professor of Cello at the University of San Diego. Every September, she also conducts a masterclass on both cello and chamber music at the SooChow University in her native country, Taiwan.

ANDREA YORITA, DANCER

Andrea Yorita is from Irvine California, where she received her classical ballet training at Academy of Dance, under the direction of Merle Sepel, Rebecca Tsivkin, and Mignon Furman. In 2012, she graduated as a Gillespie Scholar with a BFA in Dance Performance from the University of California, Irvine, where she studied under Jodie Gates, Molly Lynch, and Donald McKayle. Originally trained under the R.A.D. syllabus, Andrea has completed all Vocational R.A.D. exams with Distinction, as well as received the Solo Seal Award. In 2008, Andrea competed as a finalist in the Genee International Ballet Competition in Toronto, Canada. She has participated in the National Choreographers Initiative, as an apprentice, and the Traverse City Dance Project. Andrea was a 2016 Dance Finalist for the Clive Barnes Award. She joined BalletX in 2012 and spent 11 seasons with the company, touring nationally and internationally while working with a multitude of choreographers. She is now an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of the Arts and freelance artist.

JUSTIN PHAM, DANCER

Justin Pham is a dancer and choreographer originating from San Diego, California. He graduated from the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance with a BFA in Dance and Minor in Cinematic Arts, where he had the opportunity to study under renowned artists and directors such as William Forsythe, Jodie Gates, and Desmond Richardson. During his time in school, he signed with Go 2 Talent Agency, performed in iLuminate's Las Vegas show and was featured on "So You Think You Can Dance."

In addition to setting pieces across the country, he has directed and produced multiple independent dance films and was a finalist at the 2017 McCallum Choreography Festival in Palm Desert and the 2020 Capezio A.C.E Awards in Hollywood. Justin hopes to create a more cognitive and educational perspective on dance and choreography, specifically through the mediums of film and television, and works to become a multifaceted and interdisciplinary artist to innovate the dance industry for generations to come.

RYAN VYSKOCIL, DANCER

Originally from Maryland, Ryan Vyskocil is a dancer and freelance artist based in New York City.

Ryan studied at USC Kaufman, and performed works by William Forsythe, Jiří Kylián, Ohad Naharin, Merce Cunningham, Hans Van Mannen and Penny Saunders. Training under the guidance of Jodie Gates, Fiona Lummis, Thomas McManus, Bret Easterling, Bruce McCormick, Jennifer Lott, Yin Yue, and Peter Chu, Ryan dove into concert repertoire and training.

Through Kaufman Connections, he worked with students at the local elementary school, teaching Hip-Hop techniques and practices for two years. During this time he began to choreograph for concept video projects, and developing new work, playing with the relationship between musicality and hybridity.

Ryan worked with Andrea Miller and performed in Gallim's 2023 Joyce Theatre Anniversary residency last spring, reconstructing a previous work into a new narrative driven piece 'Castles' as well as a virtuosic high-energy piece 'Sama'. Since then he has worked with Betty Weinberger on '20 Something' at Arts On Site NYC, and with Jennifer Lott on 'The Cost Of Believing' at the James Fuentes Gallery in Los Angeles.

Ryan hopes to continue exploring the intersections of concert and commercial work, performing and collaborating at the forefront of cross-disciplinary exploration and creation.

ABOUT SYNCOPATED LADIES

Founded by Emmy-nominated Choreographer, Chloé Arnold, Syncopated Ladies is the most viewed Female Tap dance band in history. Known for their viral self-produced content, they were recognized by Beyoncé, who not only shared their work saying "They Killed It", she then transformed the homepage of Beyonce.com to feature Syncopated Ladies, and invited them to perform live internationally.

Beyoncé's support catapulted them onto a Global platform, and since then, Syncopated Ladies' trajectory has skyrocketed, amassing over 100 million views online and sold-out tour dates across the United States, Canada, and United Arab Emirates. They also have received praise from Whoopi Goldberg on The View, Janet Jackson, Ciara, Lupita Nyong'o, as well as many other celebrities and news outlets. Other appearances include Bel Air on Peacock, CNN's New Year's Eve Live, Good Morning America, The Late Late Show with James Corden, The Kelly Clarkson Show, So You Think You Can Dance, The Ellen DeGeneres Show, Global Citizen Week, New York Fashion Week, Essence Fest, Imagine Justice (featuring Common, J. Cole, and Andra Day), Glamour Women of the Year Awards, Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative at the US Open, JP Morgan Chase Women on the Move at Radio City Musical Hall, CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund, Women in the World Summit at Lincoln Center, Democratic National Convention and many more.

BIOGRAPHIES

CHLOÉ ARNOLD, FOUNDER & CHOREOGRAPHER

Emmy-nominated choreographer Chloé Arnold has choreographed over 50 episodes of The Late Late Show with James Corden featuring A-list actors from Will Smith and Hugh Jackman to pop superstars Ariana Grande and BTS. Her work can also be seen on other hit TV shows So You Think You Can Dance, Good Morning America, the Ellen Show, The Talk, A Black Lady Sketch Show, Hello, Jack! and John Legend and Chrissy Teigen's A Legendary Christmas. Chloe most recently choreographed the Apple TV+ musical film Spirited starring Will Ferrell, Ryan Reynolds, and Octavia Spencer and Jerry Seinfeld's Unfrosted for Netflix.

Discovered at a young age in Washington, DC by Debbie Allen, Chloé was embraced as her protegé and was inspired to expand the language of dance through Film, TV and Stage. Chloé is an international Tap star and founder of Syncopated Ladies, the most viewed Female Tap dance band in history, known for their viral self-produced content. Recognized by Beyoncé, who not only shared their work saying "They Killed It", she then transformed the homepage of Beyonce.com to feature Syncopated Ladies, and invited them to perform live internationally.

Her support catapulted them onto a Global platform, and since then, Syncopated Ladies' trajectory has skyrocketed, amassing over 100 million views online. They also received praise from Whoopi Goldberg on The View, Janet Jackson, Ciara, Lupita Nyong'o, as well as many other celebrities and news outlets. Live performance credits include CNN's New Year's Eve Live, Mariah Carey's Merry Christmas to All at Madison Square Garden, Good Morning America, So You Think You Can Dance, Global Citizen Week, New York Fashion Week, Essence Fest, Imagine Justice (featuring Common, J. Cole, and Andra Day), Glamour Women of the Year Awards, Billie Jean King Leadership Initiative at the US Open, JP Morgan Chase Women on the Move at Radio City Musical Hall, CFDA/Vogue Fashion Fund, Women in the World Summit at Lincoln Center, Democratic National Convention and many more.

Chloé was named one of LeBron James' "The Strongest," a campaign featured in Essence to celebrate his 16th Nike Sneaker release, was on The Root 100 List, and was featured in Shonda Rhimes and Microsoft's "Language of Leadership" panel discussion.

Chloé is also an entrepreneur who holds a degree in Film from Columbia University. She and her sister Maud produced the award-winning documentary Tap World and are the co-directors of the critically acclaimed DC Tap Festival. They have been recognized by Columbia University as Rising Stars, by the US House of Representatives as arts preservers and ambassadors and won the 33rd Annual Mayor's Arts Award for Excellence in Performing Arts.

Through everything, Chloé hasn't forgotten her roots and the journey it took to reach this point. Through the Chloe and Maud Foundation, they give back to the community by creating equal opportunity access to dance programming and education for underserved communities. During the pandemic, they gave free classes to over 25,000 students worldwide online and continued their after school programs in South Central LA, and Favelas in Rio De Janeiro, Brazil.

GISELE SILVA, DANCE CAPTAIN, DANCER

Gisele Silva is a performing artist, instructor and choreographer hailing from São Paulo, Brazil. As a Brazilian native, Ms. Silva has forged her path in the United States and made a name for herself as a leader in the global tap dance community. A member of hit female tap dance sensations Chloe Arnold's Syncopated Ladies, she has been gracing stages all over the U.S. Her work with Syncopated Ladies includes a national tour, and various performances including appearances at the Apollo Theater, Lincoln Center, Essence Festival, BET Awards, CNN's New Years Eve Live and more.

In addition to her work with Syncopated Ladies, Ms. Silva is a founding member of the acclaimed New York based tap company Music From The Sole, the brainchild of fellow Brazilian dancer, Leonardo Sandoval. Gisele was also recently seen playing the lead role of Clara in Dorrance Dance's production: The Nutcracker Suite which was featured in the 2023 Christmas video for the White House.

Gisele has performed at many prestigious venues including the New York City Center, Guggenheim, The Kennedy Center, Jacob's Pillow, Harlem Stage and The Joyce Theater. Due to her extensive work as a premier tap dancer, Gisele is an ambassador for Brazilian based dance wear brand, So Dança.

As a teaching artist, Gisele has taught for numerous tap festivals and conventions all over the world. She is a current faculty member on Turn it Up Dance Competition and Shake the Ground. She also teaches for after school programs in her home base city of Los Angeles, CA. Beyond tap dance, Gisele is an accomplished Jazz and modern dancer. She is a member of the Afro-Brazilian Dance Company Viver Brazil, where she serves as both a performer and teaching artist. Some of her commercial credits include ScHoolboy Q and Travis Scott's music video "Chopstix", DanceOn channel on YouTube, The Jones Project, Rock in Rio and more. You can also see Gisele in the Apple TV+ musical film, "Spirited" starring Will Ferrell, Ryan Reynolds and Octavia Spencer.

SYNCOPATED LADIES

DIRECTOR/CHOREOGRAPHER
CHLOÉ ARNOLD

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CHERISH MCDOWELL KALEENA RALLIS

WRITERS

MAUD ARNOLD CHERISH MCDOWELL CHLOÉ ARNOLD

MUSICAL DIRECTOR
CHANNING COOK HOLMES

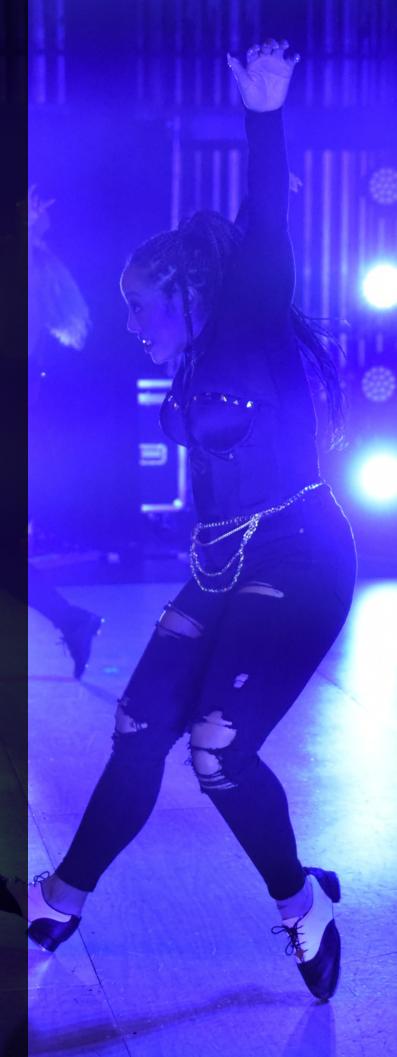
CO-PRODUCER
LEIGH JONTE

ASSOCIATE CHOREOGRAPHER
AVA BERNSTINE-MITCHELL (LIKE A BOY)

STAGE MANAGERBRANDEE LARA BARNABY

DANCE CAPTAIN
GISELE SILVA

ORIGINAL MUSIC
CHANNING COOK HOLMES
THE C.HOLMES ALL-STAR SQUAD



VIDEO PRODUCTION

CHLOÉ AND MAUD PRODUCTIONS
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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25 | 2:00 PM LOS ANGELES BALLET & SYNCOPATED LADIES

Los Angeles Ballet

Tableaux Vivants

Choreography | Nicolas Blanc

Music | Jonny Greenwood

Dancers | Julianne Kinasiewicz and Jacob Ray with Kate Inoue, Marcos Ramirez, Brigitte Edwards, Jonas Tutaj, Sarah-Ashley Chicola, and Santiago Paniagua

2024 LDF Young Artist Scholarship Recipients

Voice of Us

Choreography | Ethan Colangelo

Music | Handel performed by Franco Fabiola

Dancer | Evee Lee

Particle

Choreography | John Barclay
Music | John Barlcay
Dancer | Lucas Matzkin

Something that Holds Us Together

Choreography | Francine Peji Music | Note to Self by J. Cole Dancer | Francine Peji

La Fille Mal Gardee Variation

Choreography | Bronislava Nijinska; restaged by Dimitri Romanoff Music | Peter Ludwig Hertel Dancer | Preston Walker

Los Angeles Ballet

Reclamation (excerpt)

Choreography | Melissa Barak

Music | Ezio Bosso

Dancers | Abigail Gross, Lilly Leech, Simon Costello, Cesar Ramirez, and Jacob Soltero

Syncopated Ladies

Choreography | Chloé Arnold

Associate Choreography | Ava Bernstine-Mitchell (LIKE A BOY)

Dancers | Alysson Burton, Delaney Prescott, Gisele Silva, Ki'Leigh Williams, Orialis Ashley

MEET THE LADIES

LIKE A BOY (Ciara)

JAM SESSION

LET'S GO CRAZY (Prince)

WHEN DOVES CRY (Prince)

BREAK MY SOUL (Beyoncé)

SHE (Crystal Star)

FREEDOM (Beyoncé)

MEET OUR 2024 YOUNG ARTIST SCHOLARSHIP DANCERS

EVEE LEE

Evee Lee is a 16-year-old aspiring artist. She is a YoungArts Winner with Distinction of 2024. She attends Orange County School of the Arts (Commercial Dance); CAP, The Company; Hyphen Conservatory; and The Premier Ballet School of Orange County. In the past few years she has also experienced The Juilliard Summer Dance Program, Alonzo King LINES Summer Intensive, Laguna Dance Festival Summer Intensive, and more.

LUCAS MATZKIN

Lucas is currently completing his pre-professional training at the prestigious ABT Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School under the direction of Stella Abrera. Prior to this, he trained for six years at the ABT William J. Gillespie School at Segerstrom Center for the Arts beginning his ballet training at age six at Southland Ballet Academy. In 2023, Lucas was awarded the YAGP Grand Prix at the San Diego Regional Competition advancing to the Final Round at the YAGP Finals. In addition to his love for ballet, Lucas is a 10-dance ballroom dancer competing at the National level since age nine.

PRESTON WALKER

Preston Walker (16), an Orange County School of the Arts sophomore, has been developing in his training and love for dance since 2nd grade. Recent accomplishments include being a YoungArts winner in dance-ballet (2024), placing second and being invited to finals for the Youth America Grand Prix (YAGP) and the Youth International Ballet Competition (ADCIBC), and advancing to semifinalist in the ballet category in the Music Center's Spotlight competition (2023) and also round #2 of the still-in-progress 2024 Spotlight competition in both dance and ballet. Preston eagerly seeks out performance and training opportunities to further develop his skills and to share his passion for dance with the audience. He was recently cast as the Cavalier for the Ballet Repertory Theatre's 2023 production of The Nutcracker, spent last summer training at Houston Ballet on full scholarship, and will be attending both Ellison on a full scholarship and the Juilliard school this summer.

FRANCINE PEJI

Francine Mae Peji, or Frankie (she/her/hers), is a Filipino-American artist originally from Santa Clarita, CA. She is currently in her third year of college at UC Irvine's Claire Trevor School of the Arts as a BFA Dance Performance major, where she has worked with Lar Lubovitch, Charlotte Griffin, and Cyrian Reed, among other faculty members. As a performer and choreographer, Frankie believes in creating connections through movement and rhythms and finds joy in sharing her artistic voice, primarily through tap and contemporary dance, with others.

SAVE THE DATE!

20TH ANNUAL

JODIE GATES, FOUNDER & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

February 20-23, 2025