



C O C A 22
presents 23

Choreographic Lab Showcase

FRI, NOV 4, 2022 | 7:00PM

This performance presents the culmination of Ryadah Heiskell's Choreographic Lab experience at COCA. Under the guidance of Artistic Director of Dance Antonio Douthit-Boyd and Associate Director of Dance Production Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Ryadah Heiskell showcases her original choreography and shares the details of her experience working with COCA's Pre-Professional Division Dance Program students.

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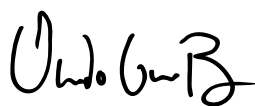


Artistic Directors' Note

Dear COCA Community,

Welcome to the 2022–2023 COCApresents Season. Reemergence was at the center of our season last year; and now, we are excited to welcome audiences back to explore the boundless talent and potential that is cultivated right here at COCA. Under the guidance of local and international creatives, our season showcases a collection of new work, reimagined COCA classics, and captivating stories that will challenge both our students and audiences alike. This year, we are honored to have several community partners—The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, The Black Rep, and The Big Muddy Dance Company—highlighting the work of professional artists and inspiring our students to follow their dreams. We invite you to immerse yourself in our season of boundless creativity and the unique and vital artistic community that is nurtured and molded at COCA.

Sincerely,



Orlando Graves Bolaños
Senior Director of
Arts Programming



Kirven Douthit-Boyd
Associate Director of Dance
Production & Artistic Director
of COCADance



Antonio Douthit-Boyd
Artistic Director
of Dance



Jennifer Wintzer
Artistic Director of
Theatre

Creative Team

Choreographer	Ryadah Heiskell
Choreographer	Mariko Kumanomido
Choreographer	MJ Imani Johnson
Choreographer	Arik Sexton
COCAdance Rehearsal Assistant	Sam Gaitsch
COCAdance Rehearsal Assistant	Gabby Billy
Mentor	Nina Flagg
Mentor	Clarice Young
Mentor	Anthony Burrell
Mentor	Tommie-Waheed Evans

Production Team

Production Manager	Carolyn Carter
Technical Director	Jayson Lawshee
Sound Board Operator	Justin Foster

Artistic Team

Senior Director of Arts Programming	Orlando Graves Bolaños
Artistic Director of Dance	Antonio Douthit-Boyd
Associate Director of Dance Production &	Kirven Douthit-Boyd
Artistic Director of COCAdance	
Artistic Director of Hip-Hop Crew	MJ Imani Johnson
Artistic Director of Theatre	Jennifer Wintzer
Artistic Producer	Cameron Tyler
Technical Director	Jayson Lawshee
Production Manager	Carolyn Carter
Costume Manager	Shevaré Perry
Costume Assistant	Cody Floyd
Dance & Pre-Professional Division Program Manager	Sam Gaitsch
Student Success Coordinator	Alisa Cooper

Untitled

Hip-Hop Crew

Samantha Beasley
Calese McKnight
Kamayah Jones
Ella Orlowsky
Jaidyn Madrid
Mitchell Davis
Cassidy Jackson

My Girl

COCAdance Second Company

Isabelle Williams
Riley Adams
Kamayah Jones
Zarah Vaughn
Dwight Erdmann
Zahara Sharif-Jackson

Inertia

COCAdance First Company

JiaLi Deck
DeKylah Epps
Keenon Hamburg
Ashlee Holloway
Adelaide Pollock
Yaya Shourd

COCAdance Apprentice Company

Aaron (AJ) Bentley
Harper Clark
Lexie Kummant
Fiona Van Allen
Tallulah Lyons-Jahn
Sanara Maasera
Declan Ryan

My Girl

COCAdance Second Company
"My Girl" by Joy Oladokun
Choreographer: Mariko Kumanomido

Untitled

Choreographer: MJ Imani Johnson & Erik

Inertia

COCAdance First and Second Company
"Ultimatum" by Murcof
". breathe." by Travis Lake
"Crazy" by DoeChii
Choreographer: Ryadah Heiskell



Creative Team Biographies

Ryadah Heiskell (Choreographer) has been choreographing since 2012 for recreational, competition, and concert dance. Ryadah's choreography combines jazz, modern, contemporary, and hip-hop dance styles to create unique, entertaining works. Her approach to choreography involves exploring time/space dynamics based in musicality, specifically polyrhythms, and the manipulation of traditional technique to create unique steps and moments throughout the piece. While Ryadah is inspired directly by the music, her goal is always to highlight the skills of the dancers. Most of her concert dance work explores abstract concepts in human experience.

MJ Imani (Choreographer) is a professional dancer and choreographer from St. Louis. Her love of dance began at the age of eight when her mother enrolled her in lessons at COCA. Thanks to instructors such as Lee Nolting and Anthony "Redd" Williams, she was able to cultivate her passion for dance as an art form. After graduating high school, she studied at Webster University, earning her B.A. in Cultural Anthropology, and graduating with Department Honors (2016). Much like her dance inspiration Katherine Dunham, MJ wanted to combine her anthropological studies with her love of dance. In 2017, she was named COCA's Katherine Dunham Pre-Professional Division Fellow in 2017. The following year, MJ relocated to Atlanta, where she interned at Dance 411, trained in commercial styles, and choreographed/performed for various artists. She returned to St. Louis in Fall of 2020 to open her studio/dance media company: 314 Movement Lab. Since her hometown return, MJ has choreographed for over six artists; provided multiple professional opportunities for local dancers; instructed various classes in hip-hop, contemporary, heels, and jazz-funk styles; and has partnered with Sumner High School to revamp their performing arts program. MJ is Artistic Director of COCA Hip-Hop Crew.

Mariko Kumanomido (Choreographer) is from St. Louis and began her formal dance training at Alexandra School of Ballet. She graduated from the University of Missouri – Kansas City with her B.F.A. in Dance. She then moved to New York City, where she was a scholarship student at the Ailey School. In New York, she danced professionally with Buglisi Dance Theater, Jessica Danser/Dansfolk, and C. Eule Dance. She also danced with Graham II and received her Graham Teacher Training certificate from the Martha Graham Center of Contemporary Dance. She moved back to St. Louis and danced with Common Thread Contemporary Dance Company, under the direction of Jennifer Medina. In 2018, she graduated from Washington University with her M.F.A. in Dance. She currently teaches at COCA, Webster University, Washington University, and Lindenwood University.

Nina Flagg (Mentor) is a Los Angeles native, dance artist, choreographer, and educator. Her movement foundations began with gymnastics, classical ballet, and modern dance followed by studies in West African dance, tap, and hip-hop/street dance. She graduated from Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA) and went on to obtain her B.A. in Sociology with a Specialization in Communications from UCLA. Nina's work has evolved as an embodied intersection between multiple movement traditions, explored through the lens of hip-hop consciousness. The plurality of her training and practice has lent itself to a diverse career in concert dance, television, and academia. As an educator, Nina has been on faculty and/or served as guest faculty at California Institute of the Arts (CalArts), UCLA, Connecticut College, Bennington College, and LMU. She has worked with such artists as Prince, Tina Turner, Bette Midler, Beyoncé, Chris Brown, Solange, Will Smith, and J Balvin. Her choreography has been featured on the GRAMMY Awards, TV Land Awards, ABC, ESPN, NBC/Peacock, and Flight Path Dance Company. Her television appearances include The Oscars, The Today Show, MTV, and Good Morning America. In summer of 2021, Nina appeared in the documentary film *AILEY* which was released in theatres nationwide after its premier at Sundance Film Festival. Currently, Nina is continuing her practice as a dancer, choreographer, pedagogue, and guest artist for organizations such as CLI Studios, LA Dance Project, Everybody Dance LA!, and The Ailey Company. As a BIPOC Artist and Educator, Nina remains passionate about creating curricular strategies for equitable, multi-generational engagement in dance education and live performance.

Creative Team Biographies

Clarice Young (Mentor) is an artist, teacher, choreographer, collaborator, and performer who researches the intersection of African Diasporic dance and contemporary modern dance. Melding elements of Afro-Caribbean, modern, and West African styles, she uses fundamentals from each to uncover ways to stabilize and release the body. Clarice received her B.F.A. in Dance from The University of Louisiana at Lafayette and her M.F.A. in Dance from Hollins University. A Louisiana native, Young was an original member of Camille A. Brown & Dancers and served as an assistant to the director. She was also a member of Ronald K. Brown's EVIDENCE, A Dance Company, acting as their first rehearsal director. She collaborated with fellow artist Francine E. Ott in *Outta the Box* at Dixon Place, performed her solo work *i am...* at Judson Church, and showcased her choreography *re(belle)* at the North Carolina Dance Festival. She has been a guest teacher at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee Summer Dance Intensive, American Dance Festival, and Hollins University. As a choreographer, she's been invited to set work on undergraduate students at NC State University and UL Lafayette. In 2019, she started The Clarice Young Project as a way to celebrate black culture and life out loud through the art of dance. Since then, students along with faculty from UNC Greensboro and NC State University, have performed each year at Greensboro Project Space honoring Black History Month. Presently, Young serves as an Assistant Professor of Dance and the Director of Undergraduate Studies at UNC Greensboro.

Tommie-Waheed Evans (Mentor), a 2021 Guggenheim Fellow, is a queer black dance maker, born and raised in Los Angeles, amidst racial divide, gang warfare, and earthquakes. His work explores blackness, spirituality, queerness, and liberation. He began his formal training with Karen McDonald before receiving a fellowship at the Ailey School, and a M.F.A. in Choreography from Jacksonville University. He has toured and performed nationally and internationally as a company member of Lula Washington Dance Theater, Complexions Contemporary Ballet and Philadanco. Since 2004, he has created more than 50 original dance works that range widely in scope, length, tone, and subject matter. Waheedworks, his Philadelphia based dance company, is the primary vehicle for his creative research. His work brings together urban street dance styles and contemporary dance vocabulary through bold and raw movements propelled by gospel music and polyrhythmic sounds. He has also been commissioned to create works for BalletX, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, PHILADANCO, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Verb Ballets, Ballet Memphis, The University of the Arts, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Lula Washington Dance Theatre, Louisville Ballet, among others. He has received accolades and honors including Resident Fellow at the Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University, Princess Grace Honoraria Award in Choreography, New Music Project Grant, Howard Gilman Foundation Fellowship, Joffrey Ballet Winning Works, and recently a Dance Research Fellowship at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts. Tommie is currently the Artist-in-Residence at PHILADANCO and on faculty at the University of the Arts.



Check out our blog post where we get more in depth about Choreographic Lab with Ryadah Heiskell!

<https://www.cocastl.org/ryadah-heiskell-talks-about-her-new-work-for-cocas-choreographic-lab/>

Land Acknowledgements

Land acknowledgements help us honor a place's Indigenous people—past and present—and recognize the history that brought us to where we are today and the fact that our communities are in stolen lands. Here is COCA's Land Acknowledgement:

In alignment with our mission to enrich lives and build community through the arts, COCA chooses to learn about, come to terms with, and share the truth of Westward Expansion. COCA acknowledges its community spaces, studios, and theatre rest on the traditional lands of Native People, including the Illini Confederacy, Osage Nation and Missouri tribe. We acknowledge this land is stolen land and acquired through a history of violence. We honor these tribes now and the other tribes who made their homes in St. Louis before us. We encourage you to learn more about native communities and land where you live.

About COCA

COCA's mission is to enrich lives and build community through the arts. With a commitment to equity and access, COCA serves as a regional hub for learning in and through the arts for all ages from all backgrounds. One of the most diverse cultural institutions in St. Louis, COCA serves over 50,000 students, audience members, artists and families from over 220 zip codes across the St. Louis region every year. The fourth largest multi-disciplinary arts organization in the country, COCA is committed to supporting the vitality and creativity of over 200 artists at the heart of its work in schools, community centers, local business, cultural organizations, and on-site at its campus in University City.

Stay in Touch!



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cocastl.org/coca-newsletter



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COCA Health & Safety Procedures

COCA's Health & Safety Procedures for theatre productions and public events are continually reviewed to ensure all protocols are in accordance with the latest public health recommendations.

Face masks are strongly recommended at COCA, not required.

We highly recommend that all patrons wear face masks, especially those who are unvaccinated and those who remain vulnerable to COVID-19.



Vocal Company Fall Concert

NOV 18 | All ages | Tickets at cocalt.org

The Fall Concert showcases a song-cycle of musical theatre and contemporary works that offer an exciting look into the up-and-coming generation of theatre artists. Students are coached throughout the year by Vocal Company Co-Directors Alicia Revé Like and Jermaine Manor.



IMPROV TROUPE FALL PERFORMANCE

NOV 20 | All ages | Tickets at cocaatl.org

Join us for a night of laughter, as COCA's Improv Troupe shows off everything they have learned this semester. Improv Troupe Fall Performance showcases a variety of improv games and scenes. Hosting the night is Improv Troupe Director Ed Reggi.



The Little Dancer

MOMENTS IN TIME

DEC 8–11 | All Ages | Tickets at cocal.org

The Little Dancer, a beloved COCA holiday tradition, has been reimagined as *The Little Dancer: Moments in Time*, a full-length classical ballet performed by members of Ballet Eclectica. This brand-new production was conceptualized using stories from COCA's young artists to put an innovative spin on the well-known classic. Renowned choreographer Kevin Jenkins serves as Creative Director for *The Little Dancer: Moments in Time*.



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Introducing the NEW COCA Membership—a new way to create, engage, and connect.

With special perks for joining, you'll be a part of a unique community passionate about arts, education and creativity.

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