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July 22-28, 2024 | Hyatt Regency—Schaumburg

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Demi Agaiby is a Mental Performance Consultant & director of Beyond Horizons Performance. With 20+ years of dance training and an M.S. in Sport and Exercise Psychology, Demi is committed to embedding psychological skills training and mental wellness across athletic and artistic spaces. In her work, Demi supports athletes and performers with their goals while building confidence, resilience, and mental toughness. To learn more about Demi and Mental Performance Consulting visit beyondhorizonsperformance.com.



Kelly Anderson, a Milwaukee native, holds a BFA in Dance from Western Michigan University. Notable performances during her time at WMU include works by Aszure Barton, Kyle Abraham, Brian Enos, and Rennie Harris. She has trained at ADF's New York Winter Intensive, DanceWorks Chicago's DanceForce and ChoreoLab, and Houston METdance's Professional Summer Intensive. Alongside her performance career, Kelly mentors competitive dancers. She has danced with Peckish Rhodes Performing Arts Society and Banks Performance Project. Currently, Kelly is in her fourth season as a Company Member and Assistant Rehearsal Director at South Chicago Dance Theatre, where she has performed works by various choreographers and toured internationally to Amsterdam and Colombia. Kelly also finds fulfillment in teaching and choreographing for local dance studios, sharing her passion for dance with her students and community.



Melissa Anderson, hailing from Milwaukee, boasts an extensive ballet career, performing soloist and principal roles with companies like Milwaukee Ballet, Ballet Teatro Municipal de San Juan, and more. Transitioning to teaching, she instructs ballet at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Peck School of the Arts, Marquette University, and Danceworks, as well as various studios in the Greater Milwaukee Area. Melissa is renowned for her ability to work with large groups and is a sought-after guest master teacher at national dance conventions including CNADM, DMW, and TATD. Certified by American Ballet Theatre (ABT®), she emphasizes a kind, body-friendly approach to ballet instruction. Connect with her on Instagram at [BalletHealthMelissa](https://www.instagram.com/BalletHealthMelissa) to experience her passion for preserving ballet's beauty and technique while shedding outdated practices.



John "Comix" Barrella, a prominent figure in street dance, primarily utilizes the genres of Locking, Popping, B-boy, and Hip Hop. His talent has been showcased in music videos like "Get Away" by Alissia and large-scale events including Tedx: Chaos and NY Knicks halftime. A respected choreographer, his influence impacts dancers in schools and teams worldwide. He serves as a Hip Hop adjunct professor at Rider University and master faculty for the Joffrey Ballet audition tour. Starting at 14, he trained in modern dance and Ballet, later delving into Hip Hop under masters like Tom McKie, Spex, Jazzy J, & more. Since 2007, John directs "Redef" dance company, known for their work in street dance and the comedy work "Stupid Humans." John developed "The Comix Method," which serves as a certification and major resource for Hip Hop teachers around the world.



Nicole Messina Billow, has taught tap and jazz for more than 25 years. Her professional dance career started after the 1999 Miss America pageant where she was a top 10 finalist and preliminary talent winner for tap dancing. She has performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, the Marquis Theater on Broadway, and the Harris and Showboat Casinos in Atlantic City. Nicole traveled on a national tour called Absolut Tap, which Aaron Tolson choreographed. She has appeared in commercials, TV, and film, and as a QVC guest host until she decided to focus on choreography and teaching. She enjoys sharing tutorials and choreography clips on her TikTok (@nicoletapz), Instagram, and YouTube accounts. She is a teacher/mentor at two dance studios in New Jersey and is guest faculty at Broadway Dance Center in New York and Powerhouse Dance in New Jersey.



Jessica Deahr Neville recently concluded her acclaimed 11-year run as Artistic Director of Chicago Dance Crash. Known for her accessible, athletic, fusion-based contemporary dance style, her choreography has earned local accolades with Chicago Tribune's Best in Dance honors and national recognition with Dance Magazine's Most Inventive New Work award. Deahr's influence extends to college residencies and collaborations with esteemed companies like Visceral Dance Chicago and Chicago Tap Theatre. She has performed at prestigious festivals and venues, including Dance For Life and Chicago Summer Dance. Noteworthy commercial ventures include collaborations with Uniqlo, Cheerios, the World Wildlife Fund, and the Chicago Department of Aviation. This year, she ventured into musical theater as Assistant Choreographer and Ensemble member for Drury Lane's "Fiddler on the Roof." www.jessicadeahr.com.

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Michael Deeb Weaver, Managing Director of Zodiaque Dance Company, also serves as a Clinical Assistant Professor of Dance at the University at Buffalo, specializing in jazz, tap, and musical theatre styles. With extensive experience as a dancer, actor, instructor, and choreographer, he has performed globally, notably in national tours like "A Chorus Line" and "Young Frankenstein." His choreography, including productions like "Merrily We Roll Along" and "Sister Act," received acclaim, earning him a finalist spot at the 2023 Industry Dance Awards. Michael has taught at Nazareth College, Montclair State University, and for organizations like Dance Masters of America. A member of Actors' Equity Association, he holds a BFA in Dance from the University at Buffalo.



Mindy Jackson, originating from Chicagoland, directs Professional Training Programs and teaches contemporary dance at STEPS on Broadway in NYC. Holding a BFA from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, Mindy boasts over 20 years of experience as a dancer, choreographer, Rehearsal Director, and mentor in concert dance, theater, and media. Notable accolades include recognition by Dance Magazine and featuring as a style model in successive issues. She has worked with acclaimed contemporary and theater dance creators like Aszure Barton, Camille A. Brown, and many more. Mindy's choreography has been highlighted at prestigious events, including the ADF's 80th Anniversary Celebration. She's a former guest artist for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's ASAP program and conducts master classes globally. Mindy is also a proud mother of two girls.



Angel Kaba is an International artistic director and award-winning choreographer based in Brooklyn, New York. Currently, she is a professor at Rider University and a faculty member at Broadway Dance Center, Alvin Ailey Extension, and Steps on Broadway. Her artistic career began with ballet at the tender age of 6, which she pursued for more than 15 years. Throughout her career, Angel has shared the stage with artists like Coolio, Orishas, Kaye Styles, Rihanna, Kayne West, Taye Diggs, TrackDilla, Burna Boy, Salif Keita, Eddy Kenzo, Diamond Platinumz and others. Further notable experiences involved stage/television/commercial performances and dancing for world-renowned brands like Coca Cola, Levi's, Fructis by Garnier, Nutella, Universal, RocNation, MTV, NBC, Essence Festival, Madison Square Garden and SNAPCHAT.



Ramona Kelley, a Berkeley Ballet Theater alumna, holds a BFA in dance from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts. Notably, she portrayed 'Betsy' in Twyla Tharp's *Come Fly Away* and created roles with the Tharp company. As a principal guest artist with Oakland Ballet, she's graced stages in productions like *An American in Paris* and *Phantom of the Opera* (25th Anniversary Tour). Ramona's teaching résumé includes Pacific Northwest Ballet, Joffrey Ballet School, and company classes for Twyla Tharp Dance and Paul Taylor Dance Company. She conducts master classes nationwide in ballet and Tharp technique while also choreographing her own works.



Kesha Milenkovic, originally from Gaithersburg, Maryland, embarked on her dance journey at nine, training at Motion Mania Dance Center and attending prestigious programs like Debbie Allen Dance Academy and Alvin Ailey Summer Intensive. She graced the Kennedy Center stage in productions directed by Debbie Allen before earning her Bachelor of Arts in Dance from Columbia College Chicago. Kesha's talent led her to Gus Giordano Dance School and their second company. She later showcased her skills in Broadway's "Chicago" aboard the *Allure Of The Seas* and performed aerial work for Royal Caribbean Cruise Line. Now, she shares her expertise as faculty at North Shore School Of Dance and Artistic Associate for *Inside Chicago Dance*. Kesha also teaches and adjudicates for various competitions and conventions while serving as rehearsal director and choreographer for C5. Passionate about performance, Kesha now expands her impact through teaching and choreography.



With over 25 years of dance experience, **Kelsey Nelson** holds a Bachelor of Science in Dance Management from Oklahoma City University. Her impressive career spans major motion pictures like *Anchorman II: The Legend Continues* and *Rock of Ages*, as well as collaborations with esteemed choreographers like Fatima Robinson and Mia Michaels. She's performed for Disney, HSN, Royal Caribbean, and more. Kelsey's passion for teaching and choreography shines through her work with universities, dance studios, and prestigious competitions across North America. She's served as a Master Instructor for National Dance Alliance and others, and now joins the faculty of Thrive Dance Experience, The Bridge Training Program, and Artist In Training, eager to connect with dancers nationwide.

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Tess Renaud, a Chicago-based dancer, trained at Visceral Dance Center and graduated from Western Michigan University with a Bachelor of Arts in dance. At WMU, she was part of Western Dance Project, performing at venues like Dance Chicago and Michigan Dance Day. Tess has performed works by choreographers including Harrison McEldowney and Nick Pupillo and at festivals like Carnival Choreographers Ball and Motor City Movement. She's completed yoga teacher training and judged competitions like Applause Talent. Tess focuses on teaching and choreography, with works set on companies like Visceral Dance Chicago and The LAUNCH Chicago. She teaches at Visceral Dance Center, Exhibit 3 Dance Company, Chicago Dance Connection, and Denise Sabala Dance Company, specializing in contemporary and improvisation.



Darryl Retter has one mission: to teach ethics, morals, and virtues through dance training. He has traveled to 25+ cities yearly for 36 years, teaching dance and studio business classes, and ran his LA dance studio business with his wife, Linda Bernabei Retter, for 31 years. His convention work includes the following tours: Dance Caravan, Professional Dance Teachers Association, Al Gilbert Teacher Seminars, Dance Makers, and his own event called Dance Teacher Connection. Darryl has been supplying dance teachers with content and resources during his career and continues to do so as the owner and artistic director of MusicWorks at www.musicworksunlimited.com. His newest creation at MusicWorks is called "MusicWorks Plus" (MW+). These short, sweet, and to-the-point bite-sized bits of creativity are designed specifically for the classroom.



Originally from Portland, Oregon, **Cesar Salinas** serves as Associate Artistic Director of Giordano Dance Chicago. His dance journey began at Zohar School of Dance in Palo Alto, CA, where he learned classic jazz styles. After studying at Willamette Ballet Academy, he earned a BFA in Dance from the University at Buffalo. He began training with Giordano Dance Chicago in 2004, and then joined as company member in 2006 where he performed worldwide and participated in educational outreach programs. In 2007, Cesar appeared on the cover of Dance Magazine. Cesar toured with Royal Caribbean to nearly 40 countries as dancer and aerialist. Cesar demonstrated the Giordano Technique alongside Nan Giordano in Dance Teacher Magazine in 2018. He's certified in the Nan Giordano Certification Program® and returned to perform Gus Giordano's iconic solo, "Wings". Now, he teaches master classes, workshops, and choreographs nationwide, leaving a lasting impact on the dance community. Connect with him at cesarsalinasdance.com and [@cesarsalinasdance](https://twitter.com/cesarsalinasdance).



Abigail Simon, a native New Yorker, trained at the School of American Ballet on a full scholarship. She danced with American Ballet Theatre and The Joffrey Ballet before transitioning to Musical Theater and Film. Notable roles include Broadway's "An American in Paris" international tour and Victoria in "Cats." Abigail has collaborated with renowned choreographers like Benjamin Millepied and Christopher Wheeldon, excelling in principal roles such as in Wheeldon's "After the Rain" and Rudolf Nureyev's "Sleeping Beauty." She's also created works with leading choreographers and served as a master teacher for The Joffrey Ballet and Alvin Ailey. In 2017, she founded a production company for world-class artists, coaching and mentoring dancers from prestigious companies like ABT and Royal Ballet. Follow her journey on Instagram [@Abigailsimonofficial](https://www.instagram.com/Abigailsimonofficial).



Dr. Carrie Skony is a Certified Chiropractic Sports Physician®, Dance Medicine Specialist, and the owner of PERFORM Active Wellness + Dance Medicine in Lisle, IL where she takes a personalized and holistic approach to provide dance injury assessments, dance-specific rehab, and injury prevention programs to dancers of all ages. Dr. Skony is a consulting physician and guest teacher for several pre-professional and professional dance companies throughout Chicagoland. She has been a contributing writer on dancer's health and injury prevention for Dance Informa magazine, Irish Dancing Magazine, and Pointe magazine. Dr. Skony's passion is educating and empowering dance educators, parents, and young dancers to learn how to care for their whole bodies well. She aims to inspire long-term health and reduce the risk of injuries so dancers can dance safer, stronger, longer. www.performactivewellness.com or follow her on social media [@drcarrieskony](https://twitter.com/drcarrieskony) for dancer wellness tips.

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John Streit, an Assistant Professor of Dance and Summer Dance Director at Brenau University in Gainesville, GA, possesses a diverse background encompassing ballet, ballroom, musical theatre dance, dance pedagogy, and dance business. His expertise lies in teaching and choreography. John has performed with renowned companies like the Georgia Ballet and Atlanta Ballet as a guest artist, featuring in productions such as Spamalot, The Producers, Cats, Damn Yankees, Anything Goes, and The Addams Family. In Atlanta, he's mentored four YAGP Top 12 finalists and created commissioned pieces. John holds the esteemed ABT NTC Certification, spanning Pre-Primary through Level 7 and Partnering in the ABT National Training Curriculum.



Priyank Thakker, founder of Naachchicago, is a Bollywood-trained dancer from Mumbai's Rael Padamsee academy. His journey spans six years, starting from middle school to earning a Bachelor's and Master's in Mechanical Engineering from Rutgers University. He was pivotal in Bollywood Badmaash Company, winning 8 competitions across India. Priyank continued his dance involvement with SAPA during his master's. In 2022, he established Naachchicago, now thriving with branches in Chicago and New York. With over 12 skilled instructors, Naachchicago is more than dance; it's a cultural movement. Priyank aims to showcase South Asian culture's richness and the captivating allure of Indian cinema through Bollywood dance, making Naachchicago an ambassador for Indian cinema's global appeal.



Andrea Trench is dedicated to supporting dance teachers in crafting developmentally appropriate classes for children under 6. With a focus on classroom management, conceptual teaching, and foundational movement skills, she draws on 12 years of studio partnership experience to empower educators. Her journey began in 1998 while pursuing a B.F.A. in dance, where she met mentor Kate Kuper, inspiring the creation of DiscoverDance. Since its launch in 2017, Andrea has presented at events hosted by Rhee Gold, Misty Lown, and others, contributing to publications like DanceStudio Life Magazine and Rhee Gold's Dancelife Blog. Known for her energetic teaching style and advocacy for early childhood dance, Andrea equips educators with effective teaching methods and articulates the importance of dance in children's lives both inside and outside the studio.



Trae Turner, recognized as a leading Hip Hop choreographer in the Midwest, boasting over 20 years in the commercial dance and entertainment sphere, specializing in dancer training, artistic direction, mentorship, and Hip Hop Culture education. Choreographed for Ciara, Fat Joe, Kam, Jess Godwin, Yemi Marie, Simone Brousseau, and more. Founder & Artistic Director of BOOM CRACK! Dance Company (2009), IBOOM BOX Dance Company (2012), and IBANIGB ANIG Dance Company (2019). Adjunct faculty at Columbia Dance College. Named the 3rd best teacher in Chicago by Art Intercepts in 2013. Achieved record student enrollment at HSDC/Lou Conte in its 43-year history. Honored with Dance Chicago's "Best Choreography Award" (2012, 2013) and produced full-length theatrical productions in 2015-2023.