

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2020 **new**
dances

**THODOS DANCE CHICAGO AND DANCEWORKS CHICAGO
ANNOUNCE NEW DANCES 2020 CHOREOGRAPHERS**

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CHICAGO— *New Dances 2020* continues its over 30-year tradition of providing an extensive in-house choreography incubation program for Chicago's dance community with Melissa Thodos, Founder and Artistic Director of Thodos Dance Chicago, and Julie Nakagawa, Co-Founder and Artistic Director of DanceWorks Chicago at the helm. *New Dances* was founded by the Chicago Repertory Dance Ensemble in the 1980s, in 2000 it found a new home with Thodos Dance Chicago (TDC). This year marks the 20th anniversary of *New Dances* being under the Thodos Dance Chicago umbrella, as well as the third year of *New Dances* being co-produced by TDC and DanceWorks Chicago (DWC).

After receiving applications from a diverse pool of choreographers reflecting a broad range of dancemaking in Chicagoland, invitations were extended to six choreographers. Melissa Thodos (TDC) recounts, "Having received a record number of applications, it is abundantly clear that *New Dances* continues as a vital and needed project to enrich our Community. We have selected some of Chicago's best and brightest dance makers and having assembled a diverse cross section of choreographers at different stages in their career trajectory from early to mid-career, it is our honor to help them to grow and achieve their creative goals."

The *New Dances 2020* roster of Chicagoland-based choreographers: **Sydney Jones, Drew Lewis, Brian Martinez, Joanna Meccia, Joe Musiel, and Peyton Winker.**



Sydney Jones

Drew Lewis

Brian Martinez

Joanna Meccia

Joe Musiel

Peyton Winker

Few opportunities exist in the United States for emerging choreographers to receive robust artistic, financial, and production support to realize their creative vision for the stage with no expectation other than the investment in the journey. Each *New Dances* choreographer will be supported by a creative residency including 25 hours of studio time plus time on stage to bring their choreographic vision to life with a company of local, professional dancers selected through an audition for the project. In addition, Melissa Thodos (TDC) and Julie Nakagawa (DWC) along with a panel of leaders from the Chicago dance community provide mentorship for the artists during and the process and post-production as well.

On Sunday, April 5, 2020, *New Dances 2020* Company Auditions will be hosted at Ruth Page Center for the Arts. TDC and DWC are searching for Chicago-area dancers, who are technically-proficient, stylistically-diverse, and artistically-inclined dancers to participate in a one-of-a-kind audition- no numbers, no costs, no cuts, just a community of dancers. Julie Nakagawa (DWC) recounted from *New Dances 2019*, "It was gratifying to hear choreographers and dancers comment about how mutually inspiring the audition process was."



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DANCERS: Dancers should be current residents of the Chicago area. Selected artists from the community will be invited to join members of DWC to comprise the *New Dances 2020* Company. Auditions will be held at the Ruth Page Center at 11am on Sunday, April 5. Dancers should be available for the entire creative, production, and performance period June 1 - 20. Audition pre-registration is required and available: <https://thodosdancechicago.org/> or <https://www.danceworkschicago.org/>.

Supporting this journey is Ashley Rockwood from Dancers Awareness Project (DAP), a dance-based production company, who also documented *NEW Dances 2018 and 2019*. Rockwood created this company in 2016 as a means to share content and experiences with and about the dance community. Jacob Snodgrass will be joining the team for the third year in a row as New Dances' Lighting Designer & Production Stage Manager. Snodgrass has been designing lights and working in the Chicago dance community since 2000.

New Dances 2020 is a must-see Chicago summer event presenting six world premiere dance works that feature a diverse line-up of fresh, homegrown talent of choreographers and dancers in a fully-produced performance. *New Dances 2020* will take place at Theater Wit June 17-20 (additional performance, ticket, and special event information to be released at a later date).

***New Dances 2020* Choreographer Bios**

Sydney Jones (Villa Park, IL) Sydney Jones, a Chicagoland area native, is thrilled to be presenting her work in *New Dances*. She will receive her Bachelor of Fine Arts in jazz dance from Point Park University in April. Sydney attended the Chicago Academy for the Arts, where she trained with Randy Duncan, Natalie Rast, and Deb Goodman. She has choreographed five concert dance pieces, two of which were presented at the Inside Choreographic Sponsorship. She is so thankful for her family and for the incredible teachers and mentors she has had along the way.

Drew Lewis (Chicago, IL) Drew Lewis is originally from Chicago, where he grew up training in jazz piano, acting, and street dance. In 2016, he graduated magna cum laude with a BFA in Dance from Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, WA, where he was the Merce Cunningham Endowed Scholar. He has studied dance at myriad institutions internationally including Nederlands Dans Theater, Springboard Danse Montreal, and the American Dance Festival, and has performed works by Kyle Abraham, Fernando Melo and Zoe Scofield among many others. Drew toured extensively with Sidra Bell Dance New York from 2016-2019, and taught as part of the company teaching cohort at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA. Other dance credits include Project 44, C-LS, and Attack Theater, and teaching credits include Loyola University Chicago, Skidmore College, and The School at Mark Morris. Drew is also a DJ and composer and his work can be found on streaming platforms as DOV and on instagram @lildov__.

Brian Martinez (Chicago, IL) After receiving his BFA in Contemporary Dance, Brian moved to Chicago to further his training with Hubbard Street's Professional Program (HSPPro) under the direction of Alexandra Wells. In the program, he has performed and workshopped works by Ryan Mason, William Forsythe, Rena Butler, Robyn Minekos Williams, and Peter Chu; all of whom provided transformative information for Brian's developing choreographic preferences. Providing a space for dancers to discover movement and take ownership of it has been a staple of his process. Allowing for this positively impacts the resulting product, whatever it may be.

Joanna Meccia (Morton Grove, IL) Joanna Meccia received degrees in Dance and Kinesiology from Indiana University. After graduating she relocated to Chicago, where she has performed and choreographed for Trifecta Dance Collective, Esoteric Dance Project, and Project606 Dance. Joanna has also co-produced projects such

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as benefit performance Where Beauty Rises at Links Hall, donating all proceeds to clean water organization Wine to Water. Additionally, she co-produced and choreographed Dance Across Chicago, a project supported by funding from DCASE, which used live music, dance, and technology to bring free performances to public spaces and public schools in Chicago.

Joe Musiel (Chicago, IL) After graduating from Indiana University in 2013, Joe joined Giordano Dance Chicago's second company, allowing him to learn from artists such as Brock Clawson and Autumn Eckman. He was a company member with Cerqua Rivera for two seasons and was a member of South Chicago Dance Theater. Performing credits also include West Side Story at the Paramount Theater and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. His work has been seen throughout the Chicago area at such events as Carnival: A Choreographers Ball, Inaside Dance, Noumenon Dance, College of DuPage Choreography Competition, Alluvion's Emergence, and Deeply Rooted Emerging Choreographer Showcase.

Peyton Winker (Chicago, IL) Peyton is a choreographer and dance teacher from Chicago, Illinois. She is currently completing her higher-level education at Columbia College Chicago where she is a double major in Dance and Marketing. During her time at CCC, she has had the opportunity to present her own choreography on stage, performed in faculty pieces, completed communications internships under the direction of Margi Cole, and work with professors Dardi McGinley-Gallivan, Darrell Jones, Paige Cunningham, and Lisa Gonzales. Peyton has worked at multiple dance studios choreographing and teaching dance while doing marketing projects and website design consultation. She recently choreographed for RuPaul's Drag Race Season 8 Top 3 drag queen, Shea Coulee's newest music video "Rewind."

New Dances 2020 Artistic Collaborator Bios

Ashley Rockwood (Chicago, IL) Ashley discovered a love for dance at the age of 2 in her hometown of Toledo, OH. She then went on to study dance at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, PA. She is a member of Actor's Equity Association, AGMA, and AFTRA. Her theatrical productions include the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera's productions of "42nd Street", "Music Man", "Hello Dolly", and "Me and My Girl". Her Chicago credits include principal dancer in the Lyric Opera of Chicago's productions of "Tannhauser" and "Showboat", featured dancer in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's "Welcome Yule" and guest artist with C5. Ashley danced with Giordano Dance Chicago for 7 years of which she toured, performed, and taught all over the world. Ashley had the honor of dancing with Beyoncé on Oprah's Farewell Episode and the Billboard Music Awards. One of her proudest moments was being on the cover of Dance Magazine. Currently she serves on the Ambassador committee of Dance for Life, on the associate board for Urban Gateways, and is a member of the Chicago Ideas Co-Op. She is the founder and artistic director of Dancers Awareness Project, which is on a mission to create opportunities for dancers to connect and make meaningful content for our community; the world. Ashley's most recent endeavor is a physical space, Free Mvmt Shop - a movement and creative studio.

Jacob Snodgrass (Chicago, IL) Jacob has been designing lights and working within the performing arts community since 2000. His works have been seen with Giordano Dance Chicago, Aerial Dance Chicago, Chicago Human Rhythm Project, BONEdance, The Dance COLEctive, Khecar Dance Theater, Breakbone Dance Company, Peter Carpenter Performance Project, Same Planet Different World, instruments of movement, Chamber Opera Chicago, Cuba's Escuela Nacional de Ballet, REIDance, Havana Cuba's DanzAbierta, Soham Dance, Concert Dance Inc. with whom he traveled to China in 2009, Joel Hall Dancers, Hedwig Dances, the Other Dance Festival, the Ruth Page Foundation, the Space Movement Project,



Canada's lbs/sq", NEIU Repertory Dance, and *New Dances*. Jacob is the Lighting Director at the Dance Center of Columbia College and has been technical director at the Ruth Page Theater, Links Hall, and Hamlin Park Dance Theater.

About Thodos Dance Chicago:

Melissa Thodos, a choreographer, educator, and performer for over 30 years, founded Thodos Dance Chicago in 1992. For 25 years, the company offered dancers a place to perform, a place to create new work and a place to educate the next generation of dancers. Thodos Dance Chicago successfully performed and taught for over one million dance fans in Chicago, across the country in 27 states, and around the world on five continents.

In its 28th year, Thodos Dance Chicago has evolved to undertake projects that provide the greatest impact in the Chicago community and beyond as a project-based dance organization. Our mission is to engage and enrich the community through dance creation, advocacy, education, mentorship and production. TDC is also working with Emmy Award-winning filmmaker Chris Olsen on creating documentaries and film about the development of and the performance of some of the Company's high profile signature story ballets and dance theater works. For more information, visit <https://thodosdancechicago.org/>.

About DanceWorks Chicago

Founded in May 2007, DanceWorks Chicago is committed to building a foundation for early career artists by providing a laboratory from which dancers and choreographers propel themselves and the art form to a new level of artistry through training, collaboration, mentorship, and performance. DWC's efforts to nurture and convene the next generation of artists, audience, and dance citizens, inspires, empowers, and contributes to a sustainable future for dance. For more information, visit <https://www.danceworkschicago.org/>.

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