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THODOS DANCE'S 15TH *NEW DANCES* SERIES, JULY 18 & 19 AT THE ATHENAEUM, CONTINUES TRADITION OF FOSTERING NEW WORKS, GUIDING POST-PERFORMANCE CAREERS IN DANCE



Thodos Dance Ensemble members (top, from left) **John Cartwright**, **Tenley Dorrill**, **Abby Ellison**, **Kyle Hadenfeldt**, **Taylor Mitchell**, (bottom) **Briana Robinson**, **Alissa Tollefson** and **Jessica Miller Tomlinson** will create and debut new works at the company's *New Dances* 2015 series. Guest choreographer is **Brian McGinnis**. The *New Dances* initiative has been a critical component of company founder **Melissa Thodos'** dance/choreograph/educate mission for Thodos Dance Chicago since 2001. Click [here](#) for hi-res.

CHICAGO, April 15, 2015 – For 14 years, Thodos Dance Chicago has cultivated new dance creation by collectively helping launch the choreographic careers of more than 70 Chicago-based artists through its renowned *New Dances* series, Chicago's earliest and most comprehensive in-house choreography series.

2015 marks the 15th consecutive year Thodos's *New Dances* series engages its current ensemble members with the special opportunity to step backstage and call their own shots as choreographers and directors. In addition to eight exciting and diverse brand new works created from within, each year a guest choreographer is hand-picked by Melissa Thodos from the dance community at large to create a new work for the project. For 2015, the invited guest choreographer for the 15th anniversary of *New Dances* is **Brian McGinnis**, who had a professional performance career with Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Elisa Monte Dance, Parsons Dance Company and Buglisi Dance Theatre.

Be part of an amazing evening of new dance discovery when eight of Chicago's top emerging dance artists plus guest choreographer Brian McGinnis are given the opportunity to create and present their own new works at Thodos Dance Chicago's 15th Anniversary *New Dances* series, Saturday, July 18 at 7:30 pm, and Sunday, July 19 at 3 p.m., at the Athenaeum Theatre, 2936 N. Southport, Chicago. Tickets are \$35; \$28 for students and seniors; \$20 industry (dancers and teachers); \$10 for children 12 and under and for groups of 10 or more. For tickets, visit athenaeum.org or call the Athenaeum box office, (773) 935-6875.

Thodos Dance Chicago's *New Dances* series is one-of-a-kind, unique and admired nationally due to the length of time and depth of support afforded the Company's artists, who are each invited to join Thodos Dance Chicago after auditioning and demonstrating their passion and skills not only as dancers, but also as choreographers and educators. Current Thodos ensemble members presenting new works at *New Dances 2015* include **John Cartwright**, **Tenley Dorrill**, **Abby Ellison**, **Kyle Hadenfeldt**, **Taylor Mitchell**, **Briana Robinson**, **Alissa Tollefson** and **Jessica Miller Tomlinson**.

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“Members of Thodos Dance Chicago are far more than performers--they are creative artists selected to join the Company based on their passion and talent for choreography. We are unique in our strong commitment to support dance creation as no other dance organization offers as comprehensive of an in-house choreography initiative to its artists as ours,” explains company founder Melissa Thodos. “Through **New Dances**, each of our ensemble members is put in a directive position to make all production decisions about his or her work. Our choreographers have already drafted and submitted written creative proposals, developed their own budgets, cast their works with dancers from within as well as outside the company, collaborated with costume and lighting designers, contributed to the marketing plan for their work, and scheduled their own rehearsal time. In total, they are each given more than 30 hours of studio time, unprecedented in our field, to bring their choreographic vision to life with their own hand-picked ensemble of dancers.”

In addition to providing a three-month development period, Thodos’ artists have the rare opportunity of being mentored during the process by a panel of highly accomplished Chicago dance professionals. This year’s panel is **Jeff Hancock**, a founding member of River North Dance Chicago, and former Hubbard Street Dance Chicago dancer, Dance Kaleidoscope, and Same Planet Different World Dance Theater, where he was a Co-Artistic Director; **Kristina Isabelle**, **New Dances** guest choreographer from 2014, artistic director of Kristina Isabelle Dance Company and director of HighJinks Productions; **Emily Stein**: a dancer, teacher and choreographer in Chicago for over 20 years, currently presenting choreography under the title *Secret Experiments in Ballet*, and on the faculty at Dance Center of Columbia College, the Joffrey Ballet’s Lemonis Bridge Program and Northwest Ballet Academy; and, **Zachary Whittenburg**, Manager of Communication at Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and former dancer with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, BJM Danse Montréal and Pacific Northwest Ballet. The panel will convene for two full-days for private showings of all nine works in their developmental stages, and they will share their feedback and expertise to help guide the choreographers to debut their finished work for the public in July.

New Dances was first produced by the Chicago Repertory Dance Ensemble in the late 1980s, where Melissa Thodos, before founding her own company, was an ensemble member and created her first early dance pieces. The impact of the early **New Dances** projects was so profound that she was passionate about recreating the project for her own company of dancers. When Chicago Repertory Dance closed, Thodos inherited the project, which she launched at Thodos Dance Chicago in 2001.

Today, by being nurtured and promoted from within the organization, Thodos ensemble members continue to gain much-needed hands on experience as choreographers backed with strong production skills, an experience specifically designed to serve them well both during and, perhaps most importantly, following their careers as performers. Since Thodos resurrected the project in 2001, **New Dances** has yielded 132 world premieres, while helping 73 Chicago-based choreographers and more than 300 dance artists develop and showcase their skills and build their reputations.

Many works from past **New Dances** have subsequently entered the repertory of Thodos Dance and have been showcased at festivals ranging from **Jacob’s Pillow** to **Dance Chicago**. Others have been embraced and received subsequent productions by noted directors Gerald Arpino of the Joffrey Ballet and Jim Vincent of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. Thanks to **New Dances**, TDC dancer/choreographers have gone on to set works on the Joffrey Ballet, Hubbard Street, River North, Dutch National Ballet Project, Dance Kaleidoscope, Atlanta Ballet, Dance Works Chicago, Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, Idaho Dance Theatre, Grand Rapids Ballet, Giordano Dance Chicago, Eisenhower Dance Ensemble and the second companies of Alvin Ailey and American Ballet Theater.

About Thodos Dance Chicago

In 1992, Melissa Thodos, a young Evanston-born, Chicago-based dancer and choreographer, was frustrated with the lack of opportunities for local dancers to work in what in her mind was the obvious environment for any well-rounded dance professional: A place to perform. A place to create. And a place to educate. Fast-forward 23 years, and Thodos is the only female choreographer and director to have helmed her own mid-sized, contemporary dance company in Chicago for more than two decades with this unique mission.

Today, Thodos Dance Chicago (TDC) is an ensemble of twelve versatile dance artists with a captivating style that uses a variety of dance forms. The company's unique mission of inspiring expression through dance education, dance creation and dance performance has established TDC as an innovative presence in American contemporary dance.

Thodos Dance Chicago features the American voice in contemporary dance and has created two critically acclaimed story ballets. In addition to performing works by **Melissa Thodos** and resident artists, TDC performs a diverse array of works created by other reputable choreographers: **Bob Fosse, Ann Reinking, Lar Lubovitch, Shapiro & Smith, Jon Lehrer, Michael Anderson, Zachary Whittenburg, Lucas Crandall, Brian Enos, Amy Ernst, Ron De Jesús, Gustavo Ramírez Sansano, Ahmad Simmons** and **KT Nelson**.

Thodos Dance Chicago continues to expand its artistic and institutional boundaries under the guidance of Founder and Artistic Director **Melissa Thodos**, Executive Director **Gail Ford**, Booking Director **Rick Johnston**, Artistic Associate **Laura Gates**, Resident Lighting Designer **Nathan Tomlinson**, Marketing and Operations Manager **Annie Zahour**, Education and Outreach Associate **Kate Weatherly**, Board President **Sharon Lear**, a dedicated board of directors and the support of thousands of contemporary dance enthusiasts both in Chicago and nationwide.

The company is supported by the **Illinois Arts Council**—a state agency, **Target, The Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation**, the **MacArthur Fund for Arts & Culture at the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation**, **The Arts Work Fund**, **The Morrison-Shearer Foundation**, **The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation**, **The Service Club of Chicago** and many individual and corporate sponsors.

For more information, visit thodosdancechicago.org.

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