Institutional Support

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Pillownotes

by Maura Keefe

The PillowNotes series comprises essays commissioned from our Scholars-in-Residence to provide audiences with a broader context for viewing dance.

"Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition." — James Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room

Home matters. Heart, heark, and castle. A refuge. A place from which to venture and a place to return. Home for Kylie Abraham has multiple meanings. In his skin, and in his body, in music and art. In New York, and now in Los Angeles. But really, it’s Pittsburgh that was first and maybe even always home. Where it’s through Kylie Abraham is from. And it threads through his creative history.

Like Kylie Abraham, the city of Pittsburgh has multiple and at times diverging identities. As a city, it’s both and neither the Northeast and the Midwest. It’s Appalachia on the one hand and the Rust Belt on the other. In straddling these boundaries, it borrows cultural and artistic credences from a variety of sources. It’s a city of speculations. It’s blue collar and white collar. It’s been called America’s smartest city. And it’s also where the reality show Dance Moms is filmed. It’s readily dedicated to its hometown sports fan—the Steeler’s, the Penguins, and the Pirates—and is equally proud of the Andy Warhol Museum. Pittsburgh sons and daughters include Gertrude Stein and August Wilson, choreographers Martha Graham and Paul Taylor. As Pittsburgh Post-Gazette writer Brian O’Neill writes: “It’s just Pittsburgh, and there’s no place like it. That’s both its blessing and its curse.”

Abraham, like Pittsburgh, presents conflicting identities. He’s Known for what some people term his neo hip-hop style, but he has also performed with former New York City Ballet principal ballerina Wendy Whelan. As he goes on to dance, one understands the singular movement style that drew Whelan to commission a duet from him for Restless Creature (which premiered at the Pillow in 2013). She explained her motivation as a desire to determine whether she could move like him, saying, “If I could do something like that as a ballet dancer. If I could transform myself to feel what he feels as a dancer.”

Abraham describes his movement as “postmodem gumbo…a hybrid of movement sensibilities inspired by a lot of postmodern, modern, contemporary and ballet forms and even some social-dance vernaculars as well.”

His groundbreaking solo inventing Jookefinlkin (2006) became a kind of signature work and it foreshadowed the complexity of what was to come with his company Abraham.In.Motion (now known simply as A.I.M). Dressed in a white tulle skirt, like a ballerina might wear, Abraham swung into the stage carrying a boom box. All at once, he embodied multiple and complex identities that were both recognizable and strange: an African American man with a boom box, an African American man in a draping white skirt (unfamiliar). At once masculine and feminine, high art and street, Abraham showed his movement histories in his dancing. His mastery as a performer allowed him then and allows him today to move smoothly between that hybrid of forms, vernacular and ballet and modern dance techniques. His virtuosity as a dancer, as a polyglot of dance languages, makes the juxtapositions of styles not jarring but overlapping.

Abraham’s connection to Pittsburgh is more than symbolic. He has remarked in interviews that his high school days are a constant source of inspiration for him—“that time of change when we discover, inhabit, acknowledge, and express ourselves.” At 16, he says, he watched the Joffrey Ballet perform in Pittsburgh, and it was then that he realized that this is what he wants to do. He went to see the Joffrey Ballet perform in Chicago, and it was then that he realized that this is what he wants to do. He went, not to see the ballet, but rather to see some dances to the song cycle by the pop superstar Prince. That love of music from the club and that love of dancing in concert with his work as a choreographer.

As Abraham moved out into the world, his sense of home expanded, with worked of home centered in the Civil Rights Movement (The Watermelon, 2015) and the end of South African apartheid in When the Wolves Came In (2017), both inspired by the 1960 music of We Insist! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite. Dearme Home (2017), narrowed the scope initially to the dancer themselves. With his company’s return to the Pillow, Abraham himself reiterates the stage with (INDY) (2018), as well as showcasing the dancers in works like Show Pony (2018) and Drive (2017).

The tangible corporeality of dancing bodies makes it impossible to ignore who we are. This is not to say that every dance, as its subject matter, grapples with issues of identity. Like Pittsburgh, the city of bridges, Abraham and his dancers span differences and suggest possibilities. As we see the dancers themselves as much as we see the dance. And both are beautiful.

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Dance writer Maura Keefe has led audience programs at various venues around the country and is the Associate Director of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, where she was named the Dorothy & Middon Professor of Dance in 2018.
REHEARSAL DIRECTORS
Music Composition
Costume Design
Choreographer
Costume Design
Lighting Design
Choreographic Performance
Scenic Design
Dramaturg
Assistant to the Choreographer

Catherine Ellis Kirk
Allysen Hooks
Tamisha Guy
Nicole Pearce
Reggie Wilkins
Charlotte Brathwaite
Margie Gillis
Jerome Begin

Theatre Foundation with major support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Show Pony (2018)

Choreography: Kyle Abraham
Music: "Hatchespru" by Jin
Lighting Design: Dan Scully
Costume Design: Fritz Masten
Dancer: Marcella Lewis

DONOVAN REED (Dancer) is originally from Philadelphia, PA, and began his dance training at the age of 16 under the direction of Shawn Lamere-Williams. Soon after, Reed elongated his search for knowledge by attending college at The University of The Arts. He was awarded his B.F.A. in May of 2016. During his time in college, Reed participated as an Artist in Residence at Die Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt, DE. In addition, he participated in an independent artist program where his training was extended with The Pennsylvania Ballet, The Philadelphia Dance Company (PHALDACO!)/Eliane Dance Theatre, and The Rock School for Dance Education. He has performed works by choreographers such as Sidra Bell, Regina Van Berkel, Sharon Eyal, Tamiie Wahahed-Evans, Beth Gill, Andrea Miller, Mike Esperanza, Tania Isaac, and Meredith Rainey. Reed is currently working with Helen Simonseu Danse, and joined A.I.M in 2018.

JADA JENAI WILLIAMS (Dancer) was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. She is a graduate of Foorelli H. LaGuardia High School and SUNY Purchase College, with a B.F.A. in Dance and a minor in Arts Management. During her college career, she had the opportunity to work with Jonathan Reidel, Kyle Abraham, Kevin Wynn, and Jean Freebury restaging Merce Cunningham's Chome of Address, and Damon Crossman. Williams has studied abroad in Perth, Australia at Western Australia Academy for Performing Arts, and has spent summers in Montreal attending Springboard Danse Montréal, where she worked with Jonathan AIkerry restaging work by Azure Barton, and Shanel Pitts restaging three by Ohad Naharin. Since graduating, she has worked with Helen Simonseu and joined A.I.M in 2018.

Program state

Choreography: Andrea Miller in collaboration with the dancers of A.I.M
Music Composition: Reggie Wilkins
Lighting Design: Nicole Pearce
Costume Design: Jose Solis
Rehearsal Directors: Tamisha Guy, Allysen Hooks
Dancers: Keerati Jinakunwiphat, Catherine Ellis Kirk, Marcella Lewis

INDY (2018)

Choreography & Performance
Music Composition
Lighting Design
Costume Design
Scenic Design
Choreographic Advisor
Dramaturg
Assistant to the Choreographer

Matthew Baker
Nicole Pearce
Karen Young
Abigail DeVille
Margie Gillis
Charlotte Brathwaite

- INTERMISSION -

The Quiet Dance (2011)

Choreography: Kyle Abraham
Music: "Some Other Time" composed by Leonard Bernstein, played by Bill Evans
Lighting Design: Dan Scully
Costume Design: Krist Wood
Dancers: 7/31, 8/1, 8/3 eve: Catherine Ellis Kirk (soloist), Matthew Baker, Tamisha Guy, Keerati Jinakunwiphat, Claude "CI" Johnson
8/2, 8/3 mat, 8/4: Catherine Ellis Kirk (soloist), Matthew Baker, Keerati Jinakunwiphat, Claude "CI" Johnson, Marcella Lewis

Marcella Lewis (Dancer) hails from Los Angeles, CA, where she began her dance training at the Lula Washington Dance Theatre at the age of three. She then continued her studies at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA). She later received her B.F.A. in Dance from SUNY Purchase College, where she was awarded the Adopt-A-Dancer Scholarship. While at Purchase, Lewis performed works by Doug Varone, Gregory Dolbashian, madabouts, Kevin Wynn, and Oli Flooman. Lewis has completed summer programs at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and Alonzo King Lines Ballet, where she was awarded the Homer Avila Scholarship. She is the recipient of a 2018 Princess Grace Award in Dance. Marcella joined A.I.M in 2013.
JOSE SOLIS (Costume Designer, state) is a graduate of Parsons School of Art and Design. He has created and worked for Emanuel Ungaro, Ralph Lauren, Oscar de la Renta, and Bill Blass New York. Solis also designed the costumes for Gallim’s Bush (2009), Wonderland (2010), For Glenn Gould (2011), and Stone Skipping (2017).

DAN STEARNS (Production Manager and Lighting Supervisor) is a lighting designer, scenic designer, and production manager interested in the intersections of dance, theater, music, and video. In addition to A.I.M, recent collaborations include Jane Comfort and Company, Pavel Zuzulak/Palisissimo, LeeSaaer The Company, Scott Ebersold, Paul H. Bedard/Theater in Asylum, Tara Ahmadinejad/Piehole, and Tami Stronach. He has worked in venues such as BAM, The Joyce, New York Live Arts, La MaMa, Abrons Arts Center, HERE, Dixon Place, and 5LD in New York; and internationally from France to Korea and many places in between. He is a graduate of NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

REGGIE WILKINS (Composer, state) is a pianist, composer, and electronic music artist based in Pittsburgh, PA. After receiving his B.A. in Architecture from the University of Pittsburgh (2011), he decided to further explore his passion for form and space through sound. His work spans a full spectrum of genres through collaborations with various churches, productions, clubs, companies, and artists. His most notable project, RIVKA, plays with texture and atmosphere in an effort to create a nostalgic environment for reflection, healing, and relaxation. More info at soundcloud.com/babyt33th

KRISTI WOOD (Costume Design, The Quiet Dance)’s original and continued profession is as a Costume Designer and Textile Artist for opera, dance, theatre, TV, and film. Some previous credits and relationships include: The Metropolitan Opera, Warhorse (Broadway), and The Lyric Opera of Chicago. TV and film credits include: All My Children (ABC), Low & Order SVU (NBC), Damages (FX), Empire and Gone Baby Gone (Fox), Widows (major film directed by Steve McQueen). Dance credits include: David Dorfman Dance, Trisha Brown Dance Company, A.I.M, Pilobolus, Joffrey Ballet, and Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. Wood now owns and operates Lagon Square Pilates + Core in Chicago and is a BASSI Pilates Instructor.

KAREN YOUNG (Costume Design, INDIY, Drive) creates costumes for dance and performance and contemporary art that have been seen in theaters and museums internationally. Recent projects include Wendy Whelan’s Restless Creature, Third Rail Projects’ highly acclaimed immersive show Then She Fell, and teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design. Design work for dance includes: Martha Graham Dance Company, Brian Brooks, Armitage Gone! Dance, American Ballet Theatre, Morphoses, Dusan Tynek, Pam Tanowitz, and Keigwin + Company, among many others. Design for video art includes: David Michalek’s Slow Dancing, Matthew Barney’s Cremaster 5 and Cremaster 1, Toni Dove’s Lucid Possession, and Eve Sussman’s 89 Seconds at Alcazar. More info at karenyoungcostume.com

MATTHEW BAKER (Choreographic Associate, Dancer) hails from Ann Arbor, Michigan. He received his B.F.A. (’08) in Dance from Western Michigan University. In NYC, he worked with choreographers such as Mark Dendy and Keith Thompson before joining Keigwin + Company, under the Artistic Direction of Larry Keigwin and co-founder Nicole Wolcott, from 2009-14. As Choreographic Associate for A.I.M, Baker works with the Artistic Director and his colleagues to maintain and develop the company’s repertory. Baker was the recipient of a Distinguished Alumni Award from his Alma Mater in 2014. Baker joined A.I.M in 2011.

TAMISHA GUY (Rehearsal Director, Dancer) is a native of Trinidad and Tobago. She began her formal dance training at Ballet Tech, under the direction of Elliot Feld. Later she attended Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School, and SUNY Purchase College as a double major in Dance and Arts Management. She has completed summer programs with Complexions Contemporary Ballet and Springboard Danse Montréal, and has performed works by William Forsythe, Pam Tanowitz, and Mark Morris. In 2013, Guy graduated with honors from SUNY Purchase College and joined the Martha Graham Dance Company shortly after. In 2016, Guy was selected as one of Dance Magazine’s “Top 25 to Watch”, and received the 2016 Princess Grace Award. In 2017, she was named one of the Best Dancers of the Year by Dance Europe. Guy currently dances with A.I.M, under artistic direction of Kyle Abraham, which she joined in 2014.

KEERATI JINAKUNWIPHAT (Dancer) is originally from Chicago, IL, and received her B.F.A. from the Conservatory of Dance at SUNY Purchase College, and was a recipient of the Adopt-A-Dancer Scholarship. She has additionally studied at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, and Springboard Danse Montréal. She has worked with artists such as Nicole von Arn, Hannah Garner, Shannon Gillen, Kevin Wynn, and Doug Varone. Jinakunwiphat began working with A.I.M as a swing in 2016 and joined the company as full-time member in 2018.

CLAUDE “CI” JOHNSON (Dancer) hails from Chicago, IL, where he began his formal dance training at The Chicago Academy for the Arts under the direction of Randy Duncan. He continued his dance training at SUNY Purchase College, where he was awarded the Adopt-A-Dancer Scholarship. During Johnson’s studies, he performed works by choreographers Johannes Weiland, Azure Burton, Doug Varone, Kevin Wynn, Rosalind Newman, Alexandra Beller, and

Drive (2017)

CHOREOGRAPHY
Kyle Abraham in collaboration with A.I.M

MUSIC
Theo Parrish and Mobb Deep, with additional sound editing by Sam Crawford

LIGHTING DESIGN
Dan Scully

COSTUME DESIGN
Karen Young

DANCERS
Matthew Baker
Tamisha Guy
Keerati Jinakunwiphat
Claude “CI” Johnson
Catherine Ellis Kirk
Marcella Lewis
Donovan Reed
Jada Jenai Williams

Drive was commissioned by New York City Center for the 2017 Fall for Dance Festival with generous support from the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation. Special funding for Drive provided by Jay Franke & David Herro, and by Rick Beyer. Drive was developed, in part, through a residency at White Oak Conservation, made possible by the Howard Gilman Foundation.

A.I.M BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Stephen Simcock (Chair), Kyle Abraham (Artistic Director, ex-officio), Cheryl Bergensfeld, Chris Calkins, Adrienne Edwards, Glann Ligon, Bebe Neuwirth, Carrie Schneider, Eric Shiner, Gilda Squire, Julia Strickland

Generous support for A.I.M provided by: Engaging Dance Audiences, administered by Dance/USA and made possible with generous funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; The DuBose & Dorothy Heyward Memorial Fund; The Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation; The Harkness Foundation for Dance, the Howard Gilman Foundation; The JKW Foundation; Joyce Theater Foundation; Mertz-Gilmore Foundation; New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project, with funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation; New York Community Trust; O’Donnell-Green Music & Dance Foundation; Princess Grace Foundation-USA; The Rockefeller Brothers Fund; Emma & Shearer Charitable Trust; and The Shubert Foundation. Public funding provided by The National Endowment for the Arts, The New York State Council on the Arts with support from Governor Andrew Cuomo and the NYS Legislature; and the NYC Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

A.I.M is a proud supporter of Dancers Responding to AIDS, which helps ensure that those most in need receive the care and comfort they would otherwise do without. Founded in 1991 by former Paul Taylor Dance Company members Denise Roberts Hurlin and Hernando Cortez, DRA relies on the extraordinary compassion and efforts of the performing arts community to fund a safety net of social services for those in need. Together, we can make a difference for those less fortunate than us. Donate at dradance.org/donate.

For booking information, contact Lotus Arts Management, Sophie Myrtill-McCready, President, at 72-11 Austin Street, Suite 371, Forest Hills, NY 11375. Tel: 347.721.8724; email: sophie@lotusartsmgmt.com; website: lotusartsmgmt.com

Jacob’s Pillow is committed to providing an inclusive environment that cultivates the celebration of the art of dance and its positive impact on communities.

We are dedicated to fostering a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable experience for everyone on our beautiful campus. You, as patrons and visitors of Jacob’s Pillow, are expected to contribute to our mutually respectful and welcoming community and support the world of dance and all its citizens for generations to come.

If you have any suggestions, comments, or incidents to report, please direct them to Deputy Director A.J. Pietrantone at apietrantone@jacobspillow.org.

HOUSE RULES:
While in our theaters, please refrain from behavior that could disturb other patrons and performers during the performance. Thank you for observing these House Rules so that everyone can have an enjoyable experience.

Silence cell phones • Photography & recording are prohibited • Other than water, food & beverages are prohibited • Keep your ticket with you at all times • Let a staff member know if you need help

We are so glad you are here. Enjoy the show!
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His choreography has been presented throughout the United States and abroad; at Fall for Dance Festival at New York City Center, Lincoln Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Joyce Theater, The Los Angeles Music Center, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Théâtre de la Ville, Sadler's Wells, Maison de la Danse, Tanz im August, On The Boards, Danspace Project, Dance Theater Workshop, Bates Dance Festival, Lincoln Center, Brooklyn Montreuil, Ottawa, Italy, Germany, Sweden, France, Jordan, Ecuador, Dublin's Project Arts Center, The Okinawa Prefectural Museum & Art Museum located in Okinawa, Japan, The Andy Warhol Museum, The Byham, and The Kelly-Strayhorn Theater in his hometown of Pittsburgh, PA. In addition to performing and developing new works for his company, A.I.M., Abraham premiered in 2016 Untitled America, a three-part commissioned work for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; toured The Serpent and The Smoke, a pas de deux for himself and acclaimed Bessie Award-winning and former New York City Ballet Principal Dancer Wendy Whelan as part of Restless Creature; and choreographed for the feature-length film, The Book of Henry, for acclaimed director Colin Trevorrow.

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Additional awards and honors include: Guggenheim Fellow, Sadler's Wells Jerwood Fellowships, Princess Grace Foundation Fellowship in Choreography, Special Projects Awards and Works in Progress Award, New York City Center Choreography Fellowship, Joyce Theater Artist in Residence, and more. Miller's educational programming is run from Gallim's Brooklyn home studio and has been brought to universities and educational centers across the US; recently at Harvard, The Juilliard School, Barnard, NYU, Marymount Manhattan College, Wesleyan University, and UCSC, among others.

JEROME BEGIN (Composer, INDY) has been called a "fabled composer-pianist" and an "unimpeachable" choice of collaborator by The New York Times. Begin's work has been performed throughout the USA, Europe, and Asia, including a nationally televised performance of his score for Bill T Jones/Annies Zane Dance Company for President Obama at the 2010 Kennedy Center Honors. Other dance commissions include works for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, The Juilliard School, Brian Brooks Movering Company, Keigwin + Company, Gallim, Sean Curran Company, Sacramento Ballet, Richmond Ballet, Alabama Ballet, and many others. His music was featured in the "PBS American Masters" on Bill T Jones' work. Recent projects include: Kawaidan, a large-scale multimedia opera installation based on traditional Japanese ghost stories, NEVEREND, an evening of dance work for Jin Ju Song-Begin/Do-On Dance, for the documentary Flex is Kings, and recording an album with Chris Lancaster in their synth/ cello duo band, Tranalim. Current projects include new works for Brian Brooks Movering Company and Loni Landon Dance Projects. Begin currently serves on the faculty of The Juilliard School.

ABIGAIL DEVILLE (Scenic Design, INDY) (b. 1981, New York, NY) received her M.F.A. from Yale University 2011 and her B.F.A. from the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2007. Deville has exhibited a constellation of site-specific installations in the United States and Europe. Recent exhibitions include Lift Every Voice & Sing, ICA Miami (2017); No Space Hidden (Shelter) ICA LA, Los Angeles, CA (2017); Magnetic Fields: Expanding American Abstraction, 1960s to Today, Kemper Museum, Kansas City, MO (2017); Harlem: Found Ways. Cooper Gallery at Hutchins Center, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2017); Urban Planning: Contemporary Art and the City 1967-2017, Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (2017); LANDMARK, Socrates Sculpture Park, Queens, NY (2016); Only When It’s Dark Enough Can You See The Stars, The Contemporary, Baltimore, MD (2016); Revolution in the Making, Hauser Wirth, Los Angeles, CA (2016); When You Cut Into the Present the Future Leaks Out at The Old Bronz Courthouse, Bronx, NY (2015); Puddle, Pothole, Portal, Sculpture Center, Queens, NY (2014); Playing with Fire: Political Interventions, Dissident Acts, and Mischievous Actions, El Museo del Barrio, New York, NY (2014); Material Histories at the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, NY (2014). DeVille has designed sets for theatrical productions at venues such as the Stratford Festival (2014), directed by Peter Sellars, Harlem Stage (2016), La MaMa (2015), JACK (2014-16), and Joe's Pub (2014) directed by Charlotte Brathwaite. She has received honors—a 2014-15 fellowship at The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard, a 2015 Creative Capital grantee, and a 2015 OBIE Award for design. DeVille is the 2017-18 Chuck Close Henry W and Marion T Mitchell Rome Prize fellow.

FRITZ MASTEN (Costume Design, Show Pony) has designed costumes and sets for theater internationally. He is the winner of The Irene Sharaff Award. For more info visit fritzmasten.com.

NICOLE PEARCE (Lighting Design, state, INDY) has worked previously with Kyle Abraham on Nonsequitor Paramor (The Juilliard School); with Andrea Miller on WHALE Bloom, and Unwrap These Flowers (Gallim, Jacoby & Pronk, The Juilliard School). Selected dance credits include: 10 works with Mark Morris (Mark Morris Dance Group, Houston Ballet, and Boston Ballet); seven works with ASUSST Buff, The Art of Dance Chicago, Malpas); 15 works with Jessica Lang (American Ballet Theatre, Jessica Lang Dance, National Ballet of Japan, Joffrey Ballet, and Birmingham Royal Ballet); 10 works with John Heginbotham (Atlanta Ballet and Dance Heginbotham); No Longer Silent with Richard Battle (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater); Terrain with Brian Brooks (Hubbard Street Dance Chicago); Face the Torrent with Sonya Tayeh (Malpas of Cuba); and Episode 31 with Alexander Ekman (New Zealand Royal Ballet). Selected dance theater credits include works with directors Edward Albee, Jade King Carroll, Amir Nizar Zuabi, and Ed Sylvanus Iskandar. Pearce has also worked with companies including The Cherry Lane, The Play Company, and The Playwrights Realm. For more info visit nicolepearcedesign.com.
COMPANY

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In 2011, OUT Magazine labeled Abraham as the “best and brightest creative talent to emerge in New York City in the age of Obama”.

ANDREA MILLER (Choreographer, state) is the Artistic Director and choreographer of Brooklyn-based company, Gallim, and has established herself as a perpetually groundbreaking artist who brings unbridled empathy, intimacy, and sensitivity to her work. A sought-after creator and collaborator in dance, film, theater, and fashion, Miller was named 2017–18 Artist in Residence at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, becoming the first choreographer to hold that distinction. Miller’s opening work created for the Met’s Temple of Dendur, Stone Skipping, was named Best Theater by Wendy Perron/Dance Magazine.

Miller’s final work for the museum opened at The Met Breuer in May 2018. Miller’s highly acclaimed works with Gallim have been performed worldwide at venues including The Joyce Theater, LaGuardia Performing Arts Center, BAM, Jacob’s Pillow, the Kennedy Center, Grec Festival de Barcelona, Théâtre National de Chaillot, The Grand Théâtre de la Ville de Luxembourg, Theaterhaus Stuttgart, Canal Madrid, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Miller received her M.F.A. from Yale University, and is a New York-based lighting and scenic designer. DeVille has designed costumes for A.I.M for over ten years, including the full-length film, Drive for Change, Show Pony, Drive for Silence, Quiet Dance, Show Pony, Drive for Tranquil, DEVO, and the Bessie Award–winning The Radio Show. Recent work includes Rocky (Broadway), Jedermann (Salzburger Festspeile), The Orchestra Rocks! (Carnegie Hall), and Another Night (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater).

Regional work includes Trilby Rep., GEVA, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Cleveland Playhouse, Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival, and Two River Theater Company. Scully earned their M.F.A. from NYU Tisch School of the Arts.


NICOLE PEARCE (Lighting Design, Show Pony) has designed costumes and sets for theater internationally. He is the winner of the Irene Sharaff Award. For more info visit fritzmaster.com.

DAN SCULLY (Lighting Design, The Quiet Dance, Show Pony, Drive) is a New York-based lighting and projection designer, and her design has been selected for A.I.M for over ten years, including the full-length work Pavement, Live! The Realest M.M., and the Bessie Award-winning The Radio Show. Recent work includes Rocky (Broadway), Jedermann (Salzburger Festspeile), The Orchestra Rocks! (Carnegie Hall), and Another Night (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater). Selected dance credits include: 10 works with Mark Morris (Mark Morris Dance Group, Houston Ballet, and Boston Ballet); seven works with Azurite Barton (Azurite & Artists, Netherlands Dans Theater, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Mal paso); 15 works with Jessica Lang (American Ballet Theatre, Jessica Lang Dance, National Ballet of Japan, Joffrey Ballet, and Birmingham Royal Ballet); 10 works with John Heginbotham (Atlanta Ballet and Dance Heginbotham); No Longer Silent with Robert Battle (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater); Terrain with Brian Brooks (Hubbard Street Dance Chicago); Face the Torrent with Sonya Tayeh (Mal paso of Cuba); and Episode 31 with Alexander Ekman (New Zealand Royal Ballet). Scull’s work theater credits include work with directors Edward Albee, Jade King Carroll, Amir Nizar Zuabi, and Ed Sursland. Pearce has also worked with companies including The Cherry Lane, The Play Company, and The Playwrights Realm. For more info visit nicolepearcedesign.com

Xavier Dolan released in 2018. Additional awards and honors include: Gugenheim Fellow, Sadler’s Wells Jerwood Fellowships, Princess Grace Foundation Fellowship in Choreography, Special Projects Awards and Works in Progress Award, New York City Center Choreography Fellowship, Joyce Theater Artist in Residence, and more. Miller’s educational programming is run from Gallim’s Brooklyn home studio and has been brought to universities and educational centers across the US; recently at Harvard, The Juilliard School, Barnard, NYU, Marymount Manhattan College, Wesleyan University, and UCSB, among others.

JEROME BEGIN (Composer, INDY) has been called a “fabulous composer-pianist” and an “unimpeachable” choice of collaborator by The New York Times. Begin’s works have been performed throughout the USA, Europe, and Asia, including a national television broadcast of his score for Bill T Jones/Amnie Zane Dance Company for President Obama at the 2010 Kennedy Center Honors. Other dance commissions include works for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, The Juilliard School, Brian Brooks Moving Company, Keigwin + Company, Gallim, Sean Curran Company, Sacramento Ballet, Richmond Ballet, Alabama Ballet, and many others. His music was featured in the “PBS American Masters” on Bill T. Jones’ work. Recent projects include: Kwäidau, a large-scale multimedia opera installation based on traditional Japanese ghost stories, NEVERLAND, an evening of dance work for Jin Ju Song-Begín/On Dance, for the documentary Flex is Kings, and recording an album with Chris Lancaster in their synth/ cello duo band, Tranalim. Current projects include new works for Brian Brooks Moving Company and Loni Landon Dance Projects. Begin currently serves on the faculty of The Juilliard School.

Fritz MASTEN (Costume Design, Show Pony) has designed costumes and sets for theater internationally. He is the winner of The Irene Sharaff Award. For more info visit fritzmaster.com.

Paramor (The Juilliard School); with Andrea Miller on WHALE Bloom, and Unwrap These Flowers (Gallim, Jacoby & Prónk, The Juilliard School). Selected dance credits include: 10 works with Mark Morris (Mark Morris Dance Group, Houston Ballet, and Boston Ballet); seven works with Azurite Barton (Azurite & Artists, Netherlands Dans Theater, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Mal paso); 15 works with Jessica Lang (American Ballet Theatre, Jessica Lang Dance, National Ballet of Japan, Joffrey Ballet, and Birmingham Royal Ballet); 10 works with John Heginbotham (Atlanta Ballet and Dance Heginbotham); No Longer Silent with Robert Battle (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater); Terrain with Brian Brooks (Hubbard Street Dance Chicago); Face the Torrent with Sonya Tayeh (Mal paso of Cuba); and Episode 31 with Alexander Ekman (New Zealand Royal Ballet). Scull’s work theater credits include work with directors Edward Albee, Jade King Carroll, Amir Nizar Zuabi, and Ed Sursland. Pearce has also worked with companies including The Cherry Lane, The Play Company, and The Playwrights Realm. For more info visit nicolepearcedesign.com
JOSE SOLIS (Costume Designer, state) is a graduate of Parsons School of Art and Design. He has created and worked for Emanuel Ungaro, Ralph Lauren, Oscar de la Renta, and Bill Blass New York. Solis also designed the costumes for Gallim’s Bush (2009), Wonderland (2010), For Glenn Gould (2011), and Stone Skipping (2017).

DAN STEARNS (Production Manager and Lighting Supervisor) is a lighting designer, scenic designer, and production manager interested in the intersections of dance, theater, music, and video. In addition to A.I.M, recent collaborations include Jane Comfort and Company, Pavel Zuzuk/Palisimmo, LeeSaar The Company, Scott Ebersold, Paul H. Bedard/Theater in Asylum, Tara Ahmadinejad/Piehole, and Tami Stronach. He has worked in venues such as BAM, The Joyce, New York Live Arts, La MaMa, Abrons Arts Center, HERE, Dixon Place, and 3LD in New York; and internationally from France to Korea and many places in between. He is a graduate of NYU Tisch School of the Arts.

REGGIE WILKINS (Composer, state) is a pianist, composer, and electronic music artist based in Pittsburgh, PA. After receiving his B.A. in Architecture from the University of Pittsburgh (2011), he decided to further explore his passion for form and space through sound. His work spans a full spectrum of genres through collaborations with various churches, productions, clubs, companies, and artists. His most notable project, RIVKA, plays with texture and atmosphere in an effort to create a nostalgic environment for reflection, healing, and relaxation. More info at soundcloud.com/babyt33th

KRISTI WOOD (Costume Design, The Quiet Dance)’s original and continued profession is as a Costume Designer and Textile Artist for opera, dance, theatre, and film. Some previous credits and relationships include: The Metropolitan Opera, Warhorse (Broadway), and The Lyric Opera of Chicago. TV and film credits include: All My Children (ABC), Low & Order SVU (NBC), Damages (FX), Empire and Gone Baby Gone (Fox, Widows) (major film directed by Steve McQueen). Dance credits include: David Dorfman Dance, Trisha Brown Dance Company, A.I.M, Pilobolus, Joffrey Ballet, and Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. Wood now owns and operates Lagon Square Pilates + Core in Chicago and is a BASI Pilates Instructor.

KAREN YOUNG (Costume Design, INDY, Drive) creates costumes for dance and performance and contemporary art that have been seen in theaters and museums internationally. Recent projects include Wendy Whelan’s Restless Creature, Third Rail Projects’ highly acclaimed immersive show Then She Fell, and teaching at the Rhode Island School of Design. Design work for dance includes: Martha Graham Dance Company, Brian Brooks, Armitage Gone! Dance, American Ballet Theatre, Morphoses, Dusan Tynek, Pam Tanowitz, and Keigwin + Company, among many others. Design for video art includes: David Michalek’s Slow Dancing, Matthew Barney’s Cremaster 5 and Cremaster 1, Toni Dove’s Lucid Possession, and Eve Sussman’s 89 Seconds at Alcazar. More info at karenyoungcostume.com

MATTHEW BAKER (Choreographic Associate, Dancer) hails from Ann Arbor, Michigan. He received his B.F.A. (’08) in Dance from Western Michigan University. In NYC, he worked with choreographers such as Mark Dendy and Keith Thompson before joining Keigwin + Company, under the Artistic Direction of Larry Keigwin and co-founder Nicole Wolcott, from 2009-14. As Choreographic Associate for A.I.M, Baker works with the Artistic Director and his colleagues to maintain and develop the company’s repertory. Baker was the recipient of a Distinguished Alummi Award from his Alma Mater in 2014. Baker joined A.I.M in 2011.

TAMISHA GUY (Rehearsal Director, Dancer) is a native of Trinidad and Tobago. She began her formal dance training at Ballet Tech, under the direction of Eliot Feld. Later she attended Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School, and SUNY Purchase College as a double major in Dance and Arts Management. She has completed summer programs with Complexions Contemporary Ballet and Springsboard Danse Montréal, and has performed works by William Forsythe, Pam Tanowitz, and Mark Morris. In 2013, Guy graduated with honors from SUNY Purchase College and joined the Martha Graham Dance Company shortly after. In 2016, Guy was selected as one of Dance Magazine’s “Top 25 to Watch”, and received the 2016 Princess Grace Award. In 2017, she was named one of the Best Dancers of the Year by Dance Europe. Guy currently dances with A.I.M, under artistic direction of Kyle Abraham, which she joined in 2014.

KEERATI JINAKUNWIPHAT (Dancer) is originally from Chicago, IL, and received her B.F.A. from the University of Pittsburgh, MBA from the SUNY Purchase College, and was a recipient of the Adopt-A-Dancer Scholarship. She has additionally studied at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, and Springsboard Danse Montréal. She has worked with artists such as Nicole von Arx, Hannah Garner, Shannon Gillen, Kevin Wynn, and Doug Varone. Jinakunwiphat began working with A.I.M as a swing in 2016 and joined the company as full-time member in 2018.

CLAUDE “CJ” JOHNSON (Dancer) hails from Chicago, IL, where he began his formal dance training at The Chicago Academy for the Arts under the direction of Randy Duncan. He continued his dance training at SUNY Purchase College, where he was awarded the Adopt-A-Dancer Scholarship. During Johnson’s studies, he performed works by choreographers Johannes Weiland, Azure Barton, Doug Varone, Kevin Wynn, Rosalind Newman, Alexandra Beller, and...
MUSIC COMPOSITION
REGGIE WILKINS

LIGHTING DESIGN
NICOLE PEARCE

COSTUME DESIGN
JOSE SOLIS

REHEARSAL DIRECTORS
TAMIKA GUY
ALLYSEN HOOPS

DANCERS
KEERTI JINAKUNWIPHAT
CATHERINE ELLIS KIRK
MARCELLA LEWIS

JADEN WILLS (Dancer) was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. She is a graduate of Foirelli H. LaGuardia High School and SUNY Purchase College, with a B.F.A. in Dance and a minor in Art Management. During her college career, she had the opportunity to work with Jonathan Reidel, Kyle Abraham, Kevin Wynn, and Jean Freebury restaging Merce Cunningham’s Change, and has spent summers in Montréal attending Springboard Danse Montréal, where she worked with Jonathan Averbry restaging work by Azuere Barton, and Chanel Pitts restaging Three by Ohad Naharin. Since graduating, she has worked with Helen Simoneau and joined A.I.M in 2018.

DONOVAN REED (Dancer) is originally from Philadelphia, PA, and began his dance training at the age of 16 under the direction of Shawn Lamere-Williams. Soon after, Reed elongated his search for knowledge by attending college at The University of The Arts. He was awarded his B.F.A. in May of 2016. During his time in college, Reed participated as an Artist in Residence at Die Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt, DE. In addition, he participated in an independent artist program where his training was extended with The Pennsylvania Ballet, The Philadelphia Dance Company (PHILADANCO!), Eileen Dance Theatre, and The Rock School for Dance Education. He has performed works by choreographers such as Sidra Bell, Regina Van Berkel, Sharon Eyal, Tómmie Wahlstedt-Evans, Beth Gill, Andrea Miller, Mike Esperanza, Tania-Isaac, and Meredith Rainey. Reed is currently working with Helen Simoneau Danse, and joined A.I.M in 2018.

STUART LONGWAY, Johnson also attended summer intensives with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Doug Varone & Dancers, Movement Invention Project, and Springboard Dance Montréal under the direction of Alexandra Wells, where he performed work by Shannon Gillen and Ela Mokh. Johnson joined A.I.M in 2017.

CATHERINE ELLIS KIRK (Dancer) is originally from Dallas, Texas. After attending Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Kirk graduated with a B.F.A. from New York University Tisch School of the Arts and holds a yoga certification through The Perri Institute for Mind and Body. Kirk has completed programs with San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, Gaga Intensive in Tel Aviv, and Springboard Danse Montréal. She has had the opportunity to perform works by Fernando Meilo, Ohad Naharin, Sharon Eyal, Peter Chu, Andrea Miller, Robert Battle, Bebe Miller, and Alex Ketley. Upon graduating, Kirk had the pleasure of apprenticing for Sidra Bell Dance NY before working with Danaka Dance, Chihiro Shimizu and Artists, U.N.A-Projects, Burr Johnson, Jasmine Hearn, and Helen Simoneau Danse. Kirk is thrilled to be dancing with A.I.M, which she joined in 2013.

MARCELLA LEWIS (Dancer) hails from Los Angeles, CA, where she began her dance training at the Lula Washington Dance Theatre at the age of three. She then continued her studies at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA). She later received her B.F.A. in Dance from SUNY Purchase College, where she was awarded the Adopt-A-Dancer Scholarship. While at Purchase, Lewis performed works by Doug Varone, Gregory Dolbashian, madabouts, Kevin Wynn, and Orl Flooman. Lewis has completed summer programs at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and Alonzo King Lines Ballet, where she was awarded the Homer Avila Scholarship. She is the recipient of a 2018 Princess Grace Award in Dance. Marcella joined A.I.M in 2016.

The Quiet Dance (2011)

DANCERS
7/31, 8/1, 8/3 eve: CATHERINE ELLIS KIRK (soloist), MATTHEW BAKER, TAMISHA GUY, KEERTI JINAKUNWIPHAT, CAUDE "CI" JOHNSON 8/2, 8/3 mat, 8/4: CATHERINE ELLIS KIRK (soloist), MATTHEW BAKER, KEERTI JINAKUNWIPHAT, CAUDE "CI" JOHNSON, MARCELLA LEWIS

Show Pony (2018)

DANCERS
7/31, 8/1, 8/3 eve: MARCELLA LEWIS 8/2, 8/3 mat, 8/4: TAMISHA GUY

The Pillow Shop is closed.

For information about the Pillow Shop, please call 413-243-9991.

Thank you!
PILLOWNOTES by Maura Keefe

The PillowNotes series compiles essays commissioned from our Scholars-in-Residence to provide audiences with a broader context for viewing dance.

“Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition.”
— James Baldwin, Giovanni’s Room

Home matters. Heart, heark, and castle. A refuge. A place from which to venture and a place to return. Home for Kyle Abraham has multiple meanings. In his skin, and in his body, in music and art. In New York, and now in Los Angeles. But really, it’s Pittsburgh that was first and maybe even always home. It’s where Kyle Abraham is from. And it is through Kyle Abraham’s lived experiences that he explores his creative history.

Like Kyle Abraham, the city of Pittsburgh has multiple and at times diverging identities. As a city, it’s both and neither the Northeast and the Midwest. It’s Appalachia on the one hand and the Rust Belt on the other. In straddling these boundaries, it borrows cultural influences from a variety of sources. It’s a city of opposites. It’s blue collar and white collar. It’s been called America’s smartest city, and it’s also where the reality show Billboards is filmed. It’s rabidly dedicated to its football, hockey, and baseball teams. It’s where the still little-known artist James Baldwin said, “Perhaps home is not a place but simply an irrevocable condition.” And it’s where Kyle Abraham has chosen to live, to work, and to create.

Abraham, like Pittsburgh, presents conflicting identities. He’s known for what some people term his neo hip hop style, but he has also performed with former New York City Ballet principal ballerina Wendy Whelan. As soon as he starts to dance, one understands the singular movement style that drew Whelan to commission a duet from him for Restless Creature (which premiered at the Pillow in 2013). She explained her motivation as a desire to determine whether she could move like him, saying, “If I could do something like that as a ballet dancer. If I could transform myself to feel what he feels as a dancer.” Abraham describes his movement as “postmodem gumbus...a hybrid of movement sensibilities inspired by a lot of postmodern, modern, contemporary and ballet forms and even some social-dance vernaculars as well.”

His groundbreaking solo inventing Pookie Jenkins (2006) became a kind of signature work and it foreshadowed the complexity of what was to come with his company Abraham.In.Motion (now known simply as A.I.M). Dressed in a white tutu skirt, like a ballerina might wear, Abraham swung onto the stage carrying a boom box. All at once, he embodied a hybrid of identities that were both recognizable components of an African American dancer’s identity (familiar), and an African American man in a draping white skirt (unfamiliar). At once masculine and feminine, high art and street, Abraham showed his movement histories in his dancing, and his mastery as a performer allowed him then and allows him today to move smoothly between that hybrid of forms, vernacular and ballet and modern dance techniques. His virtuosity as a dancer, as a postmodem dancer, allows the juxtapositions of styles not just parroting but rearranging.

Abraham’s connection to Pittsburgh is more than symbolic. He has remarked in interviews that his high school days are a constant source of inspiration for him—that time of change when we discover, inherit, affirm, and discard identities. Abraham came to concert dance later on as a club dancer. As he said in an interview with Louisville.com, “Growing up in that early hip hop time, when you went out and dance, there were moves and set up social dances, but you would just start dancing.” He went on to see the Joffrey Ballet perform Billboards (1993) when he was sixteen and it changed him. He went, not to see the ballet, but rather to see some dances to the song cycle by the pop superstar Prince. That love of music inspired him today to move smoothly between that hybrid of forms, vernacular and ballet and modern dance techniques. His virtuosity as a dancer, as a postmodem dancer, allows the juxtapositions of styles not just parroting but rearranging.

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PROGRAM

state (2018)

CHOREOGRAPHY
Andrea Miller in collaboration with the dancers of A.I.M

MUSIC COMPOSITION
Reggie Wilkins

LIGHTING DESIGN
Nicole Pearce

COSTUME DESIGN
Jose Solis

REHEARSAL DIRECTORS
Tamisha Guy

DANCERS
Keevati Jinalumwphit, Catherine Ellis Kirk

CHOREOGRAPHY & COSTUME DESIGN
Nicole Pearce

COSTUME DESIGN
Charlotte Brathwait

ASSISTANT TO THE CHOREOGRAPHER
Matthew Baker

INDY (2018)

CHOREOGRAPHY & PERFORMANCE
Kyle Abraham

MUSIC COMPOSITION
Jerome Begin

LIGHTING DESIGN
Nicole Pearce

COSTUME DESIGN
Karen Young

SCENIC DESIGN
Abigail DeVille

CHOREOGRAPHIC ADVISOR
Margie Gillis

DRAMATURG
Claude "CJ" Johnson, Marcella Lewis

ALSO SUPPORTED BY
Matthew Baker

NDT was created with commissioning funds and a residency provided by The Joyce Theater Foundation with major support from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Additional funding for the creation of NDT provided by Steven and Michelle Peeler.

- INTERMISSION -

The Quiet Dance (2011)

CHOREOGRAPHY
Kyle Abraham

MUSIC
"Some Other Time" composed by Leonard Bernstein, played by Bill Evans

LIGHTING DESIGN
Dan Scully

COSTUME DESIGN
Krist Wood

DANCERS
7/31, 8/1, 8/3 eve: Catherine Ellis Kirk (soloist), Matthew Baker, Tamisha Guy, Keevati Jinalumwphit, Claude "CI" Johnson
8/2, 8/3 mat, 8/4: Catherine Ellis Kirk (soloist), Matthew Baker, Keevati Jinalumwphit, Claude "CI" Johnson, Marcella Lewis

Show Pony (2018)

CHOREOGRAPHY
Kyle Abraham

MUSIC
"Hatchepus" by Jim

LIGHTING DESIGN
Dan Scully

COSTUME DESIGN
Fritz Masten

DANCERS
7/31, 8/1, 8/3 eve: Marcella Lewis
8/2, 8/3 mat, 8/4: Tamisha Guy

Stuart Loungway, Johnson also attended summer intensives with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Doug Varone & Dancers, Movement Invention Project, and Springboard Dance Montréal under the direction of Alexandre Wells, where he performed work by Shannon Gillen and Ela Mok. Johnson joined A.I.M in 2017.

CATHERINE ELLIS KIRK (Dancer) is originally from Dallas, Texas. After attending Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, Kirk graduated from a B.F.A from New York University Tisch School of the Arts and holds a yoga certification from The PERI Institute for Mind and Body. Kirk has completed programs with San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, Gaga Intensive in Tel Aviv, and Springboard Danse Montréal. She has had the opportunity to perform works by Fernando Meleo, Ohad Naharin, Sharon Eyal, Peter Chu, Andrea Miller, Robert Battle, Bebe Miller, and Alex Ketley. Upon graduating, Kirk had the pleasure of apprenticing for Sidra Bell Dance NY before working with Danaka Dance, Chihito Shimizu and Artists, UMA-Projects, Burr Johnson, Jasmine Hearn, and Helen Simoneau Danse. Kirk is thrilled to be dancing with A.I.M, which she joined in 2013.

MARCELLA LEWIS (Dancer) hails from Los Angeles, CA, where she began her dance training at the Lula Washington Dance Theatre at the age of three. She then continued her studies at the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA). She later received her B.F.A. in Dance from SUNY Purchase College, where she was awarded the Adopt-A-Dancer Scholarship. While at Purchase, Lewis performed works by Doug Varone, Gregory Dolbashian, madb00ts, Revin Wynn, and Ori Flooman. Lewis has completed summer programs at the San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and Alonzo King Lines Ballet, where she was awarded the Homer Avila Scholarship. She is the recipient of a 2018 Princess Grace Award in Dance. Marcella joined A.I.M in 2016.

DONOVAN REED (Dancer) is originally from Philadelphia, PA, and began his dance training at the age of 16 under the direction of Shawn Lamere-Williams. Soon after, Reed elongated his search for knowledge by attending college at The University of The Arts. He was awarded his B.F.A. in May of 2016. During his time in college, Reed participated as an Artist in Residence at Die Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Frankfurt, DE. In addition, he participated in an independent artist program where his training was extended with The Pennsylvania Ballet, The Philadelphia Dance Company (PHILADANCO!), Ellie Dance Theatre, and The Rock School for Dance Education. He has performed works by choreographers such as Sidra Bell, Regina Van Berkel, Sharon Eyal, Tommie Waheed-Evans, Beth Gill, Andrea Miller, Mike Esperanza, Tania Isaac, and Meredith Rainey. Reed is currently working with Helen Simoneau Danse, and joined A.I.M in 2018.

JADA JENAI WILLIAMS (Dancer) was born and raised in Brooklyn, NY. She is a graduate of Fooriello H. LaGuardia High School and SUNY Purchase College, with a B.F.A in Dance and a minor in Arts Management. During her college career, she had the opportunity to work with Jonathan Reidel, Kyle Abraham, Revin Wynn, and Jean Freebury restaging Merce Cunningham’s Change of Address, and Dylan Crossman Williams has studied abroad in Perth, Australia at Western Australia Academy for Performing Arts, and has spent summers in Montréal attending Springboard Danse Montréal, where she worked with Jonathan Aikberrry restaging work by Aurene Barbier, and Shanel Pitts restaging Three by Ohad Naharin. Since graduating, she has worked with Helen Simoneau and joined A.I.M in 2018.

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Home matters. Heart, heart, and castle. A refuge. A place from which to venture and a place to return. Home for Kyle Abraham has multiple meanings. In his skin, and in his body, in music and art. In New York, and now in Los Angeles. But really, it’s Pittsburgh that was first and maybe even always home. It’s where Kyle Abraham is from. And it’s through his creative history.

Like Kyle Abraham, the city of Pittsburgh has multiple and at times diverging identities. As a city, it’s both and neither the Northeast and the Midwest. It’s Appalachia on the one hand and the Rust Belt on the other. In straddling these boundaries, it borrows cultures and historical forces from its neighbors. It’s a city of Spec-Toriums. It’s blue-collar and white-collar. It’s been called America’s smartest city and it’s also where the reality show Dance Moms is filmed. It’s readily dedicated to its hometown sports teams—the Steelers, the Penguins, and the Pirates—and is equally proud of the Andy Warhol Museum. Pittsburgh sons and daughters like Gertrude Stein and August Wilson, choreographers Martha Graham and Paul Taylor. As Pittsburgh Post-Gazette writer Brian O’Neill writes: “It’s just Pittsburgh, and there’s no place like it. That’s both its blessing and its curse.”

Abraham, like Pittsburgh, presents conflicting identities. He’s known for whatever some people term his neo hip-hop style, but he has also performed with former New York City Ballet principal ballerina Wendy Whelan. As soon as he starts to dance, one understands the singular movement style that drew Whelan to commission a duet from him for Restless Creatures (which premiered at the Pillow in 2013). She explained her motivation as a desire to determine whether she could move like him, saying, “If I could do something like that as a ballet dancer. If I could transform myself to feel what he feels as a dancer.” Abraham describes his movement as “postmodern gumbos…a hybrid of movement sensibilities inspired by a list of performers, modern, contemporary and ballet forms and even some sociodance vernaculars as well.”

His groundbreaking solo Inventing Pookie Jenkins (2006) became a kind of signature work and it foreshadowed the complexity of what was to come with his company Abraham.In.Motion (now known simply as A.I.M). Dressed in a white tutu skirt, like a ballerina might wear, Abraham swaggered onto the stage carrying a boom box. All at once, he embodied the identities that were both recognizable and changeable: an African American man with an African American (familial), and an African American man in a draping white skirt (unfamiliar). At once masculine and feminine, high art and street, Abraham showed his movement histories in his dancing as a performer allowed him then and allows today to move smoothly between that hybrid of forms, vernacular and ballet and modern dance techniques. His virtuosity as a dancer, as a polyglot of dance languages, makes the juxtapositions of styles not jarring but overlapping.

Abraham’s connection to Pittsburgh is more than symbolic. He has remarked in interviews that his high school days are a constant source of inspiration for him—that time of change when we discover, inhabit, and define our identity. Abraham came to concert dance after starting out as a club dancer. As he said in an interview with LifeandTimes.com, “Growing up in that early hip-hop time, when you went out and danced, there were moves and set up social dances, but you would just start dancing.” He went to see the Jefferson Ballet perform (1993) when he was sixteen and it changed him. He went, not to see the ballet, but rather to see some dances to the song cycle by the pop superstar Prince. That love of music and the club that love of dancing in combination as a choreographer.

As Abraham moved out into the world, his sense of home expanded, with works of home centered in the Civil Rights Movement (The Watershed, 2015) and the end of South African apartheid in When The Wolves Came (2015), both inspired by the 1960s music of We Instinct! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite. Dearest Home (2017), narrowed the scope intentionally to the dancers themselves. With the company’s return to the Pillow, Abraham himself reprises the role with INDY (2018), as well as showcasing the dancers in works like Show Pony and Drive (2017). The tangible corporeality of dancing bodies makes it impossible to ignore who we are. This is not to say that every dance, as its subject matter, grapples with issues of identity. Pittsburgh, the city of bridges, Abraham and his dancers span differences and suggest possibilities as we see them. The dancers see each other as we see them and both are beautiful.