



PRESENTS **A.I.M BY KYLE ABRAHAM**
Ted Shawn Theatre
July 31-August 4, 2019

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Kyle Abraham

INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Michele Thompson

GENERAL MANAGER Hillary Kooistra

PRODUCTION MANAGER &
LIGHTING SUPERVISOR Dan Stearns

PERFORMERS Kyle Abraham
Matthew Baker
Tamisha Guy
Keerati Jinakunwiphat
Claude "CJ" Johnson
Catherine Ellis Kirk
Marcella Lewis
Donovan Reed
Jada Jenai Williams

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
Allysen Hooks

DANCERS Keerati Jinakunwiphat
Catherine Ellis Kirk
Marcella Lewis

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 Charlotte Brathwaite
ASSISTANT TO THE
CHOREOGRAPHER Matthew Baker

INDY 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 INDY provided by Steven and Michele Pesner.

- 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 Kristi Wood
DANCERS 7/31, 8/1, 8/3 eve: Catherine Ellis Kirk (soloist), Matthew Baker, Tamisha Guy,
Keerati Jinakunwiphat, Claude "CJ" Johnson
8/2, 8/3 mat, 8/4: Catherine Ellis Kirk (soloist), Matthew Baker, Keerati Jinakunwiphat,
Claude "CJ" Johnson, Marcella Lewis

Show Pony (2018)

CHOREOGRAPHY Kyle Abraham
MUSIC "Hatshepsut" by Jlin
LIGHTING DESIGN Dan Scully
COSTUME DESIGN Fritz Masten
DANCER 7/31, 8/1, 8/3 eve: Marcella Lewis
8/2, 8/3 mat, 8/4: Tamisha Guy

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 "CJ" 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.

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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.

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Tel: 347.721.8724; email: sophie@lotusartsmgmt.com; website: lotusartsmgmt.com

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COMPANY

ABOUT A.I.M

The mission of A.I.M, under the Artistic Direction of Kyle Abraham, is to create an evocative interdisciplinary body of work. Born into hip-hop culture in the late 1970s and grounded in Abraham's artistic upbringing in classical cello, piano, and the visual arts, the goal of the movement is to delve into identity in relation to a personal history. The work entwines a sensual and provocative vocabulary with a strong emphasis on sound, human behavior, and all things visual in an effort to create an avenue for personal investigation and exposing that on stage.

A.I.M is a representation of dancers from various disciplines and diverse personal backgrounds. Combined together, these individualities create movement that is manipulated and molded into something fresh and unique. For more information, to get involved, or purchase your A.I.M merchandise, please visit abrahaminmotion.org. Follow A.I.M on Instagram @abraham.in.motion.

KYLE ABRAHAM (Artistic Director) is a 2018 Princess Grace Statue Award Recipient, 2017-18 Joyce Creative Residency Artist, 2016 Doris Duke Award Recipient, and a 2015 City Center Choreographer in Residence. Abraham is a 2013 MacArthur Fellow who began his dance training at the Civic Light Opera Academy and the Creative and Performing Arts High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He continued his dance studies in New York, receiving a B.F.A. from SUNY Purchase College and an M.F.A. from NYU Tisch School of the Arts, an honorary Doctorate in Fine Arts from Washington Jefferson College, and is currently serving as a visiting professor in residence at UCLA.

In November 2012, Abraham was named the newly appointed New York Live Arts Resident Commissioned Artist for 2012–14. Just one month later, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

premiered Abraham's *Another Night* at New York City Center.

Rebecca Bengal of *Vogue* wrote, "What Abraham brings to Ailey is an avant-garde aesthetic, an original and politically minded downtown sensibility that doesn't distinguish between genres but freely draws on a vocabulary that is as much Merce and Martha as it is Eadweard Muybridge and Michael Jackson." That same year, Abraham was named the 2012 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award recipient and 2012 USA Ford Fellow, before serving as a choreographic contributor for Beyoncé's 2013 *British Vogue* cover shoot.

Abraham received a prestigious Bessie Award for Outstanding Performance in Dance for his work in *The Radio Show*, and a Princess Grace Award for Choreography in 2010. The previous year, he was selected as one of *Dance Magazine's* "25 To Watch" for 2009, and received a Jerome Travel and Study Grant in 2008.

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, Harlem Stage, Montréal, 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. Abraham recently premiered *The Runaway* for New York City Ballet's 2018 Fall Fashion Gala, which was recognized as "Best of Dance for 2018" by *The New York Times*.

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, tech, 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 Choreography 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, Lincoln Center, BAM, Jacob's Pillow, The Kennedy Center, Grec Festival de Barcelona, Theatre National de Chaillot, The Grand Theatre de la Ville de Luxembourg, Theaterhaus Stuttgart, Canal Madrid, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Commissions include Pennsylvania Ballet, Grace Farms, Bern Ballet, NDT2, Nord Nederlands Dans, Atlanta Ballet, Peak Performances, Lincoln Center, and The Kimmel Center. Collaborations in fashion include Hermès, Lacoste, Calvin Klein, VOGUE, Lane Crawford, Kswiss, and Zach Gold. Miller's recent film credit, *The Death and Life of John F. Donovan*, directed by

Xavier Dolan released in 2018. 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 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 nationally televised performance of his score for Bill T. Jones/Arnie 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: *Kwaidan*, a large-scale multimedia opera installation based on traditional Japanese ghost stories, *NEVEREND*, an evening length dance work for Jin Ju Song-Begin/Da-On Dance, the score for a documentary *Flex is Kings*, and recording an album with Chris Lancaster in their synth/cello duo band, Tranimal. 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.

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 Bronx 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 *Nonsequitur*

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 Aszure Barton (Aszure & Artists, Netherlands Dans Theater, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Malpasos); 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 (Malpasos of Cuba); and *Episode 31* with Alexander Ekman (New Zealand Royal Ballet). Selected New York theater credits includes work 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

DAN SCULLY (Lighting Design, *The Quiet Dance, Show Pony, Drive*) is a New York-based lighting and projection designer, and has been designing for A.I.M for over ten years, including the full-length works *Pavement, Live! The Realist M.C.*, 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 Trinity 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.

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 *Blush* (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 Zuštiak/Palissimo, 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, 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), *Law & 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 *Logan 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 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 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 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 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, Aszure Barton, Doug Varone, Kevin Wynn, Rosalind Newman, Alexandra Beller, and

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 Alexandra Wells, where he performed work by Shannon Gillen and Elia Mrak. 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 Melo, 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, UNA-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, madboots, Kevin 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!), Eleone 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 Fiorello 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 *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 Alsberry restaging work by Aszure Barton, and Shamel 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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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, hearth, 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 threads 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 cultural influences from a variety of sources. It’s a city of oppositions. 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 rabidly 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 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 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 “postmodern 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 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 tulle skirt, like a ballerina might wear, Abraham swaggered onto 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 (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. 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, and discard identities. Abraham came to concert dance late 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 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 from the club and that love of dancing combine in his work 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 In* (2015), both inspired by the 1960 music of *We Insist! Max Roach’s Freedom Now Suite*. *Dearest Home* (2017), narrowed the scope intimately to the dancers themselves. With the company’s return to the Pillow, Abraham himself retakes 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. We see the dancers themselves as much as we see the dance. And both are beautiful.

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