

SWITCHIN' IT UP!
Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning
Making Moves Dance Festival
Shifts Fully Online for 2020
Friday, Sept. 25 and Saturday, Sept. 26, 2020



July 13th, 2020 (New York) -- For the past 10 years, **Making Moves Dance Festival**, presented by the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning (JCAL), has served as a platform to promote new, emerging and underrepresented dance companies. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, JCAL will present the 11th annual festival as a virtual experience. Each dance company will deliver its performance, on **Friday, Sept. 25** and **Saturday, Sept. 26, 2020**, on JCAL's digital platforms.

The opportunity will be challenging yet exciting for the choreographers and dancers as they're *switchin' it up* from live to virtual. Hence the title of this year's festival: *Switchin' It Up!*

JCAL's **Making Moves Dance Festival 2020** will feature 11 New York City-based professional choreographers, from new and early-career artists to emerging and underrepresented talents. The festival has always been a testament to the rich diversity of Queens and New York City, and this year's lineup offers both traditional and contemporary influenced dance styles including Ballet, Afro-Latin, East Asian, Middle Eastern, Afro-Caribbean, East Indian, and more.

Making Moves Dance Festival 2020 highlight's this year's **Major Commission: Rohan Bhargava and the Rovaco Dance Company**. Bhargava's artistic vision for the commission will focus on giving audiences a glimpse into contemporary Indian narratives through an array of movement, music and immersive theatrical elements.

"We're thrilled to present the Making Moves Dance Festival for an 11th year," said Courtney Ffrench, JCAL's Interim Artistic Director. "And we're pleased to offer a virtual festival this year -- showing our community that while the pandemic may prevent us from gathering in spaces as in previous years, we at JCAL can harness the technology to bring these amazing dance companies to Queens and beyond."

Added Leonard Jacobs, JCAL's Interim Executive Director, "We're grateful to our funders and supporters for standing with us as we transform an in-person, theater-based gathering into something universally accessible -- even in the time of COVID. Artists lead and heal the world, and we present this year's festival in the spirit of hope, change and much-needed celebration."

Here are the artists and the jurors for **Making Moves Dance Festival 2020**:

Major Commission

- **Rohan Bhargava, Rovaco Dance Company**

Rohan Bhargava, born and raised in New Delhi, India, holds a B.F.A in Dance from Tisch School of the Arts, NYU. He works for Greater Ridgewood Youth Council, Kizuna Dance, Mare Nostrum Elements, and Notes in Motion Outreach Dance Theater, in addition to serving as Artistic Director of Rovaco Dance Company. Through his choreographic work, Rohan has won "Outstanding Choreography" at Tamasha NYC and received commissions from The Dance Gallery Festival, Sam Houston State University, CUNY Dance Initiative, Dancewave, Mannes School of Music, and Rhythmically Speaking. Currently, Rohan is completing the Jadin Wong Fellowship 2020, administered by the Asian American Arts Alliance.

New Artists

- **Makayla Peterson, Monét Movement Productions: The Collective**

Makayla Peterson is a dancer, choreographer and scholar from Brooklyn. She began her dance training at age four in a plethora of styles, attending performing arts schools and dance intensives. Currently, Peterson interns for Philadelphia-based Black Dance Magazine and performs with Enya Kalia Creations. She is continuing her work as a dance scholar while performing and creating original choreography for her company.

- **Khadijah Munajj, La Vie Dance Company**

Khadijah Munajj, an 18-year-old ballet dancer from New York City, is the founder and choreographer of La Vie Ballet Company. She studies many styles of dance, while keeping up her intense ballet training and performing. She was an apprentice with New York Theatre Ballet at the age of 16, where she choreographed for the company's school. She also trained, rehearsed and performed with NYTB company. A year later, Munajj enrolled in Dance Theatre of Harlem school where she had the opportunity to perform ballets created on her. Munajj has been invited to perform in companies, and showcases all over at a young age. Previous to her ballet career, she was a competitive figure skater.

Early-Career Artists

- **Leah Tubbs, MODArts Dance Company**

MODArts Dance Collective (MADC), established in 2011 by Leah and Shaun Tubbs, gives a voice to the underrepresented and often silenced communities of color to create more empathy and compassion in our world. The mission of MADC is to utilize movement as the catalyst to increase diversity, inclusion, and gender equality to audiences and communities nationwide.

- **Cory Villegas, Soul Dance Co.: The Soul Experience**

Cory "Nova" Villegas a native Bronxite. She has been training in Salsa On2 since she was five years old. Her training began at Starlite Dance Studio of the Bronx, and in her teen years, at Dancers Dreamzzz School of dance, also located in the Bronx. She began training in techniques such as Bollywood, Dunham, Graham, Limon Horton, and Ballet with Penelope Kalloo as her teacher, who was a former Forces of Nature company member. She then continued her training at the Ailey School and Lehman and Hunter colleges. Cory is interested in the intertwining of Afro-Latin forms with traditional styles and technique, and its marriage with music and poetry.

- **Crystal Craigen, Divine Ladies and Gentlemen**

Crystal Craigen is an Artistic Entrepreneur and Holistic Enthusiast on a mission to uplift and empower her community. Whether she is painting, woodworking, dancing, or practicing reiki or herbal arts, Crystal uses her platforms to embrace the power of creativity and the art of rejuvenation.

- **Mikaela Papisodero - Mika and Co**

Mikaela Papisodero is originally from Middleboro, MA. She graduated Cum Laude with a B.F.A. in Dance Performance from the University of Hartford. She had the opportunity to perform works by Shannon Gillen, Jose Limon, Paul Taylor, Bryan Arias, Stephen Pier and many more. She currently lives in New York City, dancing for Amirov Dance Theatre, Rioult Repertory Project, and Spark Movement Collective.

Emerging / Underrepresented Artists

- **Dolly Sfeir - Dolly Sfeir**

Dolly Sfeir grew up in Lebanon. She attended Studio Arabesque at four years of age. After moving to the U.S. at 18, Sfeir was awarded a College of the Arts Scholarship from CSU Long Beach, where she received her B.F.A. in Dance. Since moving to New York, she has received a creative residency with Jacob's Pillow, Abingdon Theater Company, as well as two residences with Mare Nostrum as part of their Emergent Choreographers Series.

- **Lane Gifford - LaneCoArts**

After attending Purchase College Conservatory of Dance where she received a B.F.A. and M.F.A., Lane Gifford founded LaneCoArts in 2006 with a mission to create physically charged dance dramas that reflect meaningful social issues and expand the language of movement through lenses of drama, visual arts, film and audio experimentation. Her multi-arts approach to dance grew from her early experiences living and working abroad as a dancer and developed with her work in the visual arts and film.

- **Peter Cheng - PETER & CO.**

Peter Cheng is a Taiwanese-American dancer/choreographer hailing from San Francisco. After earning his B.F.A. in Dance from UC Santa Barbara, Cheng trained with Alonzo King LINES Ballet, ODC/SF, SBDNY, Springboard Danse Montréal, Yin Yue and NW Dance Project. As the Artistic Director of PETER & CO., his work has been presented at 92nd St. Y/Harkness, Judson Memorial Church, Arts On Site and LPAC, among others.

- **Morgiana Celeste Varricchio - Mosaic Dance Theater Company (MDTC)**

MDTC is dedicated to the dance and folkloric traditions of the Mediterranean -- the Middle East, North Africa, Turkey, Greece, Italy and Spain. The dances and music, the stories and myths, and the history and legends of this fascinating area form the wellspring of inspiration for MDTC's creative vision. Founded in 2003, this award-winning company is known for its artistry and authenticity, not only in creating the original works that comprise its repertory, but also in faithfully researching their origins to ensure cultural integrity.

Jurors

- **Gus Solomons, Jr** -- Dancer/actor/reviewer/choreography advisor Gus Solomons. Jr., graduated in architecture from Massachusetts Institute of Technology and studied with Jan Veen at Boston Conservatory before moving to New York City to dance in "Kicks and Co.!" Solomons joined Donald McKayle's company and studied the Martha Graham Technique but soon felt the constraints of modern dance.



For Immediate Release

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- **Karesia Batan** -- A Queens-based dancer, choreographer and Founder/Director of the annual Queensboro Dance Festival, Karesia Batan is dedicated to bridging gaps of accessibility among dancers, audiences and community resources. Founded in 2014, the Queensboro Dance Festival is a tour of free performances and classes throughout the borough of Queens, presenting all Queens-based dance companies of diverse cultures and techniques. As a dancer, Batan's company credits include Nancy Meehan Co., Beth Soll, Craig Hoke Zarah, Anne Zuerner and Abby Bender/Schmantze Theater.
- **Sameena Mitta** -- Sameena Mitta is the artistic director of MeenMoves as well as of the education and outreach program MadHops. She was a recipient of the Celia Franca Scholarship and was awarded, with distinction, the Associate Diploma of the Cecchetti Society. She has spent many years teaching and working as a freelance modern dancer throughout North America and abroad.
- **Nicky Paraiso** (Festival Advisor) -- Nicky Paraiso is an actor, musician, writer, performance artist and curator. He has been Director of Programming for The Club at La MaMa since 2001, and is responsible for its surge of theater, performance, dance and cabaret programming.

About JCAL

Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning (JCAL), founded in 1972, is a multidisciplinary arts center based in the diverse community of Southeast Queens. Our mission is devoted to offering quality visual, performing, and literary arts, and to provide accessible education programs to encourage participation in the arts. JCAL is temporarily closed in accordance with state and local guidelines. Normal operating hours: Open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 6pm; closed Sundays and major holidays. For additional information, call JCAL at 718-658-7400 or visit JCAL.org.

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