



# Afoutayi Haitian Dance, Music, and Arts Company

Photo by Galen Higgins

## *Ti Sonson ak Pouvwa Tanbou - Ti Sonson and the Powers of the Drum*

Afoutayi Haitian Dance,  
Music and Arts is a  
performance company and

nonprofit arts organization  
incorporated in the state  
of Minnesota and fiscally  
sponsored by the Indigenous  
Roots in Saint Paul, MN.

Our mission is to promote Haitian and Afro-Caribbean heritage and diversify contemporary representations of Haiti through music, art, dance, and history education. We envision a world where Haitian and Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage is a fundamental part

of youth education and success to enrich communities of different backgrounds.

In 2009, Djenane Saint Juste arrived from Haiti and founded the company in the Bay Area to address the serious lack of Haitian cultural representation. In its inaugural year, Afoutayi hosted the first Haitian Dance, Music and Art Festival at Mission High School in San Francisco on the anniversary of the Battle of Vertieres, honoring the turning point in the Haitian War of Liberation through a traditional opening ceremony, community gathering, workshops, performances, and lectures. During its five-year tenure in the Bay Area, the company performed original works interpreting the Haitian tradition of Vodou at prestigious events and institutions such as the Cuba Caribe Festival, Mission Cultural Center, Dance Mission Theater, ODC Dance, San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival, and Stanford University.

The company relocated to the Twin Cities in 2014 and continues to grow as Minnesota's premier Haitian arts and cultural organization. Until 2018, Afoutayi presented its hallmark annual festival and developed it into a hub for Afro-centric movement and music through its collaborations with notable artists from the African and Afro-Caribbean diaspora. Today, Afoutayi hosts residencies, workshops, ceremonies, and lectures in schools and the community to challenge students and attendees to think and move outside of their familiar habits. To learn more about AFOUTAYI visit their new dance studio at 2525 Nevada Ave N, suite, 211, Golden Valley, MN 55427 and check out their website: [afoutayidmaco.com](http://afoutayidmaco.com)

***Ti Sonson ak Pouvwa Tanbou - Ti Sonson and the Power of the Drums***, an original piece extracted from the trilingual children's book of Djenane Saint Juste, is a bright spark, highlighting joy and resilience in Haitian culture.

In Haiti, dance is not just a physical phenomenon; it's a social, cultural, and historical product that connects us all. Dance is a vital way for Haitians to express themselves, to connect with their ancestors, to heal, and celebrate life; In this piece, different aspects of Haitian culture and its connection with the African continents will be presented through the life of Ti Sonson, the main character of the book who loves "Tanbou" drums. Tanbou was one of the first mediums of mass communication in Ayiti; "Tanbou" is also an instrument of peace and healing underlying all community gatherings. When being played, this heritage from West Africa invites us to dance. Therefore, as you hear the drums, imagine the high green mountains protected by Gran Bwa Ile, the cool ocean breeze that carries, the loving songs of Mèt Agwe and Lasirèn, and you will smile as you witness "Larèn Soley" the shining Queen sun dancing in the blue Caribbean sky. And then, as your heart connects with our drums, take your scarves, stand, dance, and sing with us.

Ti Sonson (Little Sonson) lives with his mother, father and grandmother in a cut stone house near Fort Jacques, a locality in Haiti. His mother is a machann fritay (street food vendor) in Fèmat, his father is a tap tap driver who travels from Fèmat-Petyonvil and his grandmother is a vegetable seller. Toutous is Ti Sonson's dog and his best friend and Bòs Asona himself is Ti Sonson's late grandfather. Ti Sonson likes to spend time with his family and help with the different chores he has to do every day around the house. One day, his mother had a disagreement with his grandmother. The conflict escalated to such an extent that it lasted for several days, to the point that Ti Sonson was very upset about this problem which caused them not to spend time together as a family as they usually do. That's why he tried many strategies to help the family unite while he himself discovered a new path for his life.

## Ti Sonson Team song by Florencia Pierre (Kreyòl)

Ti Sonson, woy, woy, woy, woy

Ti Sonson fè tanbou pale

Tanbou a soti ann Afrik, tanbou a rive  
Ayiti Ti Sonson fè tout moun danse

Woy, woy, woy, woy

Tanbou a rasanble tout moun

Woy, woy, woy, woy

Tanbou a gaye nan monn nan

## Ti Sonson Team song by Florencia Pierre (English translation)

Ti Sonson, woy, woy, woy, woy

Ti Sonson makes the drum talk

The drum comes from Africa, the drum arrived  
in Haiti. Ti Sonson makes people dance

Woy, woy, woy, woy

The drum brings people together

Woy, woy, woy, woy

The drum spreads around the world

## Choreographers

**Djenane Saint Juste** - Founder and Artistic Director of AFOUTAYI. A native of Haiti, Djenane Saint Juste is a professional choreographer, dancer, actress, writer, storyteller and vocalist with over 30 years of experience specializing in Haitian traditional dance and folklore. She is a part time model with over 10 years of experience in Runway, Swimsuit & Lingerie, Commercial Model, Fitness, and Parts. In 2003 she won the Haitian T.V beauty Contest Miss Videomax and since then have been working with different Haitian and international photographers and designers. She received extensive training in Traditional Haitian dance, Ballet, Hip Hop, Modern, Jazz, and Ballroom dance at the Institut de Danse JAKA, Institut



Photo by Galen Higgins

de Dance Vivianne Gauthier, and Artcho Dance Company in Haiti. She has a bachelor degree Physical Education and sport from Escuela Internacional de Educación física y deportada from Cuba, and a Master in Education from St Thomas University in Minnesota. Her work has been documented in "Making Caribbean Dance" as well as "Lavil: Life, Love, and Death in Port-au-Prince (Voice of Witness)." In 2018, Djenane received the Award of Excellence from the Haitian Community of Minnesota and the NAACP. Her latest work is her first children's book, "The Mermaid and the Whale", published in August 2020 and her second book and CD "Ti Sonson ak Pouvwa Tanbou" published in October 2023. She is currently a teaching artist at the Saint Paul Conservatory for the Performing Arts, MPR Classnotes, SELCO and COMPAS. She was the Co-choreograph at the MN Opera for the Anonymous lover production. She is the co-directed of the Afoutayi Dance Studio in Golden valley with her mother Florencia Pierre. You can learn more about her work on: [www.afoutayidmaco.com](http://www.afoutayidmaco.com)

**Florencia "FoFo" Pierre** - Cultural Director of Afoutayi. Florencia Pierre has dedicated her life to teaching the stories, songs, and rhythms that form the foundation of traditional Haitian culture. Born in La Gonâve, Haiti, Florencia "Fofo" Pierre is an accomplished dancer, choreographer, singer, actress, educator, costume designer, chef, traditional healer, and Mambo (priestess in the Vodou religion). She was a principal dancer of the National Dance Theater of Haiti and the Vivianne Gauthier School of Traditional Arts, as well as a faculty member of ENARTS Ecole Nationale des Arts in Haiti, and the founder and director of the esteemed Institute de Danse JAKA where she trained dancers and musicians in Haitian traditional dances and theater for over 30 years. She is the Cultural Director of Afoutayi and the founder of the Institut de Danse JAKA and she is currently the Founder of Kay Fofo & TSK (Two Non Profit organizations that help children go to school

and help their family create small business to support themselves and their community in Lagonav, and Thomassin in Haiti). Ms. Pierre has been featured in "Walking on Fire: Haitian Women's Stories of Survival and Resistance" by Beverly Bell and Edwidge Danticat and was also featured in the first movie produced in Haiti titled "Anita", and the movie Liberte, Egalite, Fraternite et puis apres by Jean Rouch. Having performed throughout the Caribbean, Europe, and the United States, Florencia Pierre has been the cultural consultant at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival for Once On This Island and the ALAFIA Dance company for their Ethnic Dance Festival performance. You can learn more about her work on: [www.afoutayidmaco.com](http://www.afoutayidmaco.com)

## Performers

**Christian Yao Adeti** was born and raised in Accra-Ghana, West Africa to a family of thirteen siblings. Since he was six years old, Christian has loved traditional African music and dance. It was then that he joined a drama group in his church and started exploring dancing and acting. Christian's love for performing propelled him to become a member of the traditional dance ensemble, Hayor Dance Company at W.E.B Dubois Memorial Center of Pan African Heritage. Through the company's recognition, Christian became well-known in the Ghanaian community, and traveled to many African countries to explore African music and dances as well as Scandinavia countries in Europe. Christian moved to Minnesota in the United States with an enormous passion for West African drumming and dance. Christian still continues to do what he loves the most, teaching West African music and dances in schools, community centers, parks, festivals, and weddings.

**Alanna Morris** is a Dancer-Choreographer, Educator, and Artist Organizer, born and raised in Brooklyn, New York of Afro-Caribbean descent and currently residing in Saint Paul, MN. She danced with TU Dance in St. Paul, Minnesota

under Artistic Directors, Toni Pierce-Sands and Uri Sands from 2007–2017. She's been named Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch!," City Pages' Artist of the Year and Best Choreographer. She has received fellowships from the McKnight Foundation for Dance (2015) and Choreography (2021) and Springboard Danse Montreal (2022). She is the Founder and Artistic Director of I A.M. Arts, working in the non profit sector to support critical dance performance, holistic arts education, and community life. Currently developing a thesis around the divinity of blackness and the eternal validity of the soul. Black Light is methodology, praxis and performance art project, being researched in phases over multiple years through collaborative solo performance, teaching and residency. Alanna is touring Let The Crows Come and Invisible Cities in 2024, directed by Ashwini Ramaswamy. Alanna is a Visiting Professor of Dance at Carleton College and a graduate of The Juilliard School.

**Thomasina Petrus** is a professional jazz singer and 30 year equity actor. She cultivated her talents through mentorships and friendships of the twin cities' most beloved artists, who encouraged her to continue creating exceptional music and theater by launching Thomasina Productions. She has toured the country staging "Lady Day @ Emerson's Bar & Grill" by Lanie Robertson, and her original production "The Best of Billie & Me" for all audiences including young audiences and elderly residences (particularly memory-care patients), "Etta James...Dreams to Remember", and "Hot Chocolate", a multi-Holiday musical series. AND OF COURSE "Thomasina's Cashew Brittle" (.com) available in concessions, online, and many local specialty retailers. "ThomaSING-A-grams" are available for booking performances at: [Thomasina@thomasinascashewbrittle.com](mailto:Thomasina@thomasinascashewbrittle.com).

**Rocssy Mahania** is a respected international drummer and percussionist from Congo, Brazzaville. He has started drumming from a very young age and his gift and dedication for

music has made him the protege of many master drummers in his community. Mr. Mahania has been the lead drummer with the acclaimed Congolese ensembles "Africa Tambour", "Tambour De Braza Junior", and "Goma Za Kongo". In the U.S Mr. Mahania collaborated with the well known ensembles "Bitezo Bia Kongo", "Nlolo Kongo", "Chezanami group", and participated at the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival in 2014 & 2019, as well as the "Lourden Nelson Community Center" in Santa Cruz, California. He has been traveling all over the continent of Africa, Europe, and America as a lead drummer, performer, and drum instructor for over 25 years. He collaborated with AFOUTAYI in 2021 as a guest artist for the Summer RASANBLE Workshop. Currently Rocssy Mahania teaches weekly drum classes in Oakland, in Santa Cruz, California, as well as Nevada City.

**Karen Aaron** grew up in central Canada, loves snow and embraces winter sports. She is an avid nordic skier and triathlete who is passionate about teaching adults of all ages to ski and bike. Karen works with her husband to manage a World Tour pro cycling team that races all over the world called Human Powered Health. She has always been interested in Afro Caribbean Dance and Latin music but it was not until her early forties that she began lessons with amazing local Cuban dancers and in 2023 began classes at Afoutayi with Florencia Pierre "Fofu" and Djenane Saint Juste. Karen loves to practice & perform with Chini's Salsa Rueda group "Rueda de la Calle" and is excited to join the amazing artists at Afoutayi for her inaugural professional production.

**Eric Coursen** is a Twin Cities based percussionist who has studied percussion traditions of Cuba, Haiti and Brazil, Guinea and Ghana. He is especially interested in the connection between drums and dance and has participated in several locally based drum-dance companies, folkloric drum

groups and innumerable dance classes. He began working with Djenane and Afoutayi upon her arrival in the Twin Cities in 2015.

**Romero Cannady** Born and Raised in Saint Paul Minnesota is a dancer and choreographer who began dance at the age of 6, prompted by the encouragement of his mother and father. He pursued a degree in dance at the University of Minnesota, graduating with a Bachelor's Degree in Fine Arts. During his undergraduate years, Romero had the privilege of dancing in works by Dr. Gaynell Sherrod and Robert Moses. As he evolved into a burgeoning dance artist, Romero continued his exploration of movement with the TU Dance CULTIVATE program. Simultaneously, he furthered his education by earning a Master's in Education and obtaining a tier 3 teaching license, showcasing his commitment to both artistic expression and educational advancement.

## Performer

**Rose Perou** is a 25-year-old Haitian-American who enjoys learning about Haitian culture, including dance, history, and food. She started learning about Haitian Dance and Culture with Afoutayi in 2022. Rose's dedication to her community extends beyond just sharing her culture - she is also an active member of her local community, always striving to make a positive impact on those around her.



Photo by Galen Higgins

**Storyteller: Richard Janke**

**Drummer: Altene François**

## **Music**

Ti Sonson ak Pouvwa Tanbou - Ti Sonson and the Powers of the Drum book & CD by Djenane Saint Juste, Songwriter/Singer: Florencia Pierre, Live original Drumming by Christian Adeti, Rocssy Mahania, Eric Coursen, and Altene Francois.

“Tou Manbre” - LATAYE / Dadi  
Beaubrun: [https://youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy\\_koBuesyMrPsL\\_T59ztGuhwt5dT5Uuj610&si=O\\_54ewifNGbpn\\_HO](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=OLAK5uy_koBuesyMrPsL_T59ztGuhwt5dT5Uuj610&si=O_54ewifNGbpn_HO)

**Lighting Design: Mike Grogan**

**Costume Design: Florencia Pierre**

## **Afoutayi Support Team**

**Hassen Taylor Ortega, Scarlett Gonzalez Mejia, Dalsen Vilain**

## **Special Thanks**

We want to say a big Thank you “Mèsi Anpil” to Madame Florencia Pierre also known as Manman Fofo or Queen Fofo for sharing her artistry, creativity, wisdom, love and lights with us all. For over thirty years, she has influenced and inspired so many lives all over the world not only as an artist but also as an elder, a role model, and by the force of nature you she is. Please join AFOUTAYI in a big “Ayibobo!” to celebrate Queen Florencia Pierre “Fofo”.

In order to print her second children’s book “Ti Sonson and the Powers of the Drum”, Djenane Saint Juste is selling the audio CD which contains original songs, the storytelling of the books as well as interviews in English, Haitian Creole, and French. The cost of the Cd is \$15 and you can order today at the front desk of the Cowles Center, online at <https://www.afoutayidmaco.com/> or the Afoutayi Dance Studio at 2525 Nevada Ave N, suite 211, Golden Valley, MN 55427. Thanks for your generous contribution and support.



Scan the QR code  
to view the full  
digital program  
including artist bios.



# Concerto Dance

Photo by Galen Higgins

## Ode to Opus Jazz

Concerto Dance by Jolene Konkel creates jazz and modern dance works driven by musicality and virtuosity.

Our mission is to explore work that strengthens and uplifts the human spirit, aiming to inspire hope and build community connections through vibrant concert dance.

Concerto Dance creates jazz and modern dance works driven by musicality and virtuosity. Our mission is to explore work that strengthens and uplifts the human spirit, aiming to inspire hope and build community connections through vibrant concert dance.

Our signature jazz dance style blends vernacular and classical jazz dance to create high energy and distinctly musical performances with theatrical flair. Our work seeks to honor the African Diasporic roots of jazz and celebrate the diverse cultural influences woven across all American dance forms we engage with. Concerto Dance believes dance is a means of expressing joy, an integral part of community, and a part of what it means to be human.



We desire to create artistically compelling and entertaining concert dance that engages a broad audience. Since its founding in the Fall of 2019, Concerto Dance has created and premiered multiple dance works including a dance film *Awakenings* filmed in Northfield, MN, an original evening length jazz dance work, *Girls in the Band*, conceived and directed by Konkel that celebrates the often untold stories of female jazz musicians and composers from the 1930's to today, and has presented several new works including premieres from national visiting guest artists in addition to multiple works by Jolene Konkel. Concerto is thrilled to be making its debut at the Cowles Center and is looking forward to a full season of dance with additional performances coming up at the Bloomington Center for the Arts and the Southern Theater. To Learn More Visit: [concertodance.com](http://concertodance.com)

## Choreographers Note

***Ode to Opus Jazz*** was inspired by Jerome Robbins' 1958 work, "NY Export: Opus Jazz" and originally premiered in 2018 in celebration of Robbins' centennial, and has become a signature work of Concerto Dance. The work navigates the challenges of an explosive and turbulent world through resilience, friendship, and young love utilizing vernacular and classic jazz dance with theatrical flair.

In 1958 Jerome Robbins created "NY Export: Opus Jazz" for his company *Ballets: USA* as an abstract "ballet in sneakers." He was searching for a new dance language found in the Latin and African rooted music and vernacular dance styles of the time. He wanted to break away from the traditions of ballet to find a more relevant means of expressing and embodying the emotions of American youth culture dealing with the "explosive and turbulent world around them."

*Ballets: USA* was also one of the first inter racial companies during a time when blacks and whites did not typically share the stage, especially in the ballet world. The original choreography was passed down to me as a young dancer from my ballet teacher who performed in the original work, and I quickly identified with and fell in love with the movement. "Ode to Opus Jazz," is an original work inspired by the legacy Robbins left and my early roots as a dancer. Revisiting the work much has changed, and yet it still remains relevant as we find ourselves once again dealing with a "turbulent and explosive world around us." The work calls on our collective humanity to come together, to celebrate one another, to say "I got your back," and to move forward through this explosive world with dignity and style. That's jazz.

## Choreographer

**Jolene Konkel** (began her dance training in Milwaukee under William Reilly, a descendant of Jerome Robbin's *Ballets: USA* and at the Milwaukee Ballet, Milwaukee High School of the Arts, and Danceworks. While there she performed with the Milwaukee Ballet, the Milwaukee Opera Company and Danceworks before relocating to Chicago to study at Gus Giordano's, Lou Conte Dance Studio, and the Joel Hall Dance Center. She went on to pursue a BFA in dance at the University of Minnesota studying under Zoe Sealy, Cathy Young, and Danny Buraczeski, and later completed her MFA in Performance and Choreography through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. As a choreographer Ms. Konkel's work spans both musical theater as well as concert dance and has been presented at the University of Wisconsin, the University of Minnesota "Jazz Here, Jazz Now", the University of Northwestern, Belhaven University, Renovate Choreographers Evening at the Ritz Theatre, MN Fringe, Zenon Dance Zone, Patrick's Cabaret, The Old Arizona, *Rhythmically Speaking* (2008, 2011, and 2018), and at the Bloomington Center for the Arts.

Her work in music theater has been showcased multiple times at the International Thespian Festival, Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival, and at the American Alliance for Theatre and Education. In addition to her work as a choreographer, Ms. Konkel has been educating dancers for over two decades and is passionate about teaching jazz dance technique from a historical perspective, dance history, and choreography. Jolene is the founder and Artistic Director of Concerto Dance and is thrilled to be making her choreographic debut at the Cowles Center in the Fall Forward Festival.

## Performers

**Hunter Batterson** is a dancer, performance artist, and arts administrator originally from Chicago, IL. She began her movement training with the Dance and Music Academy before transitioning into a pre-professional program at The Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts). At this time, Hunter also received additional instruction through the Kansas City Ballet and Hubbard Street Dance Chicago summer intensives. She then went on to pursue her B.F.A. in Dance and minor in History from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, graduating with high distinction in 2021. Here, she had the opportunity to create numerous original choreographies as well as perform in works by Andrea Miller (Gallim Dance), Vie Boheme, Chris Schlichting, Annie Hanauer, Joe Chvala, and Carl Flink. After graduation, she has worked with Borealis Dance Theatre, Javan Mngrezzo through Zenon Zone, Kendall Kramer, and Lily Conforti. Along with performing, Hunter also works in arts administration. She is currently the Youth + Outreach Coordinator for Zenon Dance School and the Creative Design Manager for ARENA DANCES. This is her second season with Concerto Dance, being promoted from apprentice to company member.

**Malia Craft (she/her)** is originally from Hartwell, Georgia and is a recent graduate of the University of Georgia, where she received a B.A. in dance, a minor in exercise and sports science, and a certificate in K-12 dance education. She has a strong passion for teaching as well as performing. Malia is a current company member with Threads Dance Project and made her first appearance with Concerto Dance in the cast of Girls in the Band as a guest artist in 2022. She is excited to join Concerto as a company member for the 2023/2024 season!

**Doug Hooker (he/him)** is a Minneapolis based dance artist, originally from Keizer, Oregon. Having graduated from the University of Oregon with a B.A. in Dance, he is very thankful to have had a wide variety of professional performing opportunities including dancing with the Santa Clara Vanguard Drum and Bugle Corps, touring with the Broadway show Blast!, as well as independent projects throughout the Twin Cities. Doug has previously danced with: Dancing People Company in Ashland, Oregon under the direction of Robin Stiehm, Mathew Janczewski's ARENA DANCES, Threads Dance Project, Paula Mann, Erinn Liebhard's Rhythmically Speaking, Shapiro & Smith, Collide Theatrical, and the MN Opera. Doug performed with Concerto as a guest artist last season and is excited to be entering his first year as a company member.

**Lydia Kantor (she/her)** received her dance training from Ballet Arts Minnesota, Minnesota Dance Theatre, and St. Olaf College. She has had the honor of performing with Jolene Konkel since 2016 and is a founding member of Concerto Dance. Additionally Lydia has performed locally with several other dance companies including Alternative Motion Project, Collide Theatrical Dance Company, Curio Dance, and Eclectic Edge Ensemble. Her performance experience expands into the theatre having performed in a production of Bye Bye Birdie as well as the Guthrie Theater's A Christmas Carol. For her, dance is joy.

**Sara Karimi (she/her)** Originally from Wisconsin, Sara graduated from The University of Iowa with a Bachelors of Fine Arts in Dance. Upon graduation, Sara danced and toured with 10,000 Feet Dance Company, Kayle + Co. and The Architects before relocating to Minneapolis. Local performance credits include Borealis Dance Theatre, Alexandra Bodnarchuk, MN Opera, Dance & Other Behaviors, Rogue & Rabble Dance and Danceworks. She is a company member with Threads Dance Project and Rhythmically Speaking, and a founding company member of Concerto Dance.

**Helena Magalhães (she/her)** has been a dancer for 21 years and is trained in a variety of techniques including ballet, modern, improvisation, jazz, and more. Since graduating from the University of Iowa with a BFA in Dance, she has worked with groups such as Flying Foot Forum and See-Saw Theatre Lab, and has been working with Jolene Konkell as a founding company member of Concerto Dance for the past four years.

**Shannon Mulcahy (she/her)** holds a BFA of Dance from the University of Minnesota - Twin Cities. During her undergrad, she trained under Toni Pierce-Sands, Carl Flink, Ananya Chatterjea, Erin Thompson and Joanie Smith. Her professional credits include Rhythmically Speaking, Contempo Physical Dance, and Erin Coyne Choreography. Shannon teaches at Ballare Teatro and Prairie School of Dance as well as youth master classes throughout the Twin Cities Metro area. Shannon is in her third season with Concerto Dance.

**Betsy (Gaasedelen) Nelson (she/her)** earned her BA in Dance and Exercise Science from St. Olaf College and is proud to be a founding member of Concerto Dance. Her performance credits also include Collide Theatrical Dance Company, Minnesota Opera, Curio Dance, Rhythmically Speaking, and more. Outside of

performing, Betsy has enjoyed a decade as a dance teacher and is currently on staff at CREO Arts & Dance. She is also thoroughly enjoying a new adventure as a mom to an almost-1-year-old daughter! Whether teaching or performing, Betsy particularly enjoys jazz dance and the musical and expressive richness it offers.

**Brenda Nepsund (she/her)** Founding Company Member and Returning Guest Artist, graduated from MSU, Mankato with bachelor degrees in both dance and mass media in 2014. Since then, Brenda has performed with a variety of talented companies and artists including Concerto Dance, Zorongo Flamenco, Eclectic Edge Ensemble, Stuart Pimsler Dance & Theater, Borealis Dance, and LiRa Dance. When Brenda isn't performing, you can catch her teaching at CreO Arts & Dance Conservatory or spending time with her son, Emmett Leroy.

**Sarah Pieper (she/her)** Founding Company Member and Returning Guest Artist, holds a B.A. in Dance from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point as well as Pilates Mat certification from Balanced Body. Her performance credits include Eclectic Edge Ensemble, Artistry Theater, and Alternative Motion Project. Sarah's choreographic work has been performed by the University of Northwestern, North Central University, numerous high schools, Project Dance, and the YWAM School of Dance. Additionally, she has performed and taught dance in Mexico, Costa Rica, India, and China. Currently, Sarah is the Artistic Director at Celebrate Dance Academy where she has served since 2012, and she currently performs with Concerto Dance and Vivid Artistry Dance Co. Sarah would like to thank her husband for his constant support, and her son for filling life with constant wonder.

**Brandyn Tapio (he/him)** Returning Guest Artist, is a 2014 graduate of the University of Northwestern, St. Paul where he studied theatre and dance and served as dance captain under the direction of Jolene Konkell. Post-graduation Brandyn has performed in several community theatre productions and professionally with the Chanhassen Dinner Theatre and Flying Foot Forum, and has served as an assistant choreographer to Ms. Konkell in educational music theatre. In addition to his performance career, Brandyn works in the physical therapy field. This is Brandyn's second season as a guest artist with Concerto Dance.

## Music

Oliver Nelson and Dizzy Gillespie

## Lighting Design

Mike Grogan

## Costume Design

E. Amy Hill

## Special Thanks

**Concerto Dance acknowledges that jazz dance would not exist without African influences and black pioneers who paved the way for the development of the form. We are grateful to be able to share and celebrate in this art form, giving honor to all those who have come before.**

We also thank our board members, individual donors, Creo Arts and Dance, the Cowles Center, Afoutayi Haitian Dance, Music and Arts and Kaleena Miller Dance.



Scan the QR code to view the full digital program including artist bios.



Photo by Galen Higgins



# Kaleena Miller Dance

Photo by Galen Higgins

## Electric Counterpoint

Kaleena Miller Dance  
(KMD) is an artist-driven,  
creative incubator for tap  
dancers in Minnesota.

Led by nationally-recognized tap dancer and choreographer Kaleena Miller, KMD gives space for emerging and established artists to engage with tap dance as not only a capsule of American history and culture to be studied and upheld, but as a medium for expression, problem solving and value-driven future thinking. KMD places respectful and undogmatic thought at the forefront of its activities, aiming to develop artists that collaborate with care and respect.

Miller's choreographic work places attention and sensation at the forefront, seeking to create an ecosystem of listening that gives space for the audience and performers to consider/re-consider our bodies and actions in relation to other humans, structures and sounds.

A note for participation:

*"Listen to everything all the time and remind yourself when you are not listening."*

— Pauline Oliveros

## Choreographer

**Kaleena Miller** makes and participates in sound-focused dance works. She is director of tap dance companies Kaleena Miller Dance and KMD2, and co-director of percussive dance producing entity Twin Cities Tap. She was named one of DANCE Magazine's 25 to Watch, received a McKnight Dancer Fellowship and a Sage Award, and is currently an Artist-in-Residence at the American Tap Dance Foundation in New York. She has a BFA in Dance from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, and a Deep Listening certification from the Center for Deep Listening at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Kaleena is currently splitting time between Minneapolis and New York, and is working towards an MFA at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Kaleena is thankful for and deeply indebted to her first tap dance teachers: Karla Grotting and Char Weiss.

## Performers

**Audrey Bartley** is a tap dancer who grew up dancing with Keane Sense of Rhythm, which is a non-profit dance company based in St. Paul, MN. She has trained closely with many talented people over the years- including Kaleena Miller, Nico Rubio, Cathy Wind, Ellen Keane, Nicolas Van Young, etc. She has also performed in New York, Chicago, Poland, Dallas, and of course Minnesota. She dances actively with two companies in the Midwest. First being Kaleena Miller Dance based in the Twin Cities, she joined in 2015. She joined Nico Rubio's company 333 in 2020, which is based in Chicago. She has a passion for tap dancing, and is excited to have this opportunity to share her passion with you.



Photo by Galen Higgins

**Bobby Hamilton** has been dancing for over seventeen years and has been trained in multiple styles of dance. He was a KMD2 member for two years, and a KMD2 apprentice for two years.

**Toivo Hannigan** is a versatile and dynamic guitarist based in the Twin Cities music scene. With a passion for pushing the boundaries of music, Toivo has become a sought-after talent, lending their skillful guitar work to a diverse array of bands and genres. You can catch him performing with artists like Jake Baldwin, Larry Wish, and JT bates.

**Abby King** is a diversified performing artist, choreographer, and dance instructor based in the Twin Cities. Growing up, she danced competitively and trained in a variety of styles at Metro Dance Center. Abby graduated from Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists, where she had exposure to modern, classical, and global forms of concert dance. She has had the pleasure of performing in various works and concerts with Kaleena Miller Dance, a collaborative tap dance company, and Crash

Dance Productions, conceptual contemporary dance company. In addition to her dancing and teaching, Abby is now studying apparel technologies at Minneapolis College and working to develop her vintage resale business.

**Nina Maxwell** grew up dancing competitively in central Minnesota before discovering her love for tap dance. Since then she has trained and performed with multiple tap companies including Keane Sense of Rhythm, Reverb Tap Company and KMD2.

## Music

“Electric Counterpoint” composed by Steve Reich

Played live by Toivo Hannigan

## Lighting

**Mark Ruark** is a twin cities theatre artist. While primarily a lighting designer, he also dabbles in sound, music, stage management, and performance. He has been the Technical Director at the Southern Theater since 2019.



Scan the QR code  
to view the full  
digital program  
including artist bios.

Photo by Galen Higgins

