FEB 25, 2023
SATURDAY | 7:30 PM
TOUHILL PERFORMING ARTS CENTER
SEASON 60

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CELEBRATE GIORDANO!

FEBRUARY 25, 2023

Gus Giordano  **FOUNDER**
Nan Giordano  **ARTISTIC DIRECTOR**
Michael McStraw  **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**THE COMPANY**

ASHLEY DOWNS
AMANDA HICKEY
ONJÉLEE PHOMTHIRATH

RYAN GALLOWAY
ADAM HOUSTON
KATIE RAFFERTY
ERINA UEDA

ROSARIO GUILLEN
SKYLER NEWCOM
FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ

GIORDANO DANCE CHICAGO
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JOE AND JEN ROBERTSON

*The taking of flash photos and the use of recording devices are strictly prohibited. Program and artists subject to change. Cover photo by Todd Rosenberg.*
GIORDANO DANCE CHICAGO
1754 North Clark Street | Chicago, IL  60614
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PROGRAM:

Welcome to Celebrate 60!
Choreography: Michael Taylor
Music: Nat King Cole and Natalie Cole
Lighting Design: Jacob Snodgrass
Costume Design: Madeline Gardner/Morilee

Dancers:
ASHLEY DOWNS  RYAN GALLOWAY  ROSARIO GUILLEN
AMANDA HICKEY  ADAM HOUSTON  SKYLER NEWCOM
ONJÉLEE PHOMTHIRATH  KATIE RAFFERTY
FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ  ERINA UEDA

Elegance, style, glamour – these words all describe the celebration of Giordano Dance Chicago’s 60th Anniversary Season! It felt fitting to welcome you to tonight’s performance with a short work that embodies these attributes, celebrating the past while looking towards the future.

Brief words from Artistic Director, Nan Giordano

Giordano Moves
(2005 – reconstructed 2022)
Choreography: Gus Giordano
Original Structure and Staging: Nan Giordano and Jon Lehrer
Restructure and Staging: Nan Giordano and Cesar G. Salinas
Original Music: George McRae
Lighting Design: Kevin Dreyer
Costume Design: Nina G.

Dancers:
THE COMPANY

Gus Giordano’s classic style of jazz dance is timeless. It is grounded and regal, earthbound and proud. We have taken movement from decades of his work, collaborated on a new jazz score, and created Giordano Moves. With this work, we honor and pay tribute to our Founder, the legendary Gus Giordano. Original funding generously provided by The Chicago Community Trust.
**All For You**  
(2020)  
Choreography: Adam Houston  
Music: Ólafur Arnalds  
Lighting Design: Jacob Snodgrass  
Costume Design: Nina G.  

Dancers:  
ASHLEY DOWNS & SKYLER NEWCOM  

All For You premiered on Giordano II in 2020 as part of Giordano on Giordano, and had its Company Premiere October 23, 2021 at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance.

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**La Belleza de Cuba**  
(2013)  
Choreography: Liz Imperio  
Choreography Assistant: Whitney Anne Bezzant  
Music: Los Van Van, La India, Ozomatli  
Costume Design: Branimira Ivanova  
Lighting Design: Kevin Dreyer  

Dancers:  
THE COMPANY  

La Belleza de Cuba was made possible through generous contributions from Pam Crutchfield and the Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation.

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INTERMISSION
**Groove, in formed**  
(2019)

Choreography: Peter Chu  
Choreography Assistant: Jenni Gordon  
Original Music Score: Jake Kelberman  
Music Performance: Khary Abdul-Shaheed (drums), Tim Brey (organ), Anthony Decarlo (bass), Noah Halpern (trumpet), Nathan Pence (bass), Gusten Rudolph (drums)  
Lighting Design: Jacob Snodgrass  
Costume Design: Nathan Rohrer

Dancers:  
THE COMPANY

Jazz dance was one of the primary techniques I studied during my training years. It was then I began to appreciate the polyrhythms and the history that helped shape this American art form.

For this second creation for Giordano Dance Chicago, I wanted to connect to the steps and rhythms infused in jazz dance and the Giordano Technique. Smooth and syncopated moves in the body emphasize individuality but are united by the pulsing history of this art form. Fad dances like the Charleston and Roger Rabbit have an understated presence in this work as well as a few exercises from the Giordano Technique as a way to build and “in form” this communal experience.

In this work, we celebrate individuality, which is a crucial component to jazz dance & being ‘in the groove.’ The vibrations and sounds generated from music connects humans at a profound level as rhythms can heal and bring communities together during times of sadness, grief, love, and joy.

–Peter Chu
**lub-dub**
(2022)
Choreography: Cesar G. Salinas
Music: Travis Lake, Medwyn Goodall
Lighting Design: Jacob Snodgrass
Costume Design: Jordan Ross
Dancers:

RYAN GALLOWAY           ROSARIO GUILLEN
ONJÉLEE PHOMTHIRATH     FERNANDO RODRIGUEZ
ERINA UEDA

*Used to represent the normal rhythms of the heart on auscultation, comprising the first and second heart sounds. The low-pitched, longer first heart sound forms lub. The higher-pitched, shorter second heart sound forms dub.*

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**SOUL**
(2018)
Choreography: Ray Leeper
Choreography Assistant: Kristen Gorski Wergeles
Music: Gladys Knight and the Pips, Al Green, Tina Turner
Lighting Design: Jacob Snodgrass
Costume Design: Jordan Ross
Dancers:

THE COMPANY

SOUL was created in honor of Chicago philanthropist Candace Jordan, whose spirit, passion, and advocacy for the performing arts are without bounds. This work was made possible, in part, by contributions to the Susan Carlins “Make It Happen” Initiative
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Giordano Dance Chicago (GDC) America’s original jazz dance company is celebrating 60 years of expanding jazz dance! Giordano Dance Chicago is an iconic cultural organization and an integral part of Chicago’s vibrant performing arts community. From our origins in founder Gus Giordano’s original school in Evanston, IL, to our current incarnation as a world-class dance company, GDC boasts over a half-century of worldwide performances (28 countries, 47 states, and more than 1,300 cities) with an imprint on the art form of jazz dance that is far-reaching and significant. For 38 years GDC has been under the Artistic Leadership of Nan Giordano who is responsible for commissioning numerous groundbreaking works, the mentoring of hundreds of young dancers and choreographers, and the development of the Nan Giordano Certification Program®. The Program, which offers multi-level instruction and certification in the proprietary Giordano Technique, has certified dance educators in 36 states and 7 countries, all integrating the Technique into their college, high school, and studio programs. Each Spring, GDC’s Jazz Dance/Science & Health program teaches elementary school anatomy and nutrition through a dance-centric program in CPS science classrooms. In 2022 the program brought 250 classes to 350 students in four under-resourced schools, all taught by GDC dancers. With the leadership of Nan, Executive Director Michael McStraw, and the support of our Board of Directors, Giordano Dance Chicago is stronger than ever. Join us for Season 60 Catch the Light, Feel the Radiance, Celebrate Giordano! www.giordanodance.org

Giordano II (GII) is dedicated to the nurturing and elevation of young professional dancers under the artistic leadership of Nan Giordano and directed by Joshua Blake Carter. The dancers of GII are provided the unique opportunity to be mentored by Giordano Dance Chicago dancers with the goal of advancement to the main company. Through the company’s Giordano on Giordano program, GII premieres new works each season created by GDC’s artistic team and main company dancers. GII performs at venues throughout the Midwest, preparing dancers with on-stage experience necessary for a career in concert dance and allowing them to broaden their technical and artistic range.
LEADERSHIP

Gus Giordano
Founder
(1923 – 2008)

Gus Giordano’s dedication to jazz dance exhibited itself in all facets of his extraordinary life: dancer, master teacher, choreographer, author, and founder of the Giordano Dance School (GDS) in Evanston, Illinois, founder of the dance company Giordano Dance Chicago and founder of Jazz Dance World Congress. Mr. Giordano created and taught the Giordano Technique at venues across the United States and around the world. He choreographed in all areas of performance including television, film, stage, commercials, industrials, and concert dance. In 1976 Giordano wrote the highly acclaimed Anthology of American Jazz Dance. In August 1990, Giordano organized the first Jazz Dance World Congress, which gathered renowned jazz dance master teachers and companies. The Congress has been held at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Northwestern University, the University at Buffalo, Point Park University, as well as in Phoenix, Chicago, Japan, Germany, Mexico, and Costa Rica. Gus Giordano received many awards including the 1984 Dance Educators of America Award for his outstanding contribution to the world of jazz dance, the 1988 Mayor’s Award for the Arts, the 1989 Governor’s Award for the Arts for exemplary individual artistic achievement, the 1991 Dance Teacher Now Circle Award, the 1993 Ruth Page Lifetime Service to the Field Award, and the 1996 University of Missouri Distinguished Alumni Award and William Francis English Scholar-in-Residence Award. In 1985, Governor James Thompson declared April 25 Gus Giordano Day. In 1995 he received the Honorable Artist Award from Chukyo University in Nagoya, Japan. In 1997 Gus served as National Spokesperson for National Dance Week. In 1999, he received the Third Annual Katherine Dunham Award for excellence and great contributions to the Arts, and in 2003, Chicago’s Mayor Daley presented Gus with the Chicago Senior of the Year Award. In 2005 the National Dance Association presented Mr. Giordano with its Heritage Award, and the same year he received an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts Degree from Shenandoah University.
LEADERSHIP

Nan Giordano
Artistic Director

At the helm for 38 years, Nan’s leadership of Giordano Dance Chicago began in 1985 as Associate Director, and in 1993 was appointed the title of Artistic Director. Nan was trained by her father and mentor, Gus Giordano, who created the world-renowned Giordano Technique. Developer of the Nan Giordano Certification Program®, Nan is the world’s preeminent authority on the essence, discipline, progression and continuance of the Giordano Technique; the vision of NGCP® is to provide worldwide, ongoing, and in-depth access to this ground-breaking dance form. She had an extensive performing career in concert dance, as well as in the industrial and fashion worlds. Before taking the reins on the artistic side, her concert dance experience began with Giordano Dance Theatre, apprenticing and then joining GDC. With her father leading the company, she traveled and performed extensively around the world; she also had the opportunity to perform in numerous WTTW dance television specials choreographed by her father including the Emmy Award winning The Rehearsal. When an injury ended her performing career in 1985, Nan became Associate Director of the company and was instrumental in establishing a working Board of Directors, which has evolved into today’s three separate boards. In the last 38 years, under Nan’s direction, GDC has established a high-profile reputation for excellence in the Chicago dance community, as well as in the national and international dance worlds.

Nan has guided the development of a large and diverse repertoire. Nan’s concert choreography credits include five works in GDC’s repertoire. On the commercial side Nan has choreographed several television commercials. Nan teaches master classes throughout the United States and has toured internationally as guest teacher in many countries including Brazil, Canada, Costa Rica, El Salvador, France, Germany, Guatemala, Mexico, and Israel. She is also the driving force behind Jazz Dance/Science & Health, GDC’s outreach program in three under-resourced Chicago Public Schools. Nan received the Manford Byrd Jr. Wizard of Oz Award for Outstanding Service from Howland School of the Arts. Nan is Artistic Director of Jazz Dance World Congress (JDWC), an event that draws dancers, choreographers, and teachers from more than 30 countries. Nan served three years on the Illinois Arts Council Dance Panel as well as on the Community Arts Assistance Program Dance Panel for the City of Chicago, Department of Cultural Affairs. She currently serves on the International Ballet Competition, National Honorary Committee, and the Advisory Board for Dance Magazine & Dance Teacher Magazine. She was recognized as a cover story in Dance Teacher Magazine’s January 2018 issue. Nan was also honored by Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who declared June 9, 2018, Nan
Giordano Day for her leadership and contributions to the Chicago community. In August 2018, Chicago Dancers United honored Nan (along with Lou Conte) with the Dance for Life Impact Award, recognizing her contributions to the Chicago dance community and Dance for Life. In celebration of Nan’s landmark year, the Chicago Tribune released their “2018 Chicagoans of the Year”, of which she was spotlighted as the city’s “Dance” honoree. In summer of 2019, Nan was honored with the Grace Wakefield Lifetime Achievement Award by Star Dance Alliance at the Circle of Excellence Gala. During the dim lit world, Nan launched a virtual project in Latin America, *Illuminate the Possibilities*. In October 2022, Nan was the Keynote Speaker at the Women in Dance Leadership Conference in Chicago.

Michael McStraw
*Executive Director*

Michael McStraw is a member of and outstanding advocate for the Chicago performing arts community. As a professional dancer, semi-professional musician, arts administrator, dance educator, board member, and arts patron, Michael has been a positive and constant influence in the community for the past 38 years. Raised in Western Pennsylvania, his life includes a BS degree in Geology from Allegheny College, a Master of Fine Arts degree in Modern Dance from the University of Michigan, and a stint as an agricultural extension agent in the Peace Corps in Sierra Leone, West Africa. He danced extensively with the area’s premier contemporary dance companies, including Mordine & Company Dance Theater, an organization he also managed, Jan Erkert & Dancers, and DanszLoop Chicago, of which he was a founding member. Michael was a member of and soloist with Chicago Master Singers for over 12 years and has performed extensively at numerous area churches and synagogues. Michael’s return to full-time arts administration ended a successful 17-year career in the pharmaceutical industry, most notably with G.D. Searle and Takeda Pharmaceuticals North America. He is an experienced marketing, operations, and project management professional with special skill in developing strategic long-term solutions for complex business issues. Michael is Executive Director of Jazz Dance World Congress, has twice served three-year terms on the Illinois Arts Council Dance Panel, is past President and Board Member for See Chicago Dance, Chicago’s dance marketing and advocacy organization, and has mentored young artists/administrators within Pentacle’s Help Desk program. Michael is a member of the Harris Theater Board of Trustees.
Joshua Blake Carter
Operations Manager, Director Giordano II

Choreographer Joshua Blake Carter has created works for dance companies, theater companies and events across the nation. Originally from Atlanta, GA, he was selected as the 2009 winner of Wonderbound’s (formerly Ballet Nouveau Colorado) national choreography competition, dancemakers2.0. In 2013, he was one of six winners commissioned to create a new work for DanceWorks Chicago’s DanceMoves choreography competition and was awarded the Producers’ Panel Prize by the Ruth Page Foundation for his work, “Ripen.” Joshua has created three original works for Giordano Dance Chicago, where he danced for seven seasons and currently serves as Operations Manager, and nine original works for Giordano II, where he currently serves as Director. Joshua’s choreography for Disney’s NEWSIES at the Paramount Theatre was nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Award and Regional Broadway World Award. Other commissions include Missouri Contemporary Ballet, Nomi Dance Company, Visceral Dance Chicago, and Artifact Dance Project as well as an original work for Embarq with Joffrey Ballet. In 2016, he created the finale for the event Sing! featuring Elton John. Joshua has been an Artist in Residence with Brenau University, Glendale Community College, Illinois State University, Salve Regina University and Southeast Missouri State University.

Cesar G. Salinas
Associate Artistic Director

Cesar G. Salinas, originally from Portland, Oregon, was named Associate Artistic Director for Giordano Dance Chicago at the start of their 60th Anniversary Season. He began his formal studies in dance with Zohar School of Dance, under the direction of Ehud Krauss in Palo Alto, CA. There he was introduced to the classic jazz styles of Gus Giordano, Luigi, and Matt Mattox. He moved to Oregon where he studied at Willamette Ballet Academy under Deborah Higginbotham. Cesar went on to further his training at the University at Buffalo, where he graduated with a BFA in Dance. He received a scholarship to Giordano Dance School in Chicago, IL, in 2004 and 2005. From 2006 until 2011, Cesar joined Giordano Dance Chicago as a full company member performing throughout the United States and Europe. Cesar was honored to be on the cover of Dance Magazine (August 2007) and to teach at the Jazz Dance World Congress in...
2007, 2009, and 2012. In 2013, he was chosen as a soloist for BalaSole Dance Company performing “Hunted” in New York City’s Alvin Ailey Citigroup where he received rave reviews: “richly physical performance that drew the audience’s unfettered enthusiasm” – Philip Gordon. Cesar toured the world with Royal Caribbean cruise lines as a performer in the Broadway production of Saturday Night Fever as well as an aerialist. In the January 2018 issue of Dance Teacher Magazine, Cesar demonstrates the Giordano Technique alongside Nan Giordano in honor of the company’s 55th Anniversary Season. Cesar is a certified teacher in the Giordano Technique at the Basic, Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, and Professional Levels of the Nan Giordano Certification Program® (NGCP®). Most recently Cesar returned to the stage at the Auditorium Theatre to perform Gus Giordano’s 1978 iconic solo Wings in honor of Nan Giordano’s 33 years at the helm and 25th Anniversary as Artistic Director for GDC. Lauren Warnecke of See Chicago Dance wrote, “…you could almost imagine Gus himself up there performing the piece he made 40 years ago.” He currently teaches master classes for workshops and festivals, as well as choreographs for universities and studios across the country.

Jacob Snodgrass
Technical Director

Jacob has been designing lights and working within the performing arts community since 2000, both domestically and abroad. Some of the artists he has worked with are Aerial Dance Chicago, BONEdanse, The Dance COLEctive, Khécarí Dance Theater, Breakbone Dance Company, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Peter Carpenter Performance Project, instruments of movement, Same Planet Different World, james morrow/the movement, Chamber Opera Chicago, Cuba’s Escuela Nacional de Ballet, REIDance, Havana Cuba’s DanzAbierta, Soham Dance, Cerqua Rivera Dance Theater, Concert Dance Inc./CDi, Joel Hall Dancers, Hedwig Dances, the Other Dance Festival, the Ruth Page Foundation, the Space Movement Project, Canada’s lbs/sq”, NEIU Repertory Dance, Thodos Dance Chicago’s New Dances, Shaw Chicago, WNEP Theater, 16th Street Theater, The Neofuturists, City Lit Theater, and Free Street Theater. He has been technical director at the Ruth Page Theater, Links Hall and Hamlin Park Dance Theater, and has recently taken the position of Lighting Director at the Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago.
THE COMPANY

**Ashley Downs**, a member of the main company from Lake Elmo, Minnesota, is in her tenth season performing with Giordano Dance Chicago. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Point Park University with a Bachelor of Arts degree, and a concentration in Jazz. Ashley has performed in the premieres of works by Ray Leeper, Ray Mercer, Peter Chu, Roni Koresh, and various prominent choreographers. She has loved being a part of Giordano’s Jazz Dance/Science & Health program since 2016 and is certified through the Advanced Level of the Nan Giordano Certification Program®.

**Ryan Galloway**, from New Richmond, Indiana, returns to the stage and GDC for a 7th season. He is a graduate of Indiana University, where he won the Provost’s Award for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity in the category of Performing and Creative Arts. He has performed works by choreographers including Paul Taylor, David Parson, Larry Keigwin, and Ishan Rustem, and performed at the National College Dance Festival at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. When he is not on stage, he can be found at Principle Dance in Forest Park, IL, which he co-owns with his wife Kim.

**Rosario Guillen**, from Pharr, Texas trained at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. He is in his second year with Giordano Dance Chicago, his first as a main company member. He was a soloist with the San Jose Dance Theatre in the 2020-21 season and danced in Sony Pictures’ Little Women (2019). He has also performed as Juan in a production of West Side Story by the Lexington Theatre Company, and as Rudolpho in Franklin Performing Arts Center’s rendition of Matilda. Rosario has choreographed for the San Jose Dance Theatre, the Commonwealth Ballet Company, and the Boston Conservatory at Berklee.
**Amanda Hickey**, main company member from Hanover Park, Illinois is in her fifth year with GDC. Amanda began her dance training at Faubourg School of Ballet and graduated with honors from Butler University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance Performance. She spent four years dancing with Nomi Dance Company, and has performed principal roles in the Schaumburg Dance Ensemble’s annual Nutcracker. Amanda has had the opportunity to choreograph pieces for Nomi Dance Company, the Ballet Theatre of Indiana, The Ballet INitiative, and Giordano II. Beyond performing and choreographing, Amanda is passionate about teaching and is certified in all five levels of Nan Giordano Certification Program®.

**Adam Houston**, a main company member of Boone, Iowa has been with GDC for ten seasons. In addition to dancing Adam serves as one of the co-Rehearsal Captains and co-Costume Managers. He graduated Magna Cum Laude with the “Outstanding Senior” award from the School of Dance at University of Arizona, with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance. In his time with GDC Adam has toured regionally, nationally, and internationally. He has many performances under his belt, but some of the most fulfilling in his career include being cast as the male soloist in signature GDC work and personal Gus Giordano favorite, “Can’t Take This Away,” choreographed by Randy Duncan. Adam is a sought-after teacher and choreographer. He has completed all five levels of the Nan Giordano Certification Program® and is heavily involved in GDC’s outreach program, Jazz Dance/Science & Health, in Chicago Public Schools. He has choreographed on several award-winning schools as well as three pieces for Giordano II, and in the Fall of 2021, Giordano Dance Chicago premiered his first work, “All For You” on the main company. Adam is honored to be in his tenth season with Giordano Dance Chicago, continuously fulfilling his dream.
Skyler Newcom, from Lawrenceville, Georgia is in his second year in the main company after a year as a Junior Performing Associate with GDC. Skyler graduated with a Certificate of Achievement from the School of Dance at the University of Arizona and is certified in the Beginning Level of the Nan Giordano Certification Program®. Through the Medici Scholarship, he was able to study at the Perry Mansfield Summer Camp and perform with Stacy Tookie and her company. Skyler performed “Na Floresta” by Nacho Duato while in college and was honored to dance in what he considers his most challenging duet role to date, “All For You” by Adam Houston in the 2020 Giordano on Giordano show.

Onjélee Phomthirath, from Columbus, Ohio, is in her first season as a main company member with Giordano Dance Chicago after one year with Giordano II. She spent many years of her youth learning at Pinnell Dance Centre under Jeri Pinnell, and recently graduated from Ohio State University with a BFA in Dance. During her time at OSU, she collaborated with her peers and BalletMet, and performed in the Dance Brazil Tour. She has danced with Bella Moxi Dance, and SALT 2 Contemporary Dance.

Katie Rafferty, a main company member from Oakford, Pennsylvania, is entering her thirteenth season with Giordano Dance Chicago. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania with the Outstanding Jazz Dance Performer Award from the UArts Jazz Faculty. Katie couldn’t be prouder of her time with the company; in addition to dancing, she also holds responsibilities as co-Costume Manager and co-Rehearsal Captain. She has been teaching for GDC Outreach programs, including Jazz Dance/Science & Health since 2010, and is certified to the Professional Level of the Nan Giordano Certification Program®. Katie had the honor of choreographing a pas de deux for Giordano on Giordano a few seasons ago entitled “Fly Me to The Moon.”
Fernando Rodriguez, of Fort Gratiot, Michigan, is entering his second year as a main company member after one year as a performing associate with GDC. He graduated from Grand Valley State University and Lakewood School of Therapeutic Massage. He has danced with River North Dance Chicago, Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, Paramount Theatre (West Side Story), DITP, Owen/Cox Dance, Grand Rapids Ballet Company and the Missouri Contemporary Ballet and became a Resident Choreographer for the Missouri Contemporary Ballet in 2016, dancing from South Korea to Lincoln Center in New York City. Fernando won the 2019 Inaside Chicago Dance Choreography Competition with his piece, “Pass Me By.”

Erina Ueda, was born in Nagoya, Japan, and raised in Chandler, Arizona. This season, she is entering her first year as a Main company member after a year as a Giordano II dancer. She is also our videographer and social media consultant, and has completed the Professional Level of the Nan Giordano Certification Program® as the first Japanese certified worldwide. She attended the University of Arizona, where she graduated Summa Cum Laude with a major in Dance and a minor in Psychology in 2021. Already in her young career, Erina has toured many states and countries, has been selected and premiered many of her choreographic works, and has accumulated many performances by renowned choreographers, including Paul Taylor, Martha Graham, Ohad Naharin, Crystal Pite, Ronen Koresh, Ray Mercer, Frank Chavez, Autumn Eckman, Alejandro Cerrudo, Christopher Huggins, Peter Chu, Ray Leeper, Kiesha Lalama, Jon Lehrer, Nacho Duato, and many various prominent choreographers. Erina has been featured in Netflix’s 2018 film “Driven to Dance” by Tati and Anthony Vogt, and she will be featured alongside Autumn Eckman in a soon-to-be-released documentary filmed by Emmy Award-winner, Ryan Fitzgerald.
Peter Chu, originally from Cocoa Beach, Florida, is a distinguished artist who strives to push the physical bounds of dance. He began his training as a competitive gymnast, later nurturing his artistry at Dussich Dance Studio where his evolution into dance began. As a BFA student at The Juilliard School (under the direction of Benjamin Harkarvy), Chu was pushed further as a technical mover and began an explosive journey into choreography. Upon graduation, he was awarded the Hector Zaraspe Prize for Choreography. Chu is a remarkable and multi-faceted artist. As a performer, he has danced with BJM _Danse and EZdanza, as the lead in Christina Perri’s Jar of Hearts music video, in Celine Dion’s Vegas spectacular A New Day, and with Crystal Pite’s company Kidd Pivot. In 2008, Chu formed a Las Vegas project-based company—chuthis. His multi-disciplinary dance company combines innovative lighting and sound with live contemporary movement. In 2018, chuthis presented paper cuts in an empty bag at Zuiderstrandtheater in The Hague, Netherlands, as part of the Shortcuts XL program, and was the company in residence at Perry-Mansfield Performing Arts School & Camp. Part of the mission of chuthis is to provide movement education programs for the next generation of artists. Through the chuthis Movement Intensive, an annual summer event, and chuthis Moves, a 2-3 day custom workshop or both national and international dance schools, the chuthis team fosters technical/artistic development and mind/body familiarity while igniting an adventurous side of dance. Chu has been an honored recipient of choreographic awards & commissions, including the Hector Zaraspe Prize, A.C.E. Capezio Award, & Hubbard Street Dance International Commission Project. He was also named a Blodgett Distinguished Artist by Harvard University for 2018. Additionally, Chu has served as the Rehearsal Director for Nederlands Dans Theater 2, and as a Guest Rehearsal Director for NDT1. Chu has created works for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Staatstheater Augsburg, Germany, Charlotte Ballet, Charlotte Ballet II, Orlando Ballet Theatre, Hubbard Street 2, Giordano Dance Chicago, So You Think You Can Dance, Naomi Stikeman’s Çaturn, Houston MET Dance, New Dialect, SALT Contemporary Dance, The Juilliard School, Harvard University, Point Park University, Nederlands Dans Theater Summer Intensive, Springboard Danse Montreal, SUNY Purchase, Western Michigan University, & Brigham Young University Contemporary Dance Theatre, among others. Teaching highlights include Harvard University (Guest Lecturer), HSPRO, Springboard X | shift perspective, Axis Connect, Hubbard Street Studio Series, The Dance Teacher Summit, and Movement InventionProject. Most recently, Chu has premiered new works for Giordano Dance Chicago and Gibney Dance Company, and was the choreographer for Cirque du Soleil’s Vitori in Malta. In 2021-22, Chu will premiere a creation for Paul Taylor Dance Company, and develop a new work with his own company, chuthis.
Liz Imperio, has established herself as a major director and choreographer in the entertainment industry. Some of her credits include the staging and choreography for Jennifer Lopez’s world tour *Dance Again*; director/choreographer of Gloria Estefan’s last three world concert tours; and two world tours for Madonna – the *Re-invention Tour* and the *Confessions Tour*. A proud Cuban American, Liz was born and raised in Hollywood, California. Her work caught the eye of famed choreographer Kenny Ortega at a young age. Liz became Kenny’s Associate Choreographer for six years before breaking out on her own. Her credits make her one of the most sought after choreographers in the business, including most recently: The 10th Anniversary opening performance for Premio Juventud featuring Jennifer Lopez and Pitbull; multiple episodes for *Dancing with the Stars* featuring Sheila E. and Corbin Bleu; American Idol; The Latin Grammys (last three years); American Music Awards featuring Cher; *United We Stand* with Michael Jackson; ABC’s 50th Anniversary Celebration; Disney Channel’s *Gotta Kick It Up*; James L. Brook’s feature film *Spanglish*, CBS TV series *Dirty Dancing* and commercials for Jack In The Box, L’Oreal, and Sheba Cat Commercial featuring Eva Longoria amongst many others. Liz is also known for her masterful skills as a motivator and master teacher of dance throughout the world; K-Broadway from Japan; Dance Life Studio in Stockholm, Sweden; Harmonic Studios in Paris, France among many others. Liz has been teaching on the convention circuits for over 24 years including; West Coast Dance Explosion; Tremaine Dance Convention; Co.
CHOREOGRAPHERS

Dance; Break the Floor Productions; Liz is currently Artistic Director for Hollywood Vibe Dance Convention as well as numerous European companies from Italy to England. Liz Imperio is very proud to be a partner and founder of her own Los Angeles-based production company Liz Imperio Productions.

Ray Leeper, talented and creative, Ray Leeper has established himself as one of Hollywood’s leading creative directors, producers, choreographers, and master educators. His provocative and powerful style, his innovative vision and outgoing character, makes him highly sought after in this field. Ray’s work spans the spectrum from television, movies, and commercials to off-Broadway and music videos. He has choreographed for some of the most popular television shows, most recently on FOX’s So You Think You Can Dance, where he managed to win the love of millions of viewers each week. He has worked past seasons of Dancing with the Stars, American Idol, All My Children, One Life to Live, Big Bang Theory, X-Factor UK, and America’s Got Talent. His big screen credits include, They Shoot Divas, Don’t They starring Jennifer Beals, the short film, This Island, as well as starring himself in the films, Move, and I Dream of Dance.

Originally from Los Angeles, Ray always knew he wanted to be a choreographer. At 9 years old, he was cast as the Artful Dodger in the musical “Oliver!” and the choreographer suggested dance training to his mom. There weren’t many boys training at that time, so he desperately tried to keep it a secret and continued to play sports. At 13, the kids found out and he was bullied, but preserved and started to focus on his dance training and love of choreography.

His long career has including working with such artists as Elton John, Snoop Dogg, Nick Cannon, Nile Rodgers, Kelly Rowland, Kathryn Jenkins and Geri Halliwell. His favorites include Cher because of her willingness to collaborate & humbleness and Matthew Morrison for his professionalism. Creative Director credits include Franco Dragone’s INDIA and One Love, So You Think You Can Dance, Matthew Morrison’s Where It All Began tour and NKOTB/BSD tour, IL DIVO World Tour, X-Factor European Tour.

All the components combined are what Ray appreciates most about the creative process and has collected a vast number of commercial credits for international brands Pepsi and Levis, working with Hollywood notables like famed director Nigel Dick for Sierra Mist and BAFTA award-winning director Phil Heyes for American Idol & X-Factor UK.
Ray has recently directed and choreographed the critically-acclaimed Off-Broadway musical, *One Day*, as well as the Off-Broadway show *Mental – the Musical* and other notable Off-Broadway shows, *Inappropriate* and *Nightlife*. He was awarded the esteemed “Best Choreography Award” for his work on *Common Grounds* in the New York Musical Theater Festival and the prestigious “Gold Leo Award” for Excellence in Choreography at the Kennedy Center.

After 30 years of teaching worldwide and being one of the most sought-after choreographers and master teachers in the United States, Ray now spends his time dedicated to his new creative endeavors, producing original content and choreographing for television and film.

**Cesar G. Salinas**, See page 14.

**Michael Taylor**, is celebrating over 35 years as a master teacher, giving seminars, setting original choreographic works and teaching dancers around the world in both the private and public sectors, in addition to college, university and fine arts programs. As a performer, some of his credits include: Gus Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, serving as associate director and rehearsal choreographer for six years; River North Dance Company, AKASHA Dance Company, *The Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, serving as an assistant choreographer for five years, as well as several theater, fashion and industrial credits to his name, including Papermill Playhouse’s *Funny Girl*, and Disney’s *Magical Moments* in Chicago and Rome, Italy. Michael proudly served as a director and rehearsal choreographer for Royal Caribbean Entertainment, also providing service in the audition and casting departments. Currently sharing his passion for dance, teaching, coaching and choreographing in South Florida, Michael is grateful to be a part of numerous internationally recognized performing arts organizations!
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The 2022 – 2023 season marks Rich Dee’s twelfth with Dance St. Louis, and the sixth season as the executive leader.

On the verge of closing in 2017 due to financial struggles, and under his guidance, Dance St. Louis has achieved 5 straight seasons (2018 – 2022) in the “black” and remains one of only 4 nonprofit dance-only presenters in the United States. In addition, Mr. Dee has led Dance St. Louis through the Covid-19 pandemic overcoming significant challenges as the result of cancelled shows.

During his tenure at Dance St. Louis, Mr. Dee has raised millions in philanthropic support to present the talents of more than 4,000 artists and 300 professional dance companies from across the globe to our city. In addition, he led the efforts to secure more than $1 million to commission 25 world premieres exclusively for St. Louis-based dance companies in partnership with world-renowned choreographers, to grow artistically, increase exposure for their company, and elevate our city’s dance landscape.

He is credited with the creation of An Evening of Ballet Stars showcasing principal dancers from some of America’s most iconic and prestigious ballet companies; he reimaged the SPRING TO DANCE® Festival under The Big Top circus tent at a time when indoor theaters were shuttered due to the pandemic; and through his leadership, St. Louis remains home to one of the most celebrated dance festivals in the Midwest region, SPRING TO DANCE.

Mr. Dee’s nonprofit experience spans 27 years with missions focused on the arts, animal welfare, humanitarian efforts and healthcare. He has raised more than $100 million in his career and has held executive positions with major non-profits that include the Humane Society of
Missouri, one of the largest and oldest animal welfare organizations in the country, during a successful $11 million capital campaign; the American Red Cross, most notably during 9/11; and Cancer Support Community/Gilda’s Club, the largest professionally led non-profit network of cancer support worldwide.

He currently serves as special advisor to Ensemble Español Spanish Dance Theater in Chicago, previously serving as Vice Chair of the Board and Executive Board Member for five seasons. Mr. Dee also serves as Board Vice President of the Dielmann-Kaiser House Foundation in St. Louis, focused on preserving the historic collection of furniture, fixtures and objects as well as original artwork by artist, sculptor, and master gardener Robert Dielmann. The Dielmann-Kaiser House is a historic 1883 three-story Victorian-style home located in the Dutchtown neighborhood of south St. Louis city.

Since 1995, Mr. Dee has been an active member of the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), serving as an Executive Board Member for nearly ten years. In 2000, Mr. Dee was one of only eight nonprofit leaders to serve on the Executive Host Committee for AFP International Conference on Fundraising held in St. Louis, the largest conference on fundraising in the world, setting a record that year with over 4,000 attendees. He has had the honor to work with Bob Costas, the late Beverly Sills, and other prominent figures in sports, media, and the arts and entertainment industry.

Prior to his nonprofit career, he was with FleishmanHillard, and mentored by civic icons Ruth K. Jacobson and Al Kerth. While at FleishmanHillard, he worked with clients such as Anheuser-Busch, AT&T, Hyatt, McDonalds, St. Louis Rams, St. Louis Science Center, and Walmart.

Mr. Dee is a graduate of Missouri State University with a bachelor’s degree in electronic media and journalism. He was raised in the St. Louis Hills neighborhood and graduated from St. Gabriel the Archangel and St. Mary’s High School.
Michael Uthoff was born in Chile to the founders of the Chilean National Ballet, Ernst Uthoff and Lola Botka, who were both members of the original Ballet Jooss. Uthoff arrived in NYC to study dance at The School of American Ballet, The Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance and The Juilliard School of Music.

Soon after his arrival, he became a soloist with the José Limón Dance Company. Uthoff was also an original member of the American Dance Company, which opened the State Theatre at Lincoln Center, in which he danced leading roles in works by Jose Limon, Donald McKayle and Anna Sokolow. He then joined the Joffrey Ballet as a principal dancer and later joined the First Chamber Dance Company of NY touring the USA, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

He was among the first faculty members at SUNY Purchase and founded and developed the Hartford Ballet, taking it to national prominence where it served as a framework for companies around the country to follow. His tenure culminated with tours of China and Latin America. Uthoff continued his career as the artistic director of Ballet Arizona and the Ballet Estable del Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires, Argentina. In 2006, he accepted the post of artistic and executive director of Dance St. Louis and continued the presentation of quality dance performances while developing programs that enhanced the local dance community and thrilled audiences. Spring to Dance and New Dance Horizons were introduced to its season while an intensive dance education program was developed with inner city schools. He held the post until 2017 and later returned to Dance St. Louis as the artistic director in 2020.

He has taught at the university level and in dance schools throughout the country. He guest lectured at UMSL’s dance department and became a member of the faculty at Webster University in 2010.
Uthoff has choreographed at every level and his works have been seen all over the world earning him creative grants. He has received many awards culminating with an Honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from the University of Missouri in St. Louis as well as the Excellence in the Arts awards by the Arts and Education Council received in 2013.