



Karen Mareck Grundy, Artistic/Executive Director

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MISSOURI CONTEMPORARY BALLET PRESENTS 'INTERSECTIONS'

A PROGRAM FEATURING SIX UNIQUE WORKS BY FIVE CHOREOGRAPHERS

NOVEMBER 16 & 17, 2018

Missouri Theatre

203 S. 9th St.

Columbia, MO 65201

October 30, 2018 (COLUMBIA, MO) – Missouri Contemporary Ballet's 2018-2019 season opens with 'Intersections', a repertoire performance featuring six unique works by five choreographers. Columbia audiences will be blown away by the caliber of choreographers and dancers that have been assembled by Artistic/Executive director Karen Grundy. In addition to world premieres by Grundy and Resident Choreographer Fernando Rodriguez, 'Intersections' features original works by guest choreographers Sean Carmon (New York), Alice Bloch (St. Louis), and Joshua Blake Carter (Chicago). Presented by the University of Missouri Concert Series, 'Intersections' will be performed November 16th and 17th at the historic Missouri Theatre.

The full company of nine professional dancers will take the stage in 'Intersections'. Dancers travel from all across the country and internationally to perform full-time with Missouri Contemporary Ballet. Current company dancers hail from Michigan, Kansas, Missouri, Ohio, North Dakota, West Virginia and Brazil. The performance features returning audience favorites Nicole Bell, Elise Mosbacher, Anthony Sigler, Jose Soares, Meredith Green Soares, Kay Whitney & Alice Wells as well as debuting two new apprentices for the 2019-2020 season: Maria Hall and Joshua Velazquez.

1000 Details (2012)

Choreographer: Karen Mareck Grundy

The industrial *1000 Details* premiered in MCB's 2012 performance of 'Thirst'. Inspired by the driving musical score, Grundy choreographed a piece that was "just movement for movement's sake." Because *1,000 Details* was created primarily in response to the powerful soundtrack, she decided not to attempt telling a specific story through the dancers' movements. The piece invokes an otherworldly feeling as the dancers move through intricate group work and partnering sequences. Evident by its title, this powerful work is fast paced, angular and extremely detail oriented. Originally choreographed for six dancers, the restaging of *1000 Details* will feature a cast of eight dancers.

Choice (World Premiere)

Choreographer: Karen Mareck Grundy

Choreographed for the six female dancers of MCB, *Choice* is a statement on a woman's right to choose what she does with her body. Grundy says "I felt this topic was especially relevant given the current political climate." The piece begins with two poignant solos which feel isolated and vulnerable. As the ballet progresses, synchronized group work and partnering portray the beauty of women and the quiet strength females find in supporting one another.

Karen Grundy says her goal is, "to give dancers a positive yet disciplined space to discover their center core and expand their hearts and minds, while also allowing them to explore diverse styles of dance." Karen's unique experience is reflected in her fresh and innovative style, which combines her classical ballet and modern dance training with a twist from the productions of Las Vegas, resulting in work that's accessible to all.

Born and raised in Vegas, Karen discovered her love for contemporary ballet while working side by side with L. J. Ballard as a dancer and as an assistant choreographer. Karen has been a member and featured dancer in various dance companies including Opus Dance Ensemble, New Works Project, and Ballard's Cafe Dance Co. She performed in Las Vegas for 11 years as a featured and lead dancer, and also worked in television. During this time, while working with various choreographers, she was also fortunate to work closely under the direction of Ron Lewis, director and choreographer for Liza Minnelli. Grundy has taught master classes throughout the country and as an assistant for choreographer Tiger Martina.

In 2000, Karen was recruited to Columbia, Missouri to teach at Columbia Performing Arts Centre, where she taught for 9 years. She has trained dancers who have gone on to The Juilliard School, The Lines School, Dance Kaleidoscope, Cedar Lake Contemporary Ballet, and Broadway! Her dream was always to have her own company and, before starting Missouri Contemporary Ballet in 2006, she was the Artistic Director for Cedar Lake II. Through MCB, Karen is thrilled to be able to create her vision while collaborating with artists of all genres, and the many supporters of dance in Columbia, across the state of Missouri, and throughout the Country.

Pass Me By (World Premiere)

Choreographer: Fernando Rodriguez

Pass Me By, a premiere by MCB's Resident Choreographer Fernando Rodriguez, urges the audience to pay attention to the beauty of our surroundings before life 'passes us by'. The piece addresses our current self-destructive addiction to a fast-paced lifestyle and allows for room for interpretation as audience members consider their own habits. Rodriguez urges the audience to slow down and find joy in daily life.

Fernando Rodriguez attended Grand Valley State University in Allendale, Michigan. At Grand Valley, Fernando performed lead roles in *Coppélia*, *Pas de Six*, *Pas de Quatre* and professional works by Robert Battle, Thang Dao, and Pascal Rioult. Fernando also worked with guest artists such as Sam Watson, Michael Phillips, George Smallwood, Daniel Ulbricht and Cheiko Imada. Fernando attended intensives with Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, Deeply Rooted Dance Theatre, American Ballet Theatre, Paul Taylor and The Thang Dao Dance Company on scholarship. In 2009, Fernando joined Missouri Contemporary Ballet, where he toured nationally and internationally as a company member for five seasons. He has guest performed with Grand Rapids Ballet Company in George Balachine's 'The Prodigal Son' and performed the role of Prince in *Sleeping Beauty* and *Cinderella* with Springfield Ballet. He also has guest performed in original contemporary works with Owen/Cox Dance Group. In 2015 Fernando joined Giordano Dance Chicago as a Performing Associate and later continued to dance with River North Dance Chicago, *West Side Story* (Paramount Theater) and *Cocodaco Dance Project*. Fernando returned to Missouri Contemporary Ballet as a dancer and resident choreographer in 2016. He currently dances with Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre in Chicago and will continue his role as resident choreographer of Missouri Contemporary Ballet.

Embankment (MCB Premiere)

Choreographer: Joshua Blake Carter

MCB has a long standing relationship with 'Intersections' guest choreographer, Chicago-based Joshua Blake Carter. Joshua Blake Carter's past works for MCB include *The Current State of Life* (2011) and *Ripen* (2014). An audience favorite, Carter's work *Ripen* was described by a viewer as having a "grotesque, visceral, emotional beauty".

For 'Intersections', Carter staged *Embankment* on MCB dancer José Soares, a solo originally choreographed on the Joffrey Ballet's Fernando Duarte. Throughout the solo, Soares dances with a chair, meant to symbolize the human instinct to protect ourselves.

Carter has written: "*Embankment* is about the things in our life that we put in our own way to seemingly protect ourselves. Many would say they "put walls up," but to me that is generic. We put work before a relationship that we're scared to embark on. We create excuses for not applying for that promotion. We live behind the facade of social media. Whatever your scenario is, we carry these things with us everyday. We push through the world leading with these walls and excuses. *Embankment* is about breaking them down. It's about the first steps of healing or

changing. Many will see the chair as a literal metaphor, and he doesn't discard it at the end. However, he does finally get past it.”

Originally from Atlanta, GA, **Joshua Blake Carter** joined the Giordano Dance Chicago team in 2009 as a member of Giordano II. He then danced seven seasons with the GDC main company before taking his final bow in 2017 to join the administration team as Operations Manager. Joshua continues to serve as the Director of Giordano II, a position he has held since 2013. Joshua holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance from the University of Arizona, where he began to find his choreographic voice. In 2009, he was selected as the winner of Wonderbound's (formerly Ballet Nouveau Colorado) national choreography competition, dancemakers2.0, and in the spring of 2013 he was one of six winners commissioned to create a new work for DanceWorks Chicago's DanceMoves choreography competition. Later in 2013, Joshua was awarded the Producers' Panel Prize by The Ruth Page Foundation for his work, Ripen, as part of Dance Chance: Redux 5.0. His 2015 work for Giordano Dance Chicago, the only way around is through, was referred to as “fresh and cohesive... honest and genuine” by Halfstack Magazine, and The Chicago Reader called his 2016 work Fracture for Giordano II “high-octane.” Other commissions include Missouri Contemporary Ballet, Nomi Dance Company, Visceral Dance Chicago, Artifact Dance Project and Glendale Community College (Artist in Residence 2012), as well as an original work for Embarq with the Joffrey Ballet. Additionally, Joshua created the finale for the 2016 event Sing! featuring Elton John. Joshua has served on the Dance For Life Chicago Ambassador Committee since 2013, an organization for which he is very passionate. As a dance educator, Joshua travels throughout the country in addition to being on faculty in several Chicago dance institutions.

linger longer (World Premiere)

Choreographer: Sean Carmon

New York based choreographer Sean Carmon has written: “*linger longer*’ takes its inspiration directly from my time performing as a company member in a non-profit organization — most, if not all, dance companies in this country are such organizations.

As a dancer, we are the product. we are constantly put on display, both onstage and offstage, at gala events and the like. It's the name of the game. In order to serve the arts, philanthropists and everyday donors must feel strongly that the arts are serving them and their communities. The easiest ways to achieve that viewpoint? present works that speak to the community — that challenge the audiences expectations — and send your dancers out into the field as ambassadors of the company.

linger longer is at once a challenging contemporary dance work, with clear movement themes that break away from the ballet idiom while maintaining its structure, and a satirical look at being a “dancer on display” in this culture. The music hints at — but doesn't directly reflect — a circus theme, bringing to mind the various aspects of the circus that the audience has come to know: the ringmaster, the lion tamer, the clowns, the sideshow. drawing further inspiration from the

music itself (composed and performed by Cosmo Sheldrake), I created, with costuming and lighting, a bleak yet eccentric world in direct juxtaposition and alignment to the grandness of the circus.”

Sean Aaron Carmon (Beaumont, TX) began his training under the late Bonnie Cokinos at her School of Dance. Under her guidance, he began competing nationally with Dance Masters of America. Sean held the titles of Mr. Dance of Texas in both 2004 and 2006 while in high school. Thanks to two dedicated teachers, Eva Leblanc and Lucia Booth, and a host of support from other district faculty members, Sean was awarded the Bill and Melinda Gates Scholarship, affording him the opportunity to attend New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts in 2006 on full scholarship. After moving to New York, he began taking supplemental classes at the Ailey School which led to an inevitable transfer to, and later graduation from, the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. Program in Dance in 2010.

He was a member of Elisa Monte Dance before originating the role of "Phaedra" in the 2010 Tony Award–winning revival of *La Cage Aux Folles* and performed on the 2010 Tony Awards broadcast, *Good Morning America* and *Live! with Regis and Kelly*. Mr. Carmon also performed in the Broadway production of *The Phantom of the Opera* and has appeared as a guest artist with Joshua Beamish's MOVETHECOMPANY, the International Dance Association in Italy and with the Cape Dance Company in South Africa.

Mr. Carmon danced with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre for seven years and performed major solo roles including Mikhail Baryshnikov’s original role in Alvin Ailey’s *Pas de Duke* and featured roles in ballets by other notable choreographers such as Wayne McGregor, Robert Battle, Aszure Barton, Johan Inger, Ulysses Dove, Matthew Rushing, Hope Boykin and Christopher L. Huggins. In addition, he was featured on Conan, the national TBS television talk show, Lincoln Center at the Movies, broadcast nationally on PBS and profiled in the Huffington Post for his work as an AGMA union representative for the Ailey dancers. After seven seasons with Ailey, Sean made the decision to go back to his musical theater roots -- you can now see him performing all over North America as a featured dancer with Disney’s the Lion King!

As a choreographer's assistant, Sean has learned from some of the best professional choreographers working today, including Christopher L. Huggins, Joshua Beamish, Matthew Rushing and Nicholas Villeneuve. His own choreographies have been performed all across the country and internationally and have been lauded as "everything and then some..." and "powerful" and "seriously flawless" by major national print and online publications such as The New York Times, Newsweek, JET Magazine, BroadwayBlack, DanceSpirit and Dance Magazine. He was awarded The Joffrey Ballet's 2017 Winning Works choreographic award and created his *Suite Hearts* on The Joffrey Studio Company and The Joffrey Academy's advanced trainees. Also in 2017, his work *longstoryshort* was commissioned by the Dance Gallery Festival NYC and was selected as the Audience Choice Award Winner out of 30 pieces created for the festival. He has also created works on the AAADT for multiple Ailey Dancers' Resource Fund benefit performances. Mr. Carmon created a critically acclaimed work, *Youth Novels*, on

METtoo and a sensuous, moving duet, *begin again*, for DUO, METdance's intimate performance series in Houston, TX.

Chopin Suite

Choreographer: Isadora Duncan

Staged by: Alice Bloch

Alice Bloch has restaged a classic work by Isadora Duncan titled *Chopin Suite*. Often considered the mother of modern dance, Duncan revolutionized the art of dance as we know it today. Inspired by nature and music, she glorified the body as the temple of the spirit. Bloch chose to restage *Chopin Suite* on the dancers of Missouri Contemporary Ballet "because it reflects the depth of Isadora's expressiveness and richness of her choreography." After her first rehearsal with the company, Bloch said "I am in awe of this company, because they come from a very different style and they really took the Duncan style in". *Chopin Suite* will give MCB's audiences a glimpse into the past as the dancers perform this historic work by a true American pioneer of dance.

Isadora Duncan (1865-1927) revolutionized the art of dance as we know it today. Inspired by nature and music, she glorified the body as the temple of the spirit. In an era corseted by Victorian convention, Isadora danced in Greek tunics and challenged the roles of women in art, business, and love. Her movement springs from deep emotion and celebrates the relationship of self, nature, and humanity.

Alice Bloch, EdD, Temple University; MA, UCLA is a 5th generation Isadora Duncan dancer. Duncan presentations include *Dancing the Supermom: Isadora Duncan as a Template for Today's Single Working Mothers*, and *Duncan Dance as Somatic Practice*. Alice consulted for the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Arts' Art of American Dance exhibit, offering docent trainings and Movement for Alzheimers' patients workshop. Her 2016 residency featured the lecture/performance, *Isadora and the New Woman*. She was the lead dance writer for *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Culture* (Facts on File, forthcoming). An Arts Integration specialist based at COCA where she teaches *Move for Your Health/Dance for Your Spirit* for seniors, Alice leads professional development workshops and residencies on the arts and peaceful interaction. She is on the board of the Missouri Alliance for Arts Education and President of the Missouri Dance Organization.

All performances of 'Intersections will take place at the Missouri Theatre (203 S. 9th Street Columbia, MO 65211):

November 16, 2018 @ 7 pm

November 17, 2018 @ 7 pm

Tickets start at \$28. For tickets and further information visit <https://concertseries.missouri.edu/>.

RELATED EVENT

North Village Arts District 'First Fridays': Friday, November 2nd 6-9 pm

Balsamo Warehouse 110 Orr Street, Suite 102 Columbia, MO 65201

Missouri Contemporary Ballet presents a sneak peek of our upcoming performance of 'Intersections' during the North Village Arts District 'First Fridays'. This free event will take you behind the scenes and up close & personal with the professional dancers as they rehearse inside the MCB studios in downtown Columbia.

About Missouri Contemporary Ballet

Missouri Contemporary Ballet launched in 2006 with a bold vision that Mid-Missouri – and its vibrant and progressive arts scene – was ready for a professional dance company. Founded by Karen Mareck Grundy, the Company's Artistic and Executive Director, MCB has since grown from a handful of dancers and annual performances to a multi-level operation with members, apprentices, and trainees, as well as a not-for-profit school and numerous outreach programs.

MCB is headquartered in a dedicated space in the Balsamo Warehouse on Orr Street in downtown Columbia. There we have multiple studios for Company rehearsal and classes for the community, as well as a black box performance studio. In 2015, as the Company entered its 10th anniversary season, we became a partner of the prestigious University of Missouri Concert Series.

Founded in 2011, the School of MCB cultivates the artistic and personal development of its students by providing a supportive environment of dance study. The School of MCB offers classes to dancers of all ages and levels of experience in a range of genres from classical ballet to jazz. The school stands alone in mid-Missouri as the only not-for-profit ballet school and the only school to offer instruction exclusively from professional dancers.

Off the stage and beyond the School, MCB serves the community through educational and outreach programs that promote creativity and fitness, and build appreciation for the arts. Programs are designed inclusively to introduce more people in our community to the art form of contemporary ballet.

For more information, please visit www.missouricontemporaryballet.org

Missouri Contemporary Ballet gratefully acknowledges the following institutional partners:

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