

GroundWorks Dance Theatre

Organizational History:

Now celebrating its 20th season, GroundWorks DanceTheater is known for the quality and innovation of its programs. It is *imagination you can see*. Critically celebrated as an “artistically significant” ensemble, GroundWorks explores the nuances of the human experience through unique and adventurous choreography. This exciting, eclectic work brings audiences face-to-face with fresh, fascinating performances of passion, intellect and humor.

Fundamental to GroundWorks is the fostering of new choreography and challenging preconceptions about dance, for which founding artistic director David Shimotakahara provides the vision. Beginning in 1998, from its Northeast Ohio base, this group of outstanding artists has introduced dance lovers and neophytes alike to an experience that is unconventional, yet deeply human and resonating. Sometimes performing in unusual settings and often featuring live musicians onstage, GroundWorks enriches its work with subtle layers of meaning that deepen the impact and enjoyment for the audience. This desire to push the boundaries is also evident in Shimotakahara’s bold initiative: *To constantly seek collaboration and input from ground-breaking choreographers of the highest caliber and to make certain that the repertoire of the company is constantly evolving.*

GroundWorks’ repertoire includes commissioned works by 32 nationally and internationally acclaimed guest choreographers—some of the most creative voices in the field—as well as 42 works by Shimotakahara and 12 by Artistic Associate Amy Miller. The repertoire challenges the range of its exceptional artists and the process establishes a working relationship with guests choreographers interested in creating new work with the group.

GroundWorks is committed to enriching the community through inspiring education outreach programs for which it has been recognized with funding from the Ohio Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts. Partnering with the Cleveland Municipal and Akron Public School Districts and other private, charter and parochial schools during each performance series, students in grades 3- 12 learn concepts that reinforce curriculum and stimulate creativity. The company also offers interactive workshops and master classes based in the movement language of GroundWorks and connecting to other creative pursuits.

GroundWorks performs annually for 5,000-7,000 adults, of which approximately 35% are seniors and 15% are minorities. Through its education outreach in schools, along with partnerships at local universities, the company serves a diverse student population of 2,500-3,500 students each year.

Now entering its third decade, GroundWorks looks toward its future, having earned solid support and a growing audience base as more and more people discover what the Plain Dealer has described as the “smoldering brilliance” of one of “Cleveland’s cultural gems.”

Artists:

David Shimotakahara, Executive Artistic Director

Alexis Britford, Dancer

Nicole Hennington, Dancer

Annie Morgan, Dancer

Tyler Ring, Dancer

Robert Rubama, Dancer

Rebecca Burcher, Education and Community Engagement Coordinator

Dennis Dugan, Lighting Design

Kristine Davies, Costume Designer

Bios:

DAVID SHIMOTAKAHARA (Executive Artistic Director, Choreographer - LUNA) has been a member of the Atlanta Ballet, Boston Repertory Ballet, Kathryn Posin Dance Company, and the Pittsburgh Ballet Theater. He performed with Ohio Ballet under the direction of Heinz Poll from 1983-1999. He also served as Rehearsal Assistant for Ohio Ballet from 1989-1999. From 1989-97, Mr. Shimotakahara founded and was Director of New Steps. This acclaimed dance project offered a variety of programs that stimulated the creation and growth of new choreography in Northeast Ohio. Mr. Shimotakahara has choreographed for opera and theater with the Cleveland Opera, Great Lakes Theater Festival and the Dallas Theater Center. He served on the Carlisle Project advisory panel in 1996, and dance panels for the Ohio Arts Council, Illinois Arts Council, the Mid Atlantic Arts Alliance and the National Endowment for the Arts. He has received 7 Individual Artist Fellowships for Choreography from the Ohio Arts Council from 1996 to 2012. In 1998, he received a McKnight Foundation Fellowship from the Minnesota Dance Alliance to create new work in the Minneapolis, St. Paul communities. Mr. Shimotakahara was awarded the 2000 Cleveland Arts Prize for Dance. In 2002 his work with GroundWorks DanceTheater was voted “One of 25 to Watch” by Dance Magazine. In 2007, he received the OhioDance award for Outstanding Contributions to the Advancement of the Dance Artform. Mr. Shimotakahara was a 2008 recipient of the first COSE Arts and Business Innovation awards as the founder of GroundWorks DanceTheater. In 2010 and 2013 Shimotakahara received a Creative Workforce Fellowship, a program of the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, funded by Cuyahoga Arts and Culture.

Alexis Britford (Dancer), a native of Columbus, began her dance training at Theater Street Dance Academy. She continued her studies at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music’s Preparatory Program, Dayton Ballet, Jeraldynne’s School of Dance, and Columbus Youth Ballet. Alexis is also a graduate of University of North Carolina School of the Arts’ high school Classical Ballet program and trained at Boston Conservatory, The Ailey School, Houston Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Hungarian National Ballet, and Boston Ballet. Alexis graduated summa cum laude with a BFA in Dance Performance from Wright State University in Dayton, OH. During her undergraduate

studies, she was a member of Dayton Contemporary Dance Second Company (DCDC2) and upon graduation was promoted to the professional company, where she enjoyed seven seasons touring both domestically and internationally. This is Alexis' first season with GroundWorks.

Nicole Hennington (Dancer) spent her first two decades in Arizona where she graduated from the University of Arizona with BFA in Dance and a minor in Finance. During this time, she also studied with Chuthis., Nederlands Dans Theatre, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, New Dialect, and Ate9. Over the years, Nicole has performed the works of Peter Chu, Jianhui Wang, Banning Bouldin, Emma Portner, Autumn Eckman, and Bella Lewitsky.

At the University of Arizona, Nicole had the privilege to choreograph and collaborate with her peers and her passion towards creating led her pieces to be chosen repeatedly to be performed on the Stevie Eller stage. In her final year, she was awarded the Gertrude Shurr Award, an award given to acknowledge passionate artistry and excellence in modern dance. Nicole is now overjoyed to be a new member with GroundWorks DanceTheater.

Annie Morgan (Dancer) grew up in Birmingham, Alabama where she studied the ABT curriculum through the Alabama School of Fine Arts. Annie continued her training as a conservatory student at Point Park University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in dance. There, she had the privilege of dancing works by choreographers such as Septime Webre, Antony Tudor, Matthew Powell, Adam Houglund, and Jennifer Archibald, as well as classic roles such as Kitri in Don Quixote and Giselle in Giselle. While at Point Park, Annie was the recipient of the Loti Falk Scholarship. Annie has worked with the Berkshire Choreography Project performing "Elements" at Jacob's Pillow, and has performed as a backup dancer for comedian Hannibal Buress. In 2017, Annie was named one of "eight local standout performances" in Pittsburgh by the Pittsburgh City Paper. Annie is beyond thrilled for this first year of discovery and growth alongside the beautiful artists of GroundWorks!

Tyler Ring (Dancer) is a native of Muncie, Indiana, where he graduated summa cum laude with a BFA in Dance from Ball State University. He has also studied at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and Visceral Dance Chicago. As a performer, Tyler has danced new works by Sidra Bell, Alex Ketley, and Melissa Thodos, and performed excerpts from the repertoire of Ohad Naharin, Alejandro Cerrudo, Robert Moses, Nacho Duato, and Nick Pupillo. Tyler is also a dance maker, and his choreography has received national recognition, including being chosen as the first alternate for performance at the American College Dance Association National Conference at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. After spending last season as a performing trainee with Thodos Dance Chicago, Tyler is thrilled to be joining GroundWorks for his second season.

Robert Rubama (Dancer) is a native of Virginia Beach, Virginia. He is a graduate of George Mason University with a B.F.A in Dance. Robert has had the opportunity to perform works by

Andrea Miller, Donald Byrd, Mark Morris, Soon Ho Park, Nick Pupillo, Ivan Perez, and Yin Yue. He has also performed with Agora Dance and RawArts Dance at various venues in the Washington D.C area. Robert is the creator of Terre Dance Collective which has enabled him to present work both in New York City and Washington D.C. This is Robert's first season with GroundWorks Dance Theater.

Rebecca Burcher (Education and Community Engagement Coordinator) attended Slippery Rock University and graduated in 2014 summa cum laude with a BA in Dance and a BS in Community Programs for Americans with Disabilities with a specialization in Adapted Physical Activity. She has worked as a teaching artist for Attack Theatre and Dancing Wheels Company and School. Rebecca has performed with Marcia Custer, Kathy Diehl, Amanda Tarr Dance Company, The Movement Project, MegLouise Dance, and Carmen Caceres. Her work has been selected for presentation at SPACES Art Gallery, Cleveland Dance Fest, dotdotdot, and has been commissioned by The Movement Project. She has taught various masterclasses at Slippery Rock University, Cleveland Dance Fest, and The Movement Project's 2016 Winter Intensive. She has also worked as a Production Manager for Heidi Latsky Dance and IDACO Dance Festival. Rebecca is currently the Education and Community Engagement Coordinator for GroundWorks Dance Theater.

Kristine L. Davies (Costume Designer, LUNA) has designed for *Brubeck, Flag, The Return, All I Do*, and *Saying Yes* for GroundWorks. She also designed *A Soldier's Tale with Catch and Release*, a collaboration between GroundWorks DanceTheater, the Cleveland Play House and the Cleveland Orchestra. Other design work includes the CWRU MFA Acting Program at The Cleveland PlayHouse productions of *Present Laughter, Autobahn, Arcadia, Big Love, The Little Foxes, A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Real Thing*. She designed *Bright Room Called Day, What the Butler Saw*, and *Shadow of a Gunman* for the CWRU undergraduate theater program. Ms. Davies was resident designer at Beck Center for the Arts; she has done other costume work for Great Lakes Theater Festival, Akron Art Museum, Cleveland Opera, Lyric Opera Cleveland, Playhouse Square, Cleveland State University, Phoenix Repertory Dance Theatre, Boise Contemporary Theater, and the Idaho Shakespeare Festival. She has her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and Sociology from Cleveland State University.

Dennis Dugan (Technical/Lighting Designer) has been working with GroundWorks DanceTheater since its inception. Currently, he also works with Ballet Met, Ballet Theater of Ohio, Canton Ballet, Cuyahoga Valley Youth Ballet, Verb Ballet, Ingenuity Festival, the Heinz Poll Dance Festival and The University of Akron. His fascination with light began in the 70's at Ohio University. It has led him to work in all forms of live performance in theater and dance venues from New York to Los Angeles and all the states in between. Although dance is his favorite performance art, Dennis also enjoys exploring sculpture, photography and lighting public art. Dennis is a Board Member of Ohio Dance, a membership and service organization serving the

dance community of Ohio. He was a recipient of the Ohio Dance Award for outstanding contributions to dance in Ohio in 1997.

Repertory: “LUNA” choreographed by David Shimotakahara

Video Link:

<http://groundworksdance.org/portfolio-items/luna/>

<https://vimeo.com/304887352>

Promos of our spring series:

Gartner Auditorium at Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio

March 20, 2019

7:00 pm

Program:

World premiere by Dianne McIntyre

“éveillé” (Awake) choreographed by James Gregg

<http://groundworksdance.org/portfolio-items/gartner-auditorium-2019/?portfolioCats=633%2C634%2C635>

EJ Thomas Performing Arts Hall, Akron Ohio

March 30, 2019

7:30 pm

Program:

World premiere by Dianne McIntyre

“Hindsight” choreographed by Lynne Taylor-Corbett

“LUNA” choreographed by David Shimotakahara

<http://groundworksdance.org/portfolio-items/ej-thomas-2019/?portfolioCats=633%2C634%2C635>