



October Dance

Dance at Illinois

**Black on Black:
A Celebration of Black Dance**

Thursday-Saturday
October 9-11, 2025
7:30pm

Tryon Festival Theatre



WELCOME

Welcome to Dance at Illinois' October Dance Concert, *Black on Black: A Celebration of Black Dance!*

In Fall 2022, the Krannert Art Museum hosted an exhibit entitled “*Black on Black on Black on Black*”, an installation by the only four Black faculty in the School of Art and Design at the time. This glorious expression of soul, place, identity, innovation, and personal truths inspired our celebration this year. We follow suit, proudly platforming our Black resident faculty artists as well as legendary choreographer Katherine Dunham and contemporary guest artists Rena Butler and Sonia D’Orléans Juste.

The works you will see tonight are related by curation and identity, but they are extraordinarily diverse. That simple fact should be no surprise. Black Art is not a monolith. The research of these incredible artists is deeply personal, rigorous, conceptual, creative, and marvelously unique.

I am proud of Dance at Illinois for choosing to highlight Black artistry during a year of political stress and disturbing attitudes which undermine minority contributions of all kinds. And I hope many other departments and disciplines worldwide will do the same, honoring and featuring artists from under-represented cultures loudly and proudly.

Assistant Professor Alexandra Barbier has curated an exciting series of community events in relationship to this year’s celebration. We will be collaborating with Krannert Center for the Performing Arts’ marquee season and local businesses such as Skateland, The Independent Media Center, and the Gallery Art Bar among others. Stay tuned!

And thank you for being here, because your presence matters!

Sara Hook
Head, Department of Dance
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

PROGRAM

October Dance

Dance at Illinois

Black on Black: A Celebration of Black Dance

Sara Hook, Head of Dance at Illinois and Concert Director

AFRIQUE (1950)

CHOREOGRAPHY

Katherine Dunham

STAGER

April Berry

I WOULD NOT DANCE (PREMIERE) AND HER NAME WAS MUSIC

PERFORMER

Cynthia Oliver

MARASSA

CHOREOGRAPHY

Roxane D'Orléans Juste
and Sonia D'Orléans Juste

LES PIGEONS (PREMIERE)

CHOREOGRAPHY

Rena Butler

PUNISH YA!

PERFORMER

Cynthia Oliver

#HIPPIES (PREMIERE)

CHOREOGRAPHY

C. Kemal Nance

*This performance will be presented
without an intermission.*

AFRIQUE (1950)

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CHOREOGRAPHY

Katherine Dunham

STAGED BY

April Berry

REHEARSAL ASSISTANT

Nayah Merisier

MUSIC

Estrada, Frietag, and Mendez

Arranged by Bernardo Noriego

ORIGINAL COSTUMES AND DÉCOR

John Pratt

COSTUME DESIGNER

Chantel Renee Booker

ASSISTANT COSTUME DESIGNER

Sophia Doret

LIGHTING DESIGNERS

Maggie Hershey

After Tim Hunter

SOUND DESIGNER

Ash Bernard-Clark

MEDIA DESIGNER

Ethan Borrok

STAGE MANAGER

Allyson Imig

HAIR AND MAKEUP SUPERVISOR

Paige Stewart-Rankins

DANCERS

Jayla Anderson

Rose Boder, Lily Freebery, Sofia Garcia,

Madison Harley, Jade LeJuene,

Jasmine O'Conner, Cheyenne Smith

Nik Owens

Hollis Bartlett, Jacob Henss,

Jeremiah Jordan, Siggie Tubbs

(Friday evening performance)

Elle Kramer

Understudy

Josephine Stierwalt

Villagers

Aiyah Joshua

Johnna Ferris-Goins

DRUMMERS

Cody Jensen

Adiare Thomas

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



**LEONARD (LEN)
LEWICKI**

Dance at Illinois thanks our dear friend Len Lewicki, sponsor of the production of *Afrique*, for his support of this production.

AILEY

**ALVIN AILEY DANCE
FOUNDATION**

Afrique has been made possible in part through generous support from the Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation.

CENTER for
**ADVANCED
STUDY**

**CENTER FOR
ADVANCED STUDY**

April Berry is a George A. Miller Visiting Artist through the Center for Advanced Study.



**MARIE-CHRISTINE
DUNHAM PRATT**

Dance at Illinois gratefully thanks Marie-Christine Dunham Pratt, daughter of Katherine Dunham and John Pratt, for her gracious support of this production of *Afrique*.

I WOULD NOT DANCE (PREMIERE) and HER NAME WAS MUSIC

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PERFORMER

Cynthia Oliver

MUSIC/SOUND

Jason Finkelman

COSTUME COORDINATOR

Robyn Farley

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Maggie Hershey

SOUND DESIGNER

Ash Bernard-Clark

HAIR AND MAKEUP SUPERVISOR

Paige Stewart-Rankins

MEDIA DESIGNER

Ethan Borrok

NOTES

Two of the pieces you will hear tonight are from my evening-length productions. However, the first,

I Would Not Dance, is not, and has never been performed live. *I Would Not Dance* will have its world premiere here in October Dance 2025! *Her Name Was Music* is a work from my evening-length piece *SHEMAD*. It premiered in New York in 2000 right before I accepted a position in the Dance Department at the University of Illinois. This text was inspired by a performance at Columbia University in New York where Ellen Fullman – on the Long-Stringed Instrument – was joined by Pauline Oliveros and the Deep Listening Band. The sound in the performance resonated with me and the research I was engaging for *SHEMAD*, a work contemplating women's powers and societal strategies for controlling, conspiring against, and deeming them less than the conjuring, world making, formidable forces they truly are.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to my dear friends: Sara Hook who convinced me to perform this evening and Lisa Gaye Dixon who has been a long-time outside eye and ear for my work and a tireless supporter. Thank you to the production team at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts for all their efforts, and to Alexandra Barbier for her blood, sweat, and tears in making this special year happen, inspired by our peers in Art+Design whose brilliant example continues to inspire. Finally, I dedicate these performances to Latrelle Bright whose spirit eclipses her name: a bright light she remains.

MARASSA

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CHOREOGRAPHY AND PERFORMERS

Roxane D'Orléans Juste in collaboration
with her sister, Sonia D'Orléans Juste

Original version 2022

Re-envisioned 2025

MUSIC

Eugène Bozza:
"Le Chant des Forêts"*

Justin Elie:
"Chants de la Montagne No. 1"
performed by Beverly Hillmer

*Frantz Casseus:
"Dance of the Hounsies" performed by Marc Ribot

Pablo Casals:
"Song of the birds"

Justin Elie:
"Chants de la Montagne No. 3"
performed by Beverly Hillmer

*Special thanks to Barry Griffiths for the permission
to use his recording of "Le Chant des Forêts"
by Eugene Bozza

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Maggie Hershey

MEDIA DESIGNERS

John Boesche and Ethan Borrok

SOUND DESIGNER

Ash Bernard-Clark

COSTUME COORDINATOR

Sophia Doret

HAIR AND MAKEUP SUPERVISOR

Paige Stewart-Rankins

STAGE MANAGER

Sabrina Fellingner

PROGRAM

NOTES

The nonlinear trajectory and exploratory nature of this dance offer clues and symbols that are grounded in Haitian folklore and mythology. The sacred twin spirits Marassa are part one soul and two bodies, and vice versa. The twins are considered healers and supernaturally powerful. I imagine how intertwined worlds live between the constructs of contemporary reality and our human intuitive relationship within nature's mystery. The sense of otherness and doubling are, at once, at the center, a lived and a virtual duet which speaks of the lifelong intuitive bond shared between two sisters.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Special permission to perform "Dance of the Hounsies" composed by Frantz Casseus (ASCAP).

Published by Third Side Music Inc., o/b/o Haitiana Music Company (ASCAP).

Sonia D'Orléans Juste
Jan Erkert Legacy Awardee

Thanks to our visionaries and dreamers, Sara Hook and Alexandra Barbier, to the Dance at Illinois community, the October Dance production and design teams, to my sister Sonia, and to dear friends and colleagues for their invaluable contributions: Beverly Hillmer, Mario Lamothe, and John Boesche.

LES PIGEONS

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CHOREOGRAPHY

Rena Butler

MUSIC

Franz Schubert
String Quartet No. 14 in D Minor, D. 810,
"Death and the Maiden,"
First Movement (Allegro)
Performed by Quatuor Arad

COSTUME COORDINATOR

Sophia Doret

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Maggie Hershey

SOUND DESIGNER

Ash Bernard-Clark

MEDIA DESIGNER

Ethan Borrok

HAIR AND MAKEUP SUPERVISOR

Paige Stewart-Rankins

STAGE MANAGER

Lauren Boesch

DANCERS

Ella Andersen, Emma Kunz, Sofia Garcia, Lily
Freebery, Jade Lajeune, Avi Pellegrinetti

NOTES

Les Pigeons is an exploration about flight and flock
patterning among bird tropes. The work oscillates
between individual and communal direction in
navigating clarity in progression.

PUNISH YA!
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PERFORMER

Cynthia Oliver

MUSIC/SOUND

Jason Finkelman

COSTUME COORDINATOR

Robyn Farley

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Maggie Hershey

SOUND DESIGNER

Ash Bernard-Clark

MEDIA DESIGNER

Ethan Borrok

HAIR AND MAKEUP SUPERVISOR

Paige Stewart-Rankins

NOTES

Punish Ya! is a text from the evening-length duet *BOOM!* that I performed with Illinois alum Leslie Cuyjet, who will also be presenting her own work in this “*Black on Black*” series. *BOOM!* has been my longest touring work thus far. We premiered it in its short version in 2012 as a part of Ishmael Houston Jones’ “*Parallels in Black*” series at St. Mark’s Church in New York. I was then commissioned to make it an evening-length production which premiered at New York Live Arts the following year and toured through 2016. It lives again here, appropriately in another presentation of Black contributions to the landscape of American aesthetics.

#HIPPIES

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CHOREOGRAPHY

C. Kemal Nance

REHEARSAL ASSISTANT

Lily Freebery

MUSIC

"DO 4 LOVE"

by Snoh Aalegra

Recorded music:

"Wash It Down" by Liquid Deep

COSTUME COORDINATOR

Robyn Farley

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Maggie Hershey

SOUND DESIGNER

Ash Bernard-Clark

MEDIA DESIGNER

Ethan Borrok

HAIR AND MAKEUP SUPERVISOR

Paige Stewart-Rankins

STAGE MANAGER

Anna Compton

DANCERS

Molly Brick, Kristen Der, Jenna Duncan, Leila Zou,
McKenna Garcia, Gillian Jarett, Jessica Ji, Katherine
Mason, Logan Radosits, Abigail Sobel, Lilyana
Spyrnal

NOTES

"When the power of love overcomes the love of
power, the world will know peace." (Jimi Hendrix)

#Hippies explores the emergence of a fictional,
counter "LOVE" culture. Inspired by Hippies from
the 1960s, the dance resuscitates the "make love,
not war" mantra to soothe the wounds from the
daily violence of a 2025 America.

I extend a special dole to my colleague, Paige
Cunningham-Caldarella, and rehearsal assistant, Lily
Freebery. Your contributions mean so much to me.

I am so deeply proud of the Department of Dance's
first-year students who have ACTIVATED their
journey in dance with this work. *#Hippies* is warmly
dedicated to Marian O. Nance. "What de chile say?"

PROFILES: CHOREOGRAPHERS



KATHERINE DUNHAM **(1909-2006)**

Katherine Dunham, a performer, anthropologist, choreographer, director, producer, author, essayist, educator, and humanist, was born in Chicago. She studied dance with Ludmilla Speranzeva and Vera

Mirova. Dunham received her bachelor's degree in social anthropology from the University of Chicago, a subject she chose because of its penetration into the lives of people the world-over and which later would prove so valuable in her construction of the codified technique and dance theatre based on primitive rhythms.

During her early career as a dancer and choreographer, Miss Dunham founded the Ballet Negre in Chicago in 1931 and the Negro Dance Group in 1937. She was director of the Writers Project and subsequently Dance Director for the WPA Federal Project in Chicago. In 1938, she collaborated with well-known costume and set designer John Pratt on *L'Ag'Ya*, a dance based on the folklore of Martinique. Mr. Pratt later became her husband and was designer of costumes and stage decor for the famous Dunham Company. His death in 1986 was keenly felt by all who had enjoyed the fruits of this unique 49-year partnership.

Dunham's range of accomplishments was far-reaching; in 1939, she opened at the Windsor Theatre in New York for a performance of *Tropics* and *Le Jazz Hot* and stayed for 13 weeks. Later, she created the dramatic role of Georgia Brown in the Broadway production of *Cabin in the Sky*. In Hollywood, Dunham made such films as *Star Spangled Rhythm*, *Stormy Weather*, and *Pardon My Sarong*. Dunham produced the musicals *Tropical Revue*, *Carib Song*, and *Bal Negre* in New York, and *Deux Anges Sont Venus* in Paris. She

also published many books and articles and recorded music in Mexico, Paris, and New York.

For over 30 years, Dunham maintained the only permanently self-subsidized dance troupe in America, touring to 57 countries in Europe, Asia, and South America. She translated her research and her vision of dance in the African diaspora, including the United States, into vivid works of choreography that were lauded the world over.

Many contemporary artists continue to create works for film, stage, and Broadway, which reflects Dunham's profound and indelible imprint and influence.

Early on, Katherine Dunham understood her responsibility to future generations and established a school in New York in 1943, devoting much of her energy to teaching. The Dunham School of Arts and Research, which offered studies in the performing arts, applied skills, humanities, and Caribbean research attracted actors, dancers, musicians and choreographers. Among the students of the New York Dunham School were Eartha Kitt, James Dean, Marlon Brando, Bob Fosse, Doris Duke, Warren Beatty, and Arthur Mitchell.

For many years, Dunham divided her time between Habitation LeClerc and East St. Louis, Illinois, where she established a Performing Arts Training Center while she was a professor at Southern Illinois University.

Artists and intellectuals the world over have lauded the beauty, the warmth of spirit, the scholarship, and the artistry of Katherine Dunham. Miss Dunham was honored for her achievements with numerous awards and 14 honorary degrees, including one from the University of Illinois. In 1957, the government of Haiti gave Dunham its highest

honor of Chevalier, Haitian Legion of Honor and Merit. She received a 1983 Kennedy Center Honors Award for Lifetime Achievement in the Arts and, in 1986, received the prestigious Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award among other awards too numerous to list.

In 1987, Alvin Ailey wanted to celebrate and share the genius of Dunham who had an incredible impact on him since he was a teenager, and so *The Magic of Katherine Dunham*, an evening-length retrospective of Dunham's choreography, was presented by the Ailey Company. Miss Dunham, with the assistance of several former Dunham Company dancers, reconstructed 14 of Dunham's most famous and memorable works spanning the 1930s to 1950s on the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater.

Miss Dunham died in 2006 at the age of 96.

Her legacy lives on through the Dunham Technique, which continues to be taught globally, and through her groundbreaking research into the dance of the African diaspora, which has permanently influenced modern, jazz, and musical theater dance forms.



APRIL BERRY

**(Staging and Direction for
Katherine Dunham's *Afriqué*)**

April Berry is a dance director, certified master instructor, dance educator, stager, choreographer, and an internationally acclaimed former

principal dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. A recognized dance educator and teacher, Berry has taught at the Ailey Extension in New York City, The School at Jacobs Pillow, American Dance Festival, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Kansas City Ballet Academy, Charlotte Ballet Academy, University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC), University of Missouri at Kansas City (UMKC), and most recently at Point Park University in Pittsburgh. Berry has taught ballet, jazz, Horton, Ailey Movement, and repertory classes, and is a certified Master Dunham Technique Instructor, receiving her master's certificate directly from American dance pioneer Dr. Katherine Dunham.

Berry was born and raised in Queens, New York, by a West Indian mother and a Harlem-born father. She began her professional training in ballet at the National Academy of Ballet and Theatre Arts in New York City and trained on scholarships at Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center (Ailey School). Berry studied ballet, Dunham, Graham, and Horton techniques, as well as jazz and African Caribbean folkloric and popular dance forms at the Escuela Nacional de Danza (National School of Dance) in Havana, Cuba. Berry's professional dance career began at the age of 17 in Switzerland with a state theatre ballet company, and she subsequently danced with various regional ballet companies in the United States and as a guest artist with the Teatro LaScala Ballet in Milan, Italy. Berry has been blessed to work closely with many of the most celebrated

PROFILES: CHOREOGRAPHERS

choreographers and dance artists of the 20th century, dancing the signature choreographies of Katherine Dunham, Lester Horton, George Balanchine, Alvin Ailey, Donald McKayle, Talley Beatty, Louis Johnson, Todd Bolender, Choo San Goh, Hans Van Manen, Billy Wilson, John Butler, and in works by many other renowned choreographers from the world of ballet, contemporary modern, and jazz dance.

As a dance artist with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Berry performed on stages around the world under Founding Artistic Director Alvin Ailey and Artistic Director Emerita Judith Jamison, and was honored to represent the Ailey Company as a solo dancer on two Ailey season posters. Berry is a featured dancer in the recent documentary *AILEY* by filmmaker Jamila Wignot, and has performed in Ailey Company videos and on various television specials, most notably on two televised Kennedy Center Honors programs celebrating the life and work of Katherine Dunham and of Alvin Ailey.

Ms. Berry has been actively involved in the field of dance education and community engagement since 1992, and she has developed and created award-winning programs as Director of Education and Community Engagement at Kansas City Ballet and at North Carolina Dance Theatre (now Charlotte Ballet). Berry has presented at various national dance conferences, has written for Dance/USA's online publication *From the Green Room*, and collaborated on "Legacy, Evolution and Transformation in The Magic of Katherine Dunham," an article in the 2018 issue of the Collegium of African Diaspora Dance (CADD) publication *Talking Black Dance: Inside Out/Outside In*.

In 2014, Berry was appointed Artistic Director of Dallas Black Dance Theatre, the first director following the retirement of Founding Artistic Director Ann Williams. Berry served in

that capacity during the 2014-2015 season. She currently serves the field as artist-in-residence, master teacher, guest lecturer, and dance consultant. Ms. Berry was honored to be invited by Dance/USA to serve as Founding Chair of the inaugural Dance/USA Community Engagement and Education Directors Affinity Group from 2018-2021, and with an award for Outstanding Achievement in the Field of Dance from The International Association of Blacks in Dance, among others.



RENA BUTLER
(Choreographer)

Rena Butler hails from Chicago and began her studies at The Chicago Academy for the Arts. She studied overseas at Taipei National University of the Arts in Taiwan, and received her BFA from SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance. Butler has performed with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, A.I.M by Kyle Abraham, Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company, David Dorfman Dance, the Kevin Wynn Collection, Pasos Con Sabor Salsa Dance Company, and Gibney Company.

A recipient of the prestigious 2019 Princess Grace Foundation Award for Choreography and San Francisco's 2024 Isadora Duncan Dance Award for Outstanding Achievement in Choreography, Butler has created works for Het Nationale Ballet (The Netherlands), National Ballet of Canada, San Francisco Opera's *Orpheus and Euridice*, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Norrdans (Sweden), A.I.M by Kyle Abraham, Gauthier Dance in Stuttgart (Germany), Lyric Opera of Chicago's *Proximity*, Cincinnati Ballet, Le Ballet de L'Opéra Grand Avignon and Arles Youth Ballet Company (France), the New Orleans Museum of Modern Art, SALT Dance, a film

for Third Coast Percussion and Devonté Hynes (aka Blood Orange), Oregon Ballet Theater, The Juilliard School, Oklahoma City Ballet, Parsons Dance, TEDxChicago Virtual Salon 3.0: Design Your Life, Charlotte Ballet, BalletX, and more. She was spotlighted in *Dance Magazine's* "On the Rise" feature in 2013 and was the featured cover story for *Dance Magazine's* November 2021 issue.



ROXANE D'ORLÉANS JUSTE
(Choreographer/Performer)

Roxane D'Orléans Juste was born in Canada and is of Haitian descent. She shares her artistic homes between Champaign-Urbana, New York City, and Caracas, Venezuela.

During her 35-year career, D'Orléans Juste performed and taught worldwide with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company, Annabelle Gamson Dance Solos, and the Limón Dance Company. Hailed for her technical and musical versatility, D'Orléans Juste was awarded New York's "Bessie" Award for Outstanding Sustained Achievement and Canada's Jacqueline Lemieux Prize for Outstanding Contribution to Dance. Her choreography has been commissioned and presented in Canada, the United States, Europe, South America, and Israel. She was named choreographer-in-residence for the Fundación Contemporánea Corearte in Caracas, Venezuela, and co-chairs its Executive Board (2009). D'Orléans Juste earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in dance in 2021 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where she is honored to serve as Associate Professor of Dance and MFA Program Director.



SONIA D'ORLÉANS JUSTE
(Choreographer/Performer)

Sonia D'Orléans Juste is a dancer, teacher, and choreographer of Canadian and Haitian origins. She earned her Teaching Diploma from Canada's National Ballet School, and Professional Modern Training diploma from The School of Toronto Dance Theatre (now Dance Arts Institute). Her extensive international performing and touring career began in Quebec and Toronto with Le Groupe Danse Partout and Dancemakers. She joined the Batsheva Dance Company in Israel as a principal dancer from 1989 to 1999, and afterward performed in the opera tour and in Jerusalem with Beit Lessin Theatre and Rina Shenfeld Company. Spanning four decades, her teaching career is shared between the development of young professional dance students and that of seasoned professionals. Her research has been supported by the Canada Council for the Arts and the Keren Sharett Foundation. A prolific choreographer, her works were commissioned and produced for the CURTAIN UP International Dance Festival and the Nahara Dance Company, and she collaborated with choreographer Nimrod Freed and with French Israeli singer Orlika for two music video releases, *Shalom/Salam* and *Un petit bout de toi*.



SARA HOOK
(Concert Director, Head of the Department of Dance)

Sara Hook is a performer, choreographer, and educator who actively promotes the synergy between the professional and academic arenas of dance. Her

PROFILES: CHOREOGRAPHERS

diverse performing career includes touring the world with Nikolais Dance Theater, dancing for Martha Graham luminaries Pearl Lang and Jean Erdman, and being a frequent guest artist/collaborator with David Parker and the Bang Group. Her choreography has been produced in numerous New York City venues (Dance Theater Workshop-now NYLA, Danspace, Dixon Place, Symphony Space, DanceNowNYC's Series at Joe's Pub of the Public Theater, etc.), in venues across 25 American states, and in the Netherlands, Canada, Mexico, Italy, Ecuador, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic. Both her work and teaching focus on questions about dance history, gender expression and identity, and the role of somatic exploration in meaning-making.

Sara Hook holds a BFA from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, an MFA from New York University, and a certification as a movement analyst from the Laban/Bartenieff Institute of Movement Studies. She has toured widely as a guest artist and been an adjudicator for numerous American College Dance Conferences. She has taught at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, Princeton University, Paul Taylor Dance Company Summer Intensives, and the Bates Dance Festival.

Currently, Hook is Professor and Head of the Department of Dance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she received the College of Fine and Applied Arts Excellence in Teaching Award in 2010 and the campus award for Excellence in Faculty Mentoring in 2020. Her service to the field includes being a founding member of The Pink Ribbons Project, Dancers in Motion Against Breast Cancer. Hook's aim (in all her roles) is to be a good role model and citizen, to help create opportunities for other dance artists, and to make work that both honors our artistic forebears and enlivens our experience of contemporary culture



C. KEMAL NANCE (Choreographer)

C. Kemal Nance, a native of Chester, Pennsylvania, is a performer, choreographer, and scholar of African Diasporic Dance. Attendees at the Colloquium of Black Arts in Bahia, Salvador, knighted him "Kibon" – the name of a Brazilian ice cream – to reflect the "delicious time" they experienced in his movement class. The late Kariamu Welsh, progenitor of Umfundalai contemporary African dance technique, named him Oluko, a Yoruba derivation she used to designate him as Umfundalai's senior master teacher.

Dr. Nance's leadership in the National Association of American African Dance Teachers (NAAADT) has resulted in teachers' training programs for budding African dance artists to be credentialed in the Umfundalai technique. Currently, Nance serves as the Executive Board President of the Collegium of African Diaspora Dance (CADD) and as the Associate Head of the Department of Dance at the University of Illinois where he is an Associate Professor.

For many years, Nance performed as a principal dancer with Kariamu & Company: Traditions in Philadelphia and as a recurring guest artist with the late Chuck Davis' African American Dance Ensemble (AADE) in Durham. He currently directs the Nance Dance Collective (www.blackmendance.com), an all-male dance initiative that produces dance works about Black manhood. His choreographies have appeared on national and international stages including the Afro Dance Xplosion Showcase in London and the Stella Maris Dance Ensemble's seasons of dance in Kingston (Jamaica).

In 2023, Nance was awarded the Illinois Arts Council's Arts Fellowship and the National Dance Education Organization's (NDEO) Outstanding Achievement in Higher Education Award. His scholarly research has been published in several anthologies including Karen Bond's *Dance and the Quality of Life*, Kariamu Welsh's and Esailama Diouf's *Hot Feet and Social Change: African Dance in Diasporic Communities*, Doug Risner's *Masculinity, Intersectionality and Identity: Why Boys (Don't) Dance*, and Thomas DeFrantz' forthcoming *Oxford Handbook for Black Dance*. Nance's own forthcoming *Dancing Our Africa: Kariamu Welsh and the Legacy of Umfundalai* will be published by the University of Illinois Press.



CYNTHIA OLIVER (Performer)

Cynthia Oliver joined the Dance at Illinois faculty in August 2000. She is a practicing dance artist who has danced with numerous companies including David Gordon Pick Up Co., Bebe Miller Company, Ronald

K. Brown/Evidence, and Tere O'Connor Dance. A woman of Caribbean descent, Oliver creates work that is a mélange of dance theatre and the spoken word, incorporating textures of Caribbean performance with African and American sensibilities.

Early in her career, she won a New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Award and was named Outstanding Young Choreographer by the German magazine *Ballet Tanz* (2002). Since then, Oliver's work has gained greater national and international attention. Her last evening-length production, *Virago-Man Dem*, examined the nuances and complexities of contemporary black masculinities, premiered at the 2017 Brooklyn Academy of Music's Next

Wave Festival, toured the country, and closed at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts. Her new work, *Turn.Turning TURNT*, will premiere in summer 2026 at Bates Dance Festival in Maine and will tour nationally.

Oliver earned a PhD in performance studies from New York University, and her scholarly work focuses on performance in the Anglophone Caribbean, particularly in the US Virgin Islands. She has published works in anthologies, exhibition booklets, the *Movement Research Performance Journal*, and *Women & Performance*. Her single-authored book, *Queen of the Virgins: Pageantry and Black Womanhood in the Caribbean*, was published by the University Press of Mississippi in 2009. She teaches dancing techniques, composition, performance, post-colonial and feminist theory, and courses emphasizing the African-American and African-Caribbean influences in American performance.

Oliver has received numerous awards from national arts foundations to support her work, including Creative Capital, Illinois Arts Council Choreography Fellowships, the Rockefeller Foundation's MAP Fund, the New England Foundation's National Dance Project, and awards from the National Performance Network's Creation Fund, among others. In 2011, she was selected for the nomination-only University Scholar award from Illinois for her research and performance work. From 2017-2022, she served a five-year term as Associate Vice Chancellor for Research in the Humanities, Arts, and Related Fields. In 2020, Oliver was named Center for Advanced Studies Professor; in 2021, a United States Artist Fellow and a Doris Duke Artist; and in 2022, a Guggenheim Fellow. In fall 2023, she was appointed Special Advisor to the Chancellor for Arts Integration to help the campus uplift and amplify the role of the arts in every area of research, campus, and community life.

PROFILES: CHOREOGRAPHERS



NAYAH MERISIER

(Rehearsal Assistant)

Nayah Merisier is a Haitian-American artist from South Florida with a BFA from New World School of the Arts (NWSA). While attending NWSA, Merisier performed in works by Robert Battle, Ronald

K. Brown, Paul Taylor, and Darshan Singh Bhuller. She continued her training with The Ailey School and the Joffrey Ballet School. Merisier also attended programs at The School at Jacob's Pillow, including the Afro-Latin Dance Immersion Program and the Dunham Legacy Revisited Program. Alongside her choreographic experience, Merisier is trained in classical ballet, modern, and jazz techniques, as well as West African, Afro-Caribbean, and commercial dance styles. Most recently, Merisier was a swing in *GODDESS: A New Musical* at the Public Theater in New York City, and made her artist debut in performances at Jacob's Pillow with Sekou McMiller & Friends.

PROFILES: PERFORMERS



ELLA ANDERSEN
(Dancer)

Ella Andersen is in her third year as a dance BFA at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She has most recently performed in Roxane D'Orléans Juste's restaging of José Limón's piece, *The Winged*;

Rebecca Netti-Fiol's piece, *Ayre*; and Yuno Kimura and Damiyah William's senior theses. Andersen is grateful for the opportunity to perform in this year's October Dance and would like to thank Rena Butler for her choreography, Paige Cunningham-Caldarella for her direction, and Lily Freebery, Avi Pellegrinetti, Jade Lajeune, Emma Kunz, and Sofia Garcia for their dedication to the piece and their teamwork as a cast.



JAYLA ANDERSON
(Dancer, she/her)

Jayla Anderson is a third-year BFA dance major at the University of Illinois, originally from Jefferson City, Missouri. She began her training as a competitive dancer, studying styles such as ballet, jazz, hip-hop, tap,

and contemporary. At the University of Illinois, Anderson has performed works by choreographers including Anna Sapozhnikov, Dare Ayorinde, Paige Cunningham Caldarella, Anna Rogovoy, and more. As a highlight of her time at U of I, Anderson recently performed at the Joyce Theater in *The Winged* by José Limón, restaged by Roxane D'Orléans Juste. Beyond performance, Anderson is deeply involved in the dance community as a student intern for Dance at Illinois and serves as Vice President of the Student Board, where she helps foster connection and collaboration among her peers.



HOLLIS BARTLETT
(Dancer, he/him)

Hollis Bartlett is a performer, teacher, creator, and advocate for the arts. His curiosity for movement and performance began at an early age and led him to New York University where he received a BFA in dance

followed by study abroad at the Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance in Austria. He spent 12 years as a performer, rehearsal director, and licensing/staging manager for Doug Varone and Dancers, touring throughout the US and internationally. As an educator, he has taught at the Bates Dance Festival and at universities such as Rutgers, Montclair, and SUNY Purchase. Bartlett collaborates with life partner Nattie Trogdon constructing dance works, films, and research-based practices aimed to disrupt assumptions of performance and personhood. They've presented work at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's River to River Festival, Center for Performance Research, the 14th Street Y, and Judson Church, and have received supported artist residencies with the Marble House Project, The Croft, and Monira Foundation. In Spring 2023, they were the first collaborative pair invited to participate in the New Directions Choreography Lab at The Ailey School.



ROSE BODER
(Dancer)

Rose Boder is a sophomore at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign pursuing both a BFA in dance and a BS in chemical engineering. She is originally from Knoxville, Tennessee, where she trained in modern, ballet, and jazz techniques at Dancers Studio under the direction of Irena Linn for 15 years. She danced for the Tennessee Children's Dance Ensemble until its closing and subsequently was a founding

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member of Ignitel, for which she has both performed and choreographed. During her first year with Dance at Illinois, she performed in mainstage works by Rachel Rizzuto, Banafsheh Amiri, and Anna Lillig, as well as many student works. She had the honor of performing at both ACDA's regional and national festivals last spring.



MOLLY BRICK
(Dancer, she/her)

Molly Brick is a first-year BA student from Tualatin, Oregon. A proud graduate from Tualatin High School and alumna from Fired Up Dance Academy where she trained in a wide range of techniques, Brick is thrilled to continue her academic and artistic knowledge with Dance at Illinois. She is excited to feed her interest in the human body as both a dance major and a kinesiology major through the University of Illinois dual degree program. She looks forward to a career full of performing and learning the endless possibilities dance has to offer.



KRISTEN DER
(Dancer, she/her)

Kristen Der begins her first year as a BFA in dance candidate and is pursuing a dual degree in molecular and cellular biology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is originally from Los Angeles where she started her dancing career at the age of four at Pasadena Civic Ballet. She studied various styles of dance including ballet, tap, jazz, character, and hip-hop. She is so thankful for her friends and family who have supported her dancing throughout the years and is super excited to begin her next chapter with Dance at Illinois.



JENNA DUNCAN
(Dancer)

Jenna Duncan is a first-year dance student who is also majoring in psychology and pursuing Yoga Teacher Training at the University of Illinois. She was born in New Mexico and started ballet at the age of seven at Miss Teresa's Ballet in Crete, Illinois. While in high school, she continued to train pre-professionally in the Chicago area with A&A Ballet and summer intensives (Cincinnati Ballet and others). Duncan has taught ballet, pointe, and other styles for students ranging from toddlers to adults and has participated in several local performances. She is excited to make her University of Illinois debut with peers in Dr. Kemal Nance's work, and is inspired by the energy and creative process of the artists of Dance at Illinois.



JASON FINKELMAN
(Music/Sound)

Jason Finkelman combines laptop electronics and acoustic instrumentation to create a distinct ambient, avant-world sound. A specialist on the single string musical bow *berimbau*, Finkelman's roots in improvised music include founding the New York City-based trio *Straylight* in 1992 and decades of performances with genre-blurring improvisers. As a composer for dance, Finkelman has collaborated with choreographer Cynthia Oliver for over 30 years and received a "Bessie" award as a composer for her full-evening work *SHEMAD* (2000). His most recent commissioned dance score is *SHIFT* (2025), choreographed and performed by Renée Archibald and Mallory Rubin at Whitman College. Urbana-Champaign-based since 2000, Finkelman leads the ever-evolving ensemble *Kuroshio* which released its eponymous CD on Asian Improv Records (2020), and Improvisers Exchange,

a performance ensemble of the School of Music at the University of Illinois. Finkelman was established as Director of Global Arts Performance Initiatives at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts in 2012.

**LILY FREEBERY****(Dancer, she/her)**

Lily Freebery is a senior pursuing a BFA in dance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She studied at The Academy of Dance Arts in Warrenville, Illinois, from the age of six, under the direction of

Sherry Moray and Ricky Ruiz. During her past three years at the University of Illinois, she has had the pleasure of performing works by Alfonso Cervera, Paige Cunningham Caldarella, Alexandra Barbier, Dr. Kemal Nance, and Soujung Lim, as well as senior thesis performances. One of her most recent privileges was her debut at The Joyce Theater in José Limón's *The Winged*, restaged by Roxanne D'Orléans Juste. Freebery is honored to have worked with April Berry and Rena Butler this semester and to be performing again at Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

**MCKENNA GARCIA****(Dancer, she/her)**

McKenna Garcia is a first-year BFA student from Mahomet, Illinois. She recently graduated from Mahomet-Seymour High School and Art in Motion Dance Studio in Champaign, Illinois. Garcia is

thrilled to continue her dance studies with Dance at Illinois. In addition to her BFA, she plans to pursue a

double major in human development and family studies, with aspirations of building a career as a choreographer and as a Child Life Specialist. She would like to express her heartfelt gratitude to her family for their unwavering love and support throughout her dance journey. Garcia extends a special thank you to Tricia Trimble and Skylee Peterson for their guidance and encouragement, and for helping her become the artist she is today.

**SOFIA GARCIA****(Dancer, she/her)**

Sophia Garcia is a versatile BFA dance major whose training spans ballet, modern, contemporary, and hip-hop. Originally a competition dancer, she expanded her artistry while studying at ChiArts High School where she

developed a strong foundation in modern dance. Garcia has attended multiple prestigious summer intensives and performed in a wide range of works, highlighting both her technical skill and expressive versatility. With experience across various studios and styles, she brings passion, discipline, and adaptability to the stage. Currently a sophomore at the University of Illinois, Garcia is dedicated to furthering her training. She aspires to join a professional dance company where she hopes to share her artistry with diverse audiences.

**MADISON HARLEY****(Dancer)**

Madison Harley, a multi-talented performer born and raised in the south suburbs near Chicago, has experience as a dancer, singer, actor, model, and photographer. She has explored many dance genres,

including jazz, hip-hop, contemporary, ballet, Dunham and

PROFILES: PERFORMERS

Cunningham Techniques, and more, and she has performed in various cities in North America. Harley, a junior at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign pursuing a BFA in dance with a minor in advertising, is a member of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority. She credits her budding career in dance to the dance instructors and coaches who inspired her, from I-Dance Chicago (12 years), Homewood-Flossmoor High School Varsity Dance team (Co-Captain), and American Dance Center (Homewood, IL). She also trained in liturgical dance at her local church for seven years. As Harley continues her education and growth in all areas of dance and creativity, she aspires to a promising career and looks forward to future opportunities.



JACOB HENSS
(Dancer, he/him)

Jacob Henss is a dancer, producer, choreographer, and teacher primarily based in the Midwest. He currently works at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign as a Teaching Assistant Professor. In the past, he

has been an instructional professor at Illinois State University and adjunct faculty member at Millikin University since 2020, where he was awarded Outstanding Adjunct Faculty in 2023. He holds an MFA in dance from the University of Illinois (2019-22) where he was awarded the Vannie L. Sheiry Memorial Award for Best Graduate Performer in 2021 and 2022. He is also a graduate of Webster University (2013–2017) with a BA in dance and music, where he was awarded dance honors and the Emerging Choreographer Award. Henss has performed with the Modern American Dance Company (MADCO), located in St. Louis, Missouri, where he was a MADCO2 founding member (2017–2018) and later an apprentice for the leading company (2018–1209). He currently serves as Producer and Artistic Director for Space Station Dance Residency, an organization dedicated to presenting experimental dance work in the greater St. Louis area.



BEVERLY HILLMER
(Pianist)

Beverly Hillmer is a University of Illinois graduate, having received a Bachelor of Music in piano under William Heiles. She earned a Master of Music in piano performance from Indiana University where she studied with Abby Simon. Classically trained, she began to learn the art of being a dance musician and company pianist with International Ballet Rotaru in Atlanta. Hillmer has played company class for Stars of the Bolshoi, Hubbard Street Dance, and the Mark Morris Dance Group. Since 2018, she has been a guest musician for Houston Ballet's summer intensives. Currently, she is a dance musician at the University of Illinois where she enjoys playing ballet, modern, musical theatre, and Dance for People with Parkinson's classes.



GILLIAN JARETT
(Dancer, she/her)

Gillian Jarett is a first-year BFA student from Louisville, Kentucky. As a recent graduate of the Youth Performing Arts School (YPAS) and Louisville Dance Alliance, she is ecstatic to continue her education in the arts at the University of Illinois with Dance at Illinois, following in the footsteps of her mentors and Illinois alumni Josh and Lauren Ford. Alongside a BFA in dance, she is pursuing a minor in musical theatre and is deeply passionate about choreographing. She would like to thank her family and friends for their endless support. Jarett's recent credits include Vandervier-Ford Dance Company's *Strike* (2025), YPAS' *Grease* (2024), and Joffrey Ballet School's *SPECTRUM* (2024).



CODY JENSEN
(Drummer)

Cody Jensen specializes in tonal percussion and drum set. He began playing music for dancers in the Mande tradition of West Africa. After studying djembe and dunduns with master drummer

Bolokada Conde for several years, Conde asked him to perform on and produce an album of traditional music on location in Guinea. While there, Jensen took advantage of the opportunity to study balafon with Khaly Camara. Additionally, Jensen studied Balinese traditional music and dance accompaniment with I Ketut Gede Asnawa at the University of Illinois and with I Nyoman Astita in Denpasar, Bali. Currently, Jensen tours with Bones Jugs 'N Harmony, playing traps, steel drum, xylophone, and rhythm bones.



JESSICA JI
(Dancer, she/her)

Jessica Ji is a first-year dance and kinesiology major at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She received studio dance training as a company and competition dancer at Jenny's Dance Centre before

attending college for eight years. She is a graduate of Deerfield High School where she participated in the dance company in addition to being a student choreographer for school musicals. Ji has trained in the styles of ballet, jazz, tap, hip-hop, contemporary, and modern. Although she won many titles as a soloist during her time as a competition dancer, she most enjoys being able to share her expression with others in group pieces. Ji is incredibly grateful for all the amazing opportunities she has received growing up and the space dance has offered for her to explore her artistry in a beautifully fulfilling way.



JEREMIAH JORDAN
(Dancer)

Jeremiah Jordan is a Chicago native whose passion for movement began long before his formal training. A self-taught dancer until the age of 15, he honed his craft at Hawkins House of Dance before expanding

his training at renowned institutions such as Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Chicago Multicultural Dance Center, and others. Currently a junior at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Jordan has made a lasting impact on campus through his artistry and leadership. He choreographed for the Black Student Union's Cotton Club and proudly holds the distinction of being the first male member of the Illinettes Dance Team. With aspirations of attending the Martha Graham School after graduation, Jordan is determined to further his artistry and ultimately join a professional dance company, continuing to share his voice, vision, and movement with the world.



ELLE KRAMER
(Dancer, she/her)

Elle Kramer is a sophomore BFA dance major from Elmhurst, Illinois. She began her training as a competitive dancer at a local studio and also performed in concert dance with the York

Community High School Dance Company. While at York, she appeared in numerous plays and musicals, including *Godspell*, *Bandstand*, *The Wolves*, and *A Man of No Importance*. Kramer has trained extensively in ballet, modern, jazz, hip-hop, contemporary, lyrical, and musical theatre, among other styles. At the University of Illinois, she has performed in a work by Rachel Rizzuto and participated in several creative processes. After graduation, Kramer hopes to continue performing while pursuing a career as a choreographer and creator.

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EMMA KUNZ
(Dancer)

Emma Kunz is a second-year dual-degree candidate pursuing her BFA in dance and her BS in clinical psychology. From Gurnee, Illinois, she has trained with various companies throughout Chicago for the past few years. Her highlights include performing in the Gus Giordano School of Dance Summer Intensive, Visceral Dance Chicago Professional Intensive, and the DanceWorks Chicago Intensive. She has also been seen in various pieces presented by Dance at Illinois and is excited to participate in the work of all the talented people within the department.



JADE LAJEUNE
(Dancer)

Jade Lejeune is a multi-talented performer currently residing in the northern suburbs of Chicago. She is a dancer, singer, and actress with a strong background in various dance styles including ballet, contemporary, jazz, modern, and hip-hop. Currently a junior at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign pursuing a BFA in dance and a minor in legal studies on the pre-law track. Lajeune most recently performed in "Tesseract," the Dance Senior Thesis Concert. She credits her prior dance education to Kaleidoscope Dance and Movement Center, and extends her gratitude to her family, friends, and mentors for their unwavering support of her artistic and academic endeavors.



KATHERINE MASON
(Dancer, she/her)

Katherine Mason is a first-year BFA student from Arlington Heights, Illinois. She began dancing at the age of three through the Arlington Heights Park District where she trained in various dance styles and was fortunate to work with a number of dance companies such as Giordano Dance Chicago and Deeply Rooted Dance Theater. Through her school dance program, she had the honor of performing at Disney World and the Illinois State Dance Festival. Mason is looking forward to continuing her education in dance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and would like to thank her family and friends for their constant support and encouragement as she pursues her passion for dance.



JASMINE O'CONNOR
(Dancer, she/her)

Jasmine is a central Illinois-based dancer, choreographer, and teacher. She previously trained and currently teaches dance at the Urbana Fine Arts Center. She plans to receive her Bachelor of Arts in dance and Bachelor of Science in chemistry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in May 2026. During her time with Dance at Illinois, she has studied a diverse range of styles and performed in works by Merce Cunningham, Rebecca Netti-Fiol, Jade Katch, and many undergraduate thesis works. In addition to performing, O'Connor is passionate about exploring the intersectionality of dance and chemistry, the ability to learn about physical dance movement through chemistry, and vice versa.



NIK OWENS
(Dancer, he/him/his)

Nik Owens, from Los Angeles, began his movement experience as a competitive gymnast for 15 years. He attended Wesleyan University where he received a BA in dance and a certificate in environmental studies. He lived in New York City for 12 years, where he worked with David Dorfman Dance, Raja Kelly/The Feath3r Theory, Kyle Marshall Choreography, Tiffany Mills Company, Hélène Simoneau Danse, David Parker and The Bang Group, Kayla Farrish-Decent Structures Arts, Dual Rivet, 10 Hairy Legs, Bryn Cohn and Artists, and others. Currently, he works and performs with Cynthia Oliver's COCo Dance Theatre. Owens has taught at institutions such as the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Wesleyan University, Gibney Dance Center, Rivertown Dance Academy, Dancewave (Brooklyn), and many others. He has choreographed a number of solos, most notably *The Right Kind*, which premiered at Wesleyan University in 2021.



AVI PELLEGRINETTI
(Dancer, they/them)

Avi Pellegrinetti is an interdisciplinary dancer and creator studying at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where they have held many leadership positions such as co-founder of the makesmewanna art collective and president of the Dance at Illinois Student Board. During their time at Illinois, they have had the pleasure to work with notable artists such as Alfonso Cervera, Kemal Nance, Cynthia Oliver, Anna Peretz Rogovoy, Sojung Lim, Adanya Gilmore, Gabriel Bruno Eng Gonzalez, Paige Cunningham Calderella, and many undergraduate students. They have completed interdisciplinary dance research in film, psychology, disability theory, evolution, quantum

physics, and punk, as well as studying abroad in Finland and Mexico. Pellegrinetti will be graduating in May 2026 with a BFA in dance, a minor in integrative biology, and certificates in undergraduate research and criptistemology.



LOGAN RADOSITS
(Dancer)

Logan Radosits, a first-year BFA student from Aurora, Illinois, has been passionate about the arts since childhood. He recently completed a 14-year journey as a competitive dancer with Xtreme Dance Force of Naperville, Illinois. A 13-time Victory Cup National Hip-Hop Champion, Captain of the 'XMen' dance crew, and 2025 Xtreme Icon Award recipient, Radosits' dance experience includes hip-hop, jazz, contemporary, and tap. He also studied ballet and expanded his rhythmic skills by learning percussion (drumming, piano, and music theory). Logan performed with his school's honors wind symphony and marching band. Aiming to combine his university and Dance at Illinois education with a minor in critical film, he hopes to inspire empathetic human connection by creating performance and digital art as a career.



CHEYENNE SMITH
(Dancer)

Cheyenne Smith is a third-year BFA candidate in dance at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. From Joliet, Illinois, she studied at her home studio of Generation Dance Company where she was taught a variety of styles and where most of her education lies. In her time at the University of Illinois, she has performed in works by Anna Sapozhnikov, Paige Cunningham Caldarella, Joe Bowie, Merce Cunningham, Ty'esha Lewis & Rachel Rizzuto, Gabriel Bruno Eng Gonzalez, and several student works. She served as the

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social media head and secretary for the Black Advocacy Team in the 2024-2025 school year and now serves as the co-president. Smith has presented her first screendance film this past spring, a work titled *luminous vision*.



ABIGAIL SOBEL
(Dancer, she/her)

Abigail Sobel is a first-year BFA dance student from Wilmette, Illinois. She began her dance journey at the age of seven, starting with tap and jazz before expanding to styles such as ballet, contemporary, pointe, acro, hip-hop, and modern. She began dancing competitively at the age of 11. A recent graduate of New Trier High School in Winnetka and Incite Dance Center in Skokie, Sobel discovered a love for choreography and teaching through her training and performance experiences. In addition to studying dance, she also intends to pursue a degree in integrative biology with a minor in secondary education.



LILYANA SPYRNAL
(Dancer, she/her)

Lilyana Spyrnal is a first-year BFA student from South Elgin, Illinois. She has been dancing since she was two years old with experience in the styles of ballet, jazz, musical theatre, modern, lyrical, contemporary, and more. She recently graduated from St. Charles North High School and Elite Academy of Dance's competition team, and is excited to continue her dance journey with the University of Illinois Dance at Illinois program. Additionally, Spyrnal plans to minor in Spanish to further her passion of learning another language. She plans on pursuing a career as a competition judge as well as a traveling teacher and choreographer for dance programs all over the country. She'd like to thank her family members for their endless

support of her passion, and her dance instructors back home for showing her that it is possible to turn what you love into your future.



JOSIE STIERWALT
(Dancer)

Josie Stierwalt is a sophomore at the University of Illinois pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance. From Tolono, Illinois, she has been dancing for 15 years. Stierwalt has danced at Art In Motion, a local studio in Champaign, where she trained in jazz, contemporary, Lyrical, hip-hop, modern, ballet, musical theatre, and tap. She has learned from teachers of various other styles such as ballroom, Israeli, and Iranian dance. Stierwalt has performed in pieces by U of I faculty Rachel Rizzuto and Alexandra Barbier, as well as graduate alumni Banafsheh Amiri and undergraduate alumni Ashley Bruno. She hopes to continue learning and performing with Dance at Illinois.



SIGGI TUBBS
(Dancer)

Siggie Tubbs is a ballet dancer trained in the Vaganova technique under the tutelage of teachers such as Luciana Rezende, Mikhail Tchoupakov, and Sascha Radetsky. After a semester at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, he began coaching diving athletes using ballet exercises to improve their form in the air. As a dancer, Tubbs focuses on developing a quality of movement unique to his anatomy but remaining within the parameters of a given technique. He has performed principal roles and variations in ballets such as *The Nutcracker*, *Giselle*, and *La Bayadère* as well as in modern dance pieces with alums of the Department of Dance such as Jade Katch. He currently seeks to learn more about 20th-century modern dance techniques.



ADIARE THOMAS
(Drummer)

Born and raised in Champaign, Illinois, Adiare Thomas has had a passion for music ever since birth. He began playing drums in church, and from that foundation, he ventured into other genres of music such as R&B, neo soul, blues, rock, jazz, pop, metal, and African. He currently plays for bands and artists across the country and abroad, and is in high demand as a gospel drummer throughout the state of Illinois. Adiare loves being one with music and continues to strive to be the best drummer he can be.



LEILA ZOU
(Dancer, she/her)

Leila Zou grew up in the suburbs of Dallas, Texas, where she learned Chinese Folk Dance through the JiaPing Shi School of Dance. She then initiated her ballet training at City Ballet and the Dallas Ballet Center while also experiencing various styles of dance, such as contemporary, modern, and jazz. When she moved to Illinois in 2020, she danced with the Hinsdale Dance Academy, performing lead roles in their ballet productions: Clara and the Sugar Plum Fairy in *The Nutcracker*, Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Princess Aurora in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Moreover, she competed at the Youth America Grand Prix and the Universal Ballet Competition annually, most recently receiving 15th place for her contemporary solo at the Universal Ballet Competition. Zou is eager to pursue her passion for dance while also working towards a major in molecular and cellular biology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

PROFILES: DESIGNERS



LAUREN BOESCH (Stage Manager)

Lauren Boesch, a second-year stage management graduate student from Seattle, loves a strong cup of coffee and hiking in the mountains. University of Illinois management credits have included *ELLNORA*

(2025), *Orfeo* and *An Evening with Ricky Ian Gordon* (Lyric Theatre @ Illinois), and *Dracula: A Feminist Revenge Fantasy, Really* (Department of Theatre). Regional stage management credits include Asolo Repertory Theatre, Aspen Music Festival and School, Sarasota Opera, Santa Fe Opera, and Cirque du Soleil.



CHANTEL RENEE BOOKER (Costume Coordinator, Afrique)

Chantel Renee Booker is a freelance costume designer and crafts artisan. She earned her BFA in apparel and textile design from Michigan State University and her MFA in costume design from the University of Illinois

at Urbana-Champaign. Since the 2024–2025 season, she has served as costume crafts artisan for Illinois Theatre and Lyric Theatre, and designed costumes for *Afrique* for the Dance at Illinois October concert. Her Dance at Illinois credits include *Ayre* (costume designer). Her Illinois Theatre credits include *I Wish* (costume designer), *Rent* (costume designer), *Coriolanus* (assistant costume designer), and *Urinetown* (assistant costume designer and wardrobe supervisor). Other credits include *Absentia* (costume designer, Vibrancy Theater); *Everybody* (craft shop supervisor); *Be Head* and *The Women of Lockerbie* (costume designer, Ohio University Theater); *Bonnets: How*

Ladies of Good Breeding are Induced to Murder (costume designer) and *Frankenstein* (hair and makeup designer, Michigan State University Theatre); and *Our Town* and *Dames at Sea* (costume designer, Summer Circle Theatre).



ETHAN BORROK (Media Designer, he/him)

Ethen Borrok, originally from Long Island, New York, is a first-year MFA candidate in media design. He received his BFA from University at Buffalo where he focused on digital media design and lighting design.

Borrok's previous design credits include *The Pajama Game* (Drama Theatre at UB Center for the Arts), *Mr. Burns, A Post-Electric Play* (Black Box at UB Center for the Arts), and multiple Zodiaque Dance Company concerts (Drama Theatre at UB Center for the Arts) to name a few. He thanks the friends and family who have supported him on this journey.



ANNA COMPTON (Stage Manager, she/her)

Anna Compton is a third-year MFA candidate in stage management. She earned her BS in theatre at Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. This past summer, she worked at the Texas Shakespeare

Festival as a mainstage stage manager for productions of *Macbeth* and *Steel Magnolias*. Her credits at Krannert Center include *Plumas Negras*, *Dracula*, *The Gangster Play: Circus/Circus*, and *Dancing on the Ceiling* 2024. This academic year, she will serve as the stage manager for Lyric Theatre's *Little Women* in spring 2026.



ROBYN FARLEY

(Costume Coordinator, she/her)

Robyn Farley is a third-year MFA candidate in the Costume Technology Program. She studied at the University of Texas at El Paso (her home town) where she received her BFA in

costume design. As a wardrobe manager for the Williamstown Theatre Festival the past two summers, Farley's most recent project was the national revival of *Not About Nightingales* by Tennessee Williams. Farley has served as wardrobe manager or costume coordinator for various projects; she always looks forward to the next project.



SABRINA FELLINGER

(Stage Manager)

Sabrina Fellingner, a junior pursuing a BFA in stage management at the University of Illinois, is originally from Cleveland, Ohio. Some of her previous U of I credits include

The Winter's Tale (Illinois Theatre, assistant stage manager), *No Puedo, I'm Sorry* (Illinois Theatre, assistant stage manager), and *Fugitive Songs* (Lyric Theatre @ Illinois, assistant stage manager). Other credits include *The Tempest* and *King Lear* (Ohio Shakespeare Festival, production stage manager), *Usual Girls* (Station Theatre, stage manager), and *Buyer & Cellar* (Beck Center for the Performing Arts, assistant stage manager).



ASH BERNARD-CLARK

(Sound Designer)

Ash Bernard-Clark is a third-year undergraduate in theatre, pursuing a BFA in sound design and technology. This is their first sound design for Dance at Illinois, following their previous work as the

audio engineer for the Dance Senior Thesis Concert 2025. Previous design credits include *Misery* and *Puffs: One Act Edition* with the Pocket Playhouse at the University of Oregon in 2023, as well as serving as an associate sound designer locally for *POTUS* at the Station Theater in 2024. Up next, they will be an assistant sound designer for *Anastasia* with Lyric Theatre at Illinois. Bernard-Clark would sincerely like to thank all of their family and friends in Urbana-Champaign and across the country for their love and support throughout this process!!



MAGGIE HERSHEY

(Lighting Designer, they/them)

Maggie Hershey is a third-year lighting design and technology BFA candidate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. They were the lighting designer for Illinois Theatre's Theatre

Studies New Works Project 2025, Lyric Theatre at Illinois Theatre's Theatre Studies New Works Project 2025, Lyric Theatre @ Illinois' Lyric Under the Stars 2024, Armory Free Theatre's. *Bug* and *On the Exhale*, Champaign-Urbana Theatre Company's *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*, and STEPS Performing Arts Center's *Grease* and *A Chorus Line*. They were also the assistant lighting designer for Illinois Theatre's *Witch* and the programmer for Illinois

PROFILES: DESIGNERS

Theatre's *Gangster Play: Circus/Circus* and *Dracula, a Feminist Revenge Fantasy, Really*. The past three summers they have worked for Protolight, a lighting systems integrator and distributor.



ALLYSON IMIG

(Production Stage Manager, she/they)

Allyson Imig, a second-year MFA candidate in stage management and production management, holds credits with a variety of theatres including *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Sunset Playhouse), *Winter's Tale* (Illinois Theatre), *Age* (Dance at Illinois), *Oklahoma!* (Lyric Theatre @ Illinois), *La Cage Aux Folles* (Outskirts Theatre Co.), and *Power, Passion, Precision* (Madison Ballet). She thanks her family and friends for their support and care packages.



NOAH RUSSELL

(Properties Manager, they/them)

Noah Russell is a first-year MFA candidate in properties design and management at the University of Illinois. With a background in industrial design and hands-on making, they create imaginative and sustainable stage properties.

PRODUCTION STAFF

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Maria Miguens

TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Dylan Scott

PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER

Allyson Imig

STAGE MANAGERS

Anna Compton

Lauren Boesch

Sabrina Fellingner

PROPERTIES MANAGER

Noah Russell

COSTUME COORDINATORS

Chantel Renee Booker (*Afriqye*)

Sophia Doret

(*Marassa, Les Pigeons*)

Robyn Farley

(*Cynthia Oliver, #Hippies*)

HAIR AND MAKEUP COORDINATOR

Paige Stewart-Rankins

DANCE MEDIA DESIGNER

Ethan Borrok

SOUND DESIGNER

Ash Bernard-Clark

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Maggie Hershey

ASSISTANT LIGHTING DESIGNER

Raziel Rogers

ASSISTANT DANCE MEDIA COORDINATOR

Samuel Hanson

VIDEO ARCHIVE COORDINATOR

Laura Chiamonte

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Stazi Showerman

HEAD ELECTRICIAN

Cameron Strandin

AUDIO ENGINEER

Noah McLeod

DECK CREW

Madison Harley

Sofia Saldana

Khiari Everett

WARDROBE CREW SUPERVISOR

Ella Andersen

Anuprova Bhowmik

Jasmine O'Connor

LIGHT BOARD OP

Emily Ernst

QLAB OP

Ryan Olson

LIVESTREAM AND RECORDING CAMERA CREW

Dominika Panek

Gabriella Quaresima

Lena Baumann

Andrea Hanson

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The University of Illinois System carries out its mission in its namesake state, which includes the traditional territory of the Peoria, Kaskaskia, Piankashaw, Wea, Miami, Mascoutin, Odawa, Sauk, Mesquaki, Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, Menominee, Ho-Chunk, and Chickasaw Nations. These lands continue to carry the stories of these Nations and their struggles for survival and identity.

As a Land-grant institution, the University of Illinois has a particular responsibility to acknowledge the peoples of these lands, as well as the histories of dispossession that have allowed for the growth of this institution. We are also obligated to reflect on and actively address these histories and the role that this university has played in shaping them. This acknowledgement and the centering of Native peoples is a start as we move forward.

Krannert Center affirms the commitment by the university to move beyond these statements, toward building deeper relationships and taking actions that uphold and preserve Indigenous rights and cultural equity.

As we gather to experience this performance, we have an opportunity to reflect on the ways that systems of oppression have shaped our society. We can work together to create systems that support human dignity, establish equity, strengthen cross-cultural relationships, and draw upon the creative capacity of all people that make up this community, state, nation, and world.

DANCE AT ILLINOIS

The Department of Dance at the University of Illinois

Dance.illinois.edu

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Alexandra Barbier, Assistant Professor
Betsy Brandt, Associate Teaching Professor and
Non-Majors Program Director
Laura Chiaramonte, Assistant Teaching Professor and
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Taylor King Crocker, Lecturer
Paige Cunningham Caldarella, Associate Professor
Roxane D'Orléans Juste, Associate Professor and
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Jan Erkert, Professor Emerita
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Donors Play a Pivotal Role in the realization of the department's ambitions to become a national center for the development of dance artists and leaders. The collaborative work generated in our program has been spreading across campus and out into the world, and we can do even more to share what dance can contribute to our society. Dance Partners—our generous donors—provide the core strength for our students, our creative work, and our vision for advancing the art of dance.

Our No Debt for Dancers campaign strives to eliminate college debt and eradicate the notion of the "starving artist" by raising funds for alumni projects, summer study, and tuition scholarships.

We hope you will join us in our mission to cultivate imaginative, innovative, and sustainable artistic lives.

Contributions to Dance at Illinois can be made by visiting:

dance.illinois.edu/about/support/give-to-dance

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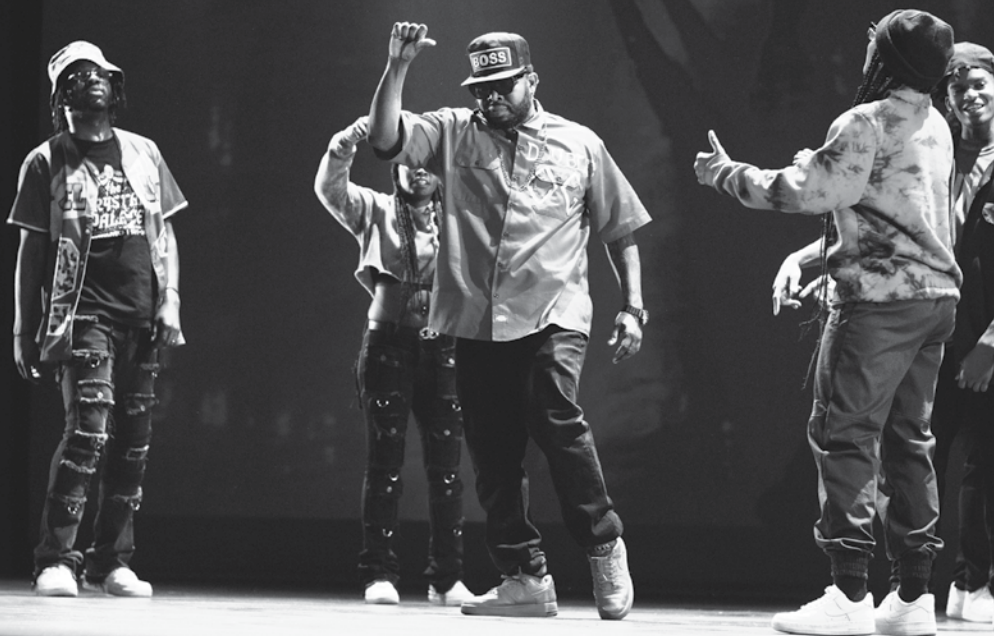
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Necessaries

Restrooms are located in the foyers of Foellinger Great Hall, Tryon Festival Theatre, and Colwell Playhouse; the east entrances on the Lobby level; and in each elevator lobby on Level 1 and Level 3. Lobby restrooms and one restroom in each elevator lobby are fully accessible and contain baby-changing stations.

Ushers will be happy to provide you cough drops courtesy of St. Joseph Apothecary, or disposable foam earplugs if the place starts rockin'.

If you or a companion needs medical assistance, contact an usher or other staff member.

Please take a moment before the performance to note the theatre exits nearest to you. If it becomes necessary to evacuate the theatre, please remain calm, follow the instructions of the house staff, and exit in an orderly fashion to the appropriate safe meeting location which will be announced to you.

Phones and Devices

The use of cell phones, cameras, and recording devices during performances is prohibited unless otherwise announced from the stage.

Late Arrivals

As a courtesy to performers and audience members, latecomers will be seated only at times selected in advance by the artist. Should you find that you've arrived late to a performance, our Patron Services staff will keep you informed about the earliest seating opportunity.

Lost Items

If you are in need of Lost and Found, please visit the Patron Services counter. We will do our best to reunite object and owner!

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If you find you can't attend a performance, please contact the Ticket Office in advance, preferably by 6pm the day before the performance (kran-tix@illinois.edu or 217.333.6280). We never charge a handling fee on ticket transactions.

Accessibility

Krannert Center for the Performing Arts is committed to making experiences accessible for all patrons, and we are delighted to provide a number of services to assist you. Krannert Center is equipped with an assisted listening system, wheelchair-accessible and no-step/few-step seating, and large-print programs, Braille programs, and American Sign Language interpreters are available with three weeks' advance notice.

For assistance regarding your visit please contact patronservices@krannertcenter.illinois.edu or 217.333.9716 or visit go.KrannertCenter.com/Accessibility.

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