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URBANITY DANCE PRESENTS *inTENTion*, CONCLUSION TO 10TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

Featuring World Premieres Choreographed by
Meg Anderson, Key'Aira Lockett, Levi Marsman, Asia Pyron,
Nailah Randall-Bellinger, and Chun Jou Tsai

May 20 & 21 at the Multicultural Arts Center, Cambridge, MA



www.urbanitydance.org

March 31, 2022, Boston, MA — **Urbanity Dance** presents *inTENTion*, the Professional Company's season finale and the culmination of Urbanity's 10 Year Anniversary season. Held at the **Multicultural Arts Center** in Cambridge, on **Friday, May 20 and Saturday, May 21, 2022 at 7:30pm**, the performance features the premieres of newly commissioned works by acclaimed choreographers **Meg Anderson** (Urbanity Artistic Associate), **Key'Aira Lockett** (former Urbanity Company member; Dance Fellow at The ICA), **Levi Marsman** (Ailey II alum; dance educator at the Ailey School, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, and Urbanity), **Asia Pyron** (Director of PYDANCE), **Nailah Randall-Bellinger** (dance educator; scholar at Harvard University), and **Chun Jou Tsai** (former Urbanity Company member; Director of CJT Dream Dance).

The pieces will be performed by Urbanity Dance Professional Company members **Meg Anderson, Haissan Booth, Haley Day, Katie Grenier, Olivia Link, Kendall Niblett, and Nia Sadler.**

The works featured in *inTENTion* include:

-a new work by **Meg Anderson** featuring six dancers, performing in two separate locations—both on-stage and in a different room, projected by video feed onto the stage. “The piece began as an experiment about perception,” explains Meg. “I am interested in what gets lost in translation, or what is perceived versus what is actually happening. I am also interested in what changes between the performers when they can see each other and when they can’t.”

-*smile* by **Key’Aira Lockett**, in collaboration with the dancers, features seven Urbanity Dance Professional Company members (full company). *smile* is set to music by Jay-Z, Gil Scott-Heron, Nina Simone and Kanye West. The new work “reflects the times we’re in, especially in urban communities...reconstructing the metaphysical and economic wall that separates the 'we' from the 'them,' and finding new materialities that consciously acknowledges and accepts difference, while at the same time [being] fluid enough to move in and out of with free will,” says Key’Aira.

-*One, Two, We* by **Levi Marsman** for three dancers is an abstract work for three dancers, diving into the need for individuality and connection and set to music by Max Richter and Olafur Armand. “I’m hoping to showcase each of the dancers’ strengths as individuals, in unison, and their strengths together. My goal is to show the beauty of each of those qualities in the dance,” says Levi.

-*A Scene from the End* by **Asia Pyron/PYDANCE** features seven Urbanity Dance Professional Company members (full company) and is set to “Strings of Life” by Derrick May. “Witness this scene from the end of the world and ask yourself what would your last efforts be when your world comes to an end. Who are you with? Where will you go? Has your world already ended in the past? Has it been reborn since then?” says Asia.

-*From Where I Sit* by **Nailah Randall-Bellinger** for four dancers, explores perspective reasoning. “Though we as human beings may share space and experiences, it’s our individual identities and where we are situated in that shared space that we observe ‘life’ and form our perspective. As such perspectives create differences, they may or may not support a true humanity” says Nailah.

-a new solo work by former Urbanity company member **Chun Jou Tsai** based on the idea of the Plume (Lingzi), which is the long pheasant tail feathers worn on warriors’ helmets in Chinese opera. The choreography merges traditional Asian dance elements with western contemporary forms.

Event Information

inTention

Friday, May 20, 2022 at 7:30pm

Saturday, May 21, 2022 at 7:30pm

Multicultural Arts Center | 41 Second St | Cambridge, MA

Tickets: \$50 VIP Seating; \$28 General Admission; \$23 Students, Seniors, BDA Members

Link: <https://www.urbanitydance.org/intention>

World premieres:

Levi Marsman – *One, Two, We*

Key’Aira Lockett – *smile*

Asia Pyron – *A Scene from the End*

Nailah Randall-Bellinger – *From Where I Sit*

Additional world premieres by Meg Anderson and Chun Jou Tsai

Urbanity Dance Professional Company

Meg Anderson

Haissan Booth

Haley Day

Katie Grenier

Olivia Link

Kendall Niblett

Nia Sadler

Masks are required for attendance.

About Urbanity Dance

Urbanity Dance was founded as a non-profit arts organization in 2011 by Director Betsi Graves with the mission to engage, inspire, and empower individuals and communities through the art of dance and movement. This mission is manifested through Urbanity's organizational pillars of Company, School, and Community, which strive to achieve three objectives: to propel contemporary dance to the forefront of Boston's cultural landscape; fill an unmet demand for access to training in diverse dance forms; and use dance as a tool for fostering bodily autonomy and creativity in local schools and community spaces. Through its three South End studios and work in the community, Urbanity is proud to provide high-quality dance experiences to over 10,000 dance-lovers of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities every year.

Urbanity's Professional Company offers challenging, entertaining, and visionary experiences that leverage excellence to activate space, engage art, and build connection. With its blend of disciplines ranging from modern jazz to breakdance, it embodies Urbanity's commitment to community by celebrating the collective tapestry of lived experiences and training of its dancers. Company performances, workshops, and classes promote empathy and harness the collaborative spirit and energy of Boston residents and its multidisciplinary arts network. Through these efforts, the Company has been recognized as one of Boston's Best by *Improper Bostonian*, a "Best of Boston" winner by *Boston Magazine*, and a Top Ten Critics' Pick by *The Boston Globe*. To date, it has presented work at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, The Alvin Ailey Citigroup Theater, The Institute of Contemporary Art, and venues across New England, New York, New Mexico, Virginia, Texas, and Florida.

The School at Urbanity Dance offers high-quality dance training in several styles and genres for over 500 students of all ages and experience levels each year through its three South End studios. The faculty, all from diverse cultural and dance backgrounds, supports each student in their training through a structured, nurturing classroom environment that fosters growth, discipline, and fun. The School's teaching philosophy aims to teach to the whole dancer and develop students' emotional, social, and physical well being to become fully empowered individuals.

Urbanity's commitment to Community encompasses a diverse range of partnerships with schools, health centers, local arts institutions, enrichment camps, and juvenile detention centers through its three flagship programs: Urbanity in the Community, which provides dance curriculum to Boston Public School students who otherwise would not have access; Dance with Parkinson's, which uses movement to improve the mobility, balance, and coordination of those with Parkinson's Disease and other neurodegenerative disorders; and Movement Mends, which uses movement to empower and inspire those who have experienced incarceration, homelessness, or violence.

Together, the Company, School, and Community programs create an interwoven network that provides high-quality art experiences to students of all ages and backgrounds, as well as paid opportunities for all professional dancers, dancemakers, artistic collaborators and teachers, that serve Urbanity's mission, its South End neighborhood in Boston, and the city at large.

About Meg Anderson

Meg Anderson hails from central Massachusetts where she began her early dance career. She continued her dance education at Dean College and graduated with her BA in Dance in 2012. Since graduation Meg has danced in prestigious theaters such as the Ailey Theater, Jordan Hall, and the Paramount Theater. She was honored to be one of the only two female dancers ever to perform Pilobolus's famous founding quartet Ocellus alongside fellow Urbanity Dancer Jamie Ballou. Throughout her six seasons with Urbanity, Meg has had the pleasure of working with many notable choreographers such as Betsi Graves, Marcus Schulkind, Jaclyn Walsh, Carl Flink, Jackie Nowicki and Andy Noble. She has also had the opportunity to present her own choreography, collaborating with such organizations as Massachusetts Symphony Orchestra, Boston Children's Choir and Emerson Dance Ensemble, and creating many works on Urbanity's company dancers. She also shares her love of dance with hundreds of students each week as she teaches and choreographs throughout New England. Meg is honored to have many roles within Urbanity including Artistic Associate, Director of the Junior Apprentice Program and Youth Companies, as well as Co-director of the Urbanity Dance Summer Intensive.

About Key'Aira Lockett

A Native of Dallas, Texas, **Key'Aira Lockett** began her dance training at the age of three at Dallas Black Dance Academy. There she trained in Ballet, Modern, Jazz, and African, and various indigenous dance practices. Ms. Lockett continued her dance training at the academy throughout her adolescence, and eventually at age sixteen joined Dallas Black Dance Theatre II. With DBDT II she toured in Uganda, Africa, Los Angeles, California, and Miami Florida performing works by Christopher Huggins, Baba Chuck Davis, Nycole Ray, and Bruce Woods.

In 2016, Ms. Lockett received her undergraduate degree from the Boston Conservatory where she earned her BFA in Dance with an emphasis in creative performance. Soon after her undergrad, Key'Aira received her MFA in performance and choreography from Hollins University, where she studied abroad in Frankfurt Germany. Key'Aira now resides in Boston, MA, where she does free-lance choreography. Outside of her independent projects, she has choreographed for

Urbanity Dance Company, Boston Conservatory, Hollins University, & Berklee College of Music. Ms. Lockett is currently the Visiting Assistant Professor of Dance at Hollins University.

About Levi Marsman

Levi Philip Marsman was born and raised in Boston, MA and he began his training at the Boston Arts Academy, OrigiNation Cultural Arts Center, and Jeanette Neill Dance Studio as a scholarship recipient in their Boston Youth Moves Program. After graduating from the Walnut Hill School for the Arts, Levi was awarded a place in the Scholarship Program at The Ailey School. He later enrolled in the Ailey/Fordham BFA Program, which led to an invitation to join Ailey II by former director, Sylvia Waters before graduation. Levi's performance credits include the Radio City Christmas Spectacular (New York), Movements Dance Company (Jamaica), OrigiNation (Boston), Lula Washington Dance Theatre (Los Angeles), Reed Dance (Pittsburgh) and PHILADANCO! (Philadelphia).

Levi is currently an instructor at Urbanity Dance and in the Ailey Extension program at the Ailey School and has been Artist in Residence at the Boston Arts Academy, the Boston Conservatory at Berklee and Teacher In Residence for Urbanity Dance. Most recently he was choreographer for Boston Lyric Opera's 2021 production of "Cavalleria Rusticana" and choreographer and movement director for the Commonwealth Shakespeare Company's production of "The Tempest". The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum commissioned him to create a new work entitled 'Colorful' in conjunction with the opening of their exhibit, "Boston's Apollo" in 2020 and he was created, "some kind of peace", to close out Richmond Ballet's 2021 season.

He has also created works for institutions such as Dallas Black Dance Theatre: Encore!, the Walnut Hill School for the Arts, Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, LaVilla School for the Arts, Sharron Miller Academy for the Performing Arts, Alexander W. Dreyfoos School for the Arts, Marygrove College, Renaissance High School, Boston Youth Moves, Dean College, Endicott College, Eastern Michigan University, Wheaton College, Georgetown University's Black Movements Dance Theatre, the Joffrey School, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, The Ailey School, Reed Dance, the Chamber Music Society of Palm Beach, Ballet Ecclectica at Center of Creative Arts, OrigiNation and MOVE(NYC).

Levi's awards include Contemporary Dance Silver Medalist of the 4th Seoul International Dance Competition, 2007 Young Professionals Awardee—Martha Hill Dance Fund, Best Performance at the 10th Annual Oakland Dance Festival in Michigan and first recipient of the 2016 Ballet Inc. Emerging Choreographer Award. He was asked to perform an original solo in the 2018 Boston Contemporary Dance Festival and was one of two guest choreographers to create a new work for Urbanity Dance in Boston in their "Urbanity NeXt" Project in 2017.

His second work for Dallas Black Dance Theatre: Encore! will premiere this spring in Dallas. He is excited to be movement choreographer for his second project with Commonwealth Shakespeare Company as they present 'Much Ado About Nothing' for Shakespeare in the Commons.

About Asia Pyron

Asia Pyron is a freelance choreographer and the director of PYDANCE. Asia is originally from Atlanta, GA but received most of her early training at Interlochen Arts Academy in Northern Michigan. After graduating highschool, Asia attended the Boston Conservatory at Berklee where she received her B.F.A. in Contemporary Performance and Composition in 2020. During her time in Boston, she formed her dance collective, PYDANCE, and performed in local dance festivals such as the Boston Contemporary Dance Festival, Onstage360, and the Boston Conservatory WinterWorks concerts. Asia has been commissioned as a guest artist for multiple companies such as the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Cambridge Rindge and Latin School, DanceLab NY, VLA Dance, and QuarIntensive. She has also been a finalist in various choreography competitions such as Choreography Online, the UNCSA Summer Residency program, and the Mare Nostrum Elements: Emerging Choreographers Series. Asia currently resides in Nashville, TN, where she continues to create work for PYDANCE and other dance organizations throughout the country.

About Nailah Randall-Bellinger

Nailah Randall-Bellinger is a dance educator, scholar, and choreographer. For over 35 years, she has taught modern and contemporary classes throughout the United States and abroad at national conventions and universities. She has studied, performed, and lectured in Brazil, Ghana, Haiti, The Czech Republic, and Senegal.

Nailah Randall-Bellinger began her professional performing career in Los Angeles. She has worked with film director and poet S. Pearl, and performed as a member of Karen McDonald's New Age Dance Workshop dance company and Jamie Nichols Fast Feet, Inc. After receiving a Masters degree from Lesley University with a concentration in Interdisciplinary Studies: Dance and African American literature, she began to focus and develop the concept of the "dancing text" as a means to explore the corporeality of dance. In 1998 Nailah presented her work *Dancing Beloved* as part of the Gendered Resistance Conference at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where her company RootsUprising retold Toni Morrison's story of Margaret Garner through movement. Randall-Bellinger is one of the contributing artists/writers to the book *Gendered Resistance*, a written account of the conference, published in 2013.

In 2015, Randall-Bellinger collaborated with a group of artists in Cambridge to give voice to the voiceless in the production of *Stories Without Roofs: Transitions*, a show consisting of the essays, monologues, poetry, songs, dance and general musings of residents of shelters in the city of Cambridge. She has created original works for Boston-based contemporary dance company Urbanity and was choreographer for the Boston production *Ragtime* at Wheelock Family Theater. In 2020, she was awarded the Alorie Parkhill Learning and Travel Grant to study expressions of dance in South East Asia.

Randall-Bellinger was Assistant Professor of Dance at Dean College in Franklin, MA, where she taught courses in modern dance, dance composition, dance history, and dance in film survey. Currently, she serves as the Chair of the Dance Department at The Cambridge School of Weston, in Weston, MA, where she has taught for the past ten years. She has been Teaching Artist faculty at Harvard Dance Center for over a decade and continues to teach contemporary and body conditioning classes throughout the year. In Spring 2021, Randall-Bellinger facilitated the first of a series of virtual artist-led discussions around artistry, identity, and advocacy, where she presented her film works *#shesstillbreathing* and *Women's Work*, both inspired and constructed within the constraints of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Randall-Bellinger is one of seven artists commissioned by the Harvard University Committee on the Arts (HUCA) in 2021 to create a new work on campus. The work, titled *Initiation– In Love Solidarity*, explores the embodiment of the Middle Passage, and the resilience and evolving identities of women in the African diaspora. The Harvard Dance Center is supporting Randall-Bellinger in her research and process and will be programming showings and conversations over the Fall '21 semester.

About Chun Jou Tsai

Chun Jou Tsai (Dream/Mia), founder and director of CJT Dream Dance, is originally from Taiwan with extensive knowledge of dance performance, choreography, education and acting.

Ms. Tsai accepted a full scholarship in 2010 to attend Case Western Reserve University MFA, master degree in Contemporary Modern Dance. She has received numerous awards for her choreography and performance since 2005 till now including Excellence in choreography by Kelly Holt Award, The Cleveland Arts Prize by Lathryn Karpides scholarship in Modern Dance and Excellence in performance by Edna Raphael Award as well as funding to attend the prestigious American Dance festival in 2008 and 2011 and Vienna international Dance Festival (ImPulsTanz) in 2013.

Chun Jou Tsai is one of few professional dance artists in the Boston area currently merging Asian traditional dance with Western contemporary forms. Her dance was performing on Basil, Italy, Vatican, Johannesburg in South Africa, Tokyo, Awaji island, Singapore, Alaska, LA, NYC, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Ohio, Maine, HongKong, Macao, Shanghai, ShenZhen, Xiamen, and so on. The rich international performing experiences brought her an open wide worldview and perspectives in dance and choreography.

Her dance company, CJT Dream Dance, was set up in 2018, which provides professional dance training classes in Chinese dance, Modern dance and Kpop dance. She passes on her deep knowledge to students from 3 to 60+ years old in different levels of dance.

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