

## **Bard College** Press Release

Contact: Mark Primoff  
845.758.7412  
primoff@bard.edu

### **For Immediate Release**

#### **AMERICAN DANCE FESTIVAL AND BARD COLLEGE COMBINE EDUCATIONAL MISSIONS TO LAUNCH NEW PARTNERSHIP**

**Featured Artists are Quilan “Cue” Arnold, Ephrat “Bounce” Asherie, Beth Gill, and Nia Love.**

ANNANDALE-ON-HUDSON, NY — The Bard College Dance Program and the American Dance Festival have begun a new a partnership that seeks to challenge the way dance is taught in higher education. Uniting critical inquiry and professional practice, the new program contextualizes students’ training with an annual focus on a pressing contemporary topic.

The partnership’s first year examines how two influential roots of modern dance—the African diaspora and Western European dance traditions—operate within contemporary practice and in particular how the education of dancers at American colleges and universities can be reimaged.

Leah Cox, Dean of the American Dance Festival and Term Associate Professor of Dance at Bard, leads the partnership. Cox selected ADF faculty that seek to decolonize their classrooms by challenging the way that dance is traditionally taught. Each ADF faculty member represents a unique area of expertise and presents students with ways to overcome divisions within the dance field or between the field and the world at large.

“One of the most pressing issues we are dealing with as educators is the way that whiteness has structured the academy,” stated Leah Cox, who was a longtime member of the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company. “In dance, the influence of whiteness appears in content, pedagogy, and the way we create and organize courses. Western European-based forms are usually prioritized as foundational, and the way courses are structured—separating technique, composition, and improvisation, for instance—reflects a Western understanding of dance. The Bard-ADF partnership courses challenge these norms.”

This new partnership builds on the Bard Dance Program's two previous professional partnerships, which began with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company (2009-2015), then followed with the Trisha Brown Dance Company (2015-2018). Maria Simpson, Bard College Dance Program Director states, "The Program was keen to pursue the next professional partnership with an entity that not only cultivates multiple artistic voices but also prioritizes the contemporary education of the dancer—an education that cannot lean exclusively in a Eurocentric direction."

In the last five years, Bard's Dance Program has expanded its curriculum to offer dance forms such as Palestinian Dabkeh and Contemporary West African Dance. The ADF partnership continues to build on Bard's efforts to diversify the curriculum by creating courses that put different dance forms in conversation with one another. Working together, Cox and ADF faculty members designed partnership courses to provoke critical reflection among students through innovative pedagogy and collaborative teaching. Partnership activities in 2018-19 include:

- In the fall, choreographer and performer Nia Love co-taught two levels of contemporary movement practice with Cox exploring alignments with African diasporic and Western European dance forms.
- This spring hip hop artist Quilan "Cue" Arnold teaches a movement course investigating the practical and pedagogical through-lines and differences between hip hop and postmodern dance forms. Arnold also teaches a seminar in American popular dance and culture studies.
- "Bessie" Award-winning choreographer Beth Gill will engage students in physical research toward the development of her next creative project. Gill's repertory class will ask students to examine how they currently locate an idea of themselves within various frameworks of politics, culture, psychology, family, race, gender, and sexuality. The class will culminate in an informal performance on May 15.
- B-girl, choreographer, and performer Ephrat "Bounce" Asherie will be the partnership artist-in-residence. Asherie will develop a new solo, work with students, and present her latest work, *Odeon*, at Bard's Fisher Center on April 13 and 14, 2019.

"I'm thrilled to be working at Bard again," stated Beth Gill, an ADF faculty member. "My past experience with Bard students was rich and inspiring and led to a whole new phase of working inside of my creative process."

The partnership reflects the vision of the ADF School, which is known for its Summer Dance Intensive, Pre-Professional Dance Intensive, and Dance Professionals Workshop. "The School must be responsive and adaptable," Cox said. "Today's dance artists want their dance practice to

reflect their identities and causes, and they want to challenge binaries that isolate us from each other.”

The ADF family of artists and faculty has grown to include newer members who engage these contemporary concerns, such as E. Moncell Durden, Gesel Mason, Michelle Gibson, and Abby Zbikowski, in addition to legends in the field like “Baba Chuck” Davis, Gerri Houlihan, Dianne MacIntyre, and Donald McKayle. The School has extended its curriculum to offer a weekly meeting group to discuss race, as well as regular discussions and reading groups on gender, sexuality, and social justice in the arts. In conjunction with its unwavering emphasis on professional training and contact with an international roster of companies and choreographers, these new offerings continue to make ADF an essential destination for dance artists worldwide.

#### **ABOUT ADF ([americandancefestival.org](http://americandancefestival.org))**

ADF's sustained record of creative achievement is indivisible from the history of modern dance. Since 1934, ADF has served the needs of dance, dancers, choreographers, and performance artists through its performance season and summer school. Named “One of the nation’s most important institutions” by the New York Times and “The world’s greatest dance festival” by the New York Post, ADF’s reputation is global. It is rare to find a professional dance artist working today who has not attended ADF.

#### **ABOUT THE BARD COLLEGE DANCE PROGRAM ([dance.bard.edu](http://dance.bard.edu))**

The Bard College Dance Program sees the pursuit of artistry and intellect as a single endeavor. We believe that the study of dance is a cognitive act demanding both physical practice and academic exploration. The Program prepares students to be versatile leaders in the field through the study of dance from a range of traditions and perspectives, an emphasis on student-driven creative projects, and access to a wide range of contemporary artists through its Professional Partnership Program. We expect students to take risks—risks that call on their participation as citizens of the world and cultivate their perceptive sensibilities. We believe that serious inquiry in all areas of the liberal arts is critical to the development of the whole person and to the success of our future artists.

#### **ABOUT THE ARTISTS**

**Quilan “Cue” Arnold** (MFA) is a dance professional based out of Brooklyn, New York. Quilan received a MFA in Dance at The Ohio State University and a BA from Penn State University. He has danced for the New York Philharmonic (NY), Little Theatre at Dixon Place (NY), and Rennie Harris’s Puremovement (PA) and Grassroots (CO) dance companies. Quilan’s choreographic work has been presented in a domestic and international milieu including Memphis, TN; New York City, NY; Towson, MD; and Salvador, Brazil. He is a 2017 Artist in

Residence at the University of Memphis (TN) and a 2017 Guest Lecturer at New York University (NY). Quilan serves as a faculty member at Mark Morris Dance Center (NY), and Gibney Dance Center (NY). Quilan's research considers the representation of hip-hop dance as it shifts from a vernacular context to the studio, internet, and stage. His journey has inspired the creation of the hip-hop organization, onC.U.E (Create, Unite, Empower), and the online course, Get Groovy. onC.U.E and Get Groovy classes have influenced students in Columbus, OH; New York City, NY; Memphis, TN; Baltimore, MD; and worldwide through online courses.

**Ephrat "Bounce" Asherie**, a 2016 Bessie Award Winner for Innovative Achievement in Dance, is a New York City-based B-girl, dancer and choreographer. As Artistic Director of Ephrat Asherie Dance (EAD) she has presented work at the Apollo Theater, FiraTarrega, Jacob's Pillow, New York Live Arts, Summerstage, and the Yard, among others. Ephrat has received numerous awards to support her work including a Kevin Spacey Artist of Choice Award, a Mondo Cane! commission from Dixon Place, a Creative Development Residency from Jacob's Pillow, Workspace and Extended Life Residencies from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, a Travel and Study Grant from the Jerome Foundation and two residencies through the CUNY Dance Initiative. Her first evening length work, *A Single Ride*, received two Bessie nominations in 2012 for Outstanding Emerging Choreographer and Outstanding Sound Design by Marty Beller. Most recently Ephrat received a National Dance Project award to support the development and touring of her newest work, *Odeon*. Set to premiere in the summer of 2018, the creation of *Odeon* was also made possible by Jacob's Pillow Dance, Mass MoCA, Works & Process at the Guggenheim, and the Jacob's Pillow Fellowship at the Tilles Center for the Performing Arts at LIU Post. Ephrat is a regular guest artist with Dorrance Dance and has worked and collaborated with Doug Elkins, Rennie Harris, Bill Irwin, David Parsons, Gus Solomons Jr and Buddha Stretch, among others.

**Leah Cox** is a Term Associate Professor at Bard College and Dean of the American Dance Festival. She serves on the New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award Committee and has been an adjudicator for the American College Dance Association and YoungArts. She worked with the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Company from 2001 to 2015. She began as a Company dancer and transitioned to become rehearsal assistant and, subsequently, the Company's first Education Director, developing its educational programs and overseeing its educational partnerships. Cox reconstructed the Company's works on university dance programs and professional companies nationwide. In New York City, her choreography has been presented at the Museum of Art and Design, the 92nd Street Y, Dixon Place, the DUMBO Dance Festival, and the CoolNY Festival. She is currently working on a new project with Liz Lerman.

**Beth Gill** is a choreographer who has been making contemporary dance and performance in New York City since 2005. Gill has been commissioned by New York Live Arts, The Chocolate Factory Theater, The Kitchen and Dance Theater Workshop. Her performances have toured nationally and internationally including: Fusebox (TX), The Nazareth College Dance Festival (NY) and Dance Umbrella (UK). Gill is the recipient of a 2015 Doris Duke Impact Award, a 2015 Guggenheim Fellowship, a 2015-2016 Hodder Fellowship at Princeton University, and a 2012 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists Award. She is an inaugural member of The Hatchery Project, a 2015-2016 Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Extended Life Artist in Residence and a 2013-2015 New York City Center Choreography Fellow. In 2011 Gill was awarded two New York State Dance and Performance “Bessie” Awards for Outstanding Emerging Choreographer and the Juried Award “for the choreographer exhibiting some of the most interesting and exciting ideas happening in dance in New York City today.” In 2012 Dance Magazine named her one of the top 25 artists to watch. Gill is a graduate of New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts and has been a guest artist and teacher at Bard College, Barnard College, Eugene Lang College the New School for Liberal Arts, Arizona State University, NYU’s Experimental Theater Wing, the New York State Summer School of the Arts, and the American Dance Festival.

**Nia Love**’s career spans forty years, beginning in 1978 when she became one of the youngest international apprentices with Havana’s world renowned Ballet Nacional de Cuba. In 1986, Love studied Butoh and toured with celebrated Japanese Butoh master Min Tanaka. Love received her B.F.A. in Theater from Howard University (1987), M.F.A. in Choreography from Florida State University (1992). She was a Fulbright Fellow (2002-03), a Brooklyn Arts Exchange/BAX Artist-In-Residence (2011-12, 2013-14), and a Movement Research Artist-in-Residence (2016-17). Love received the New York Live Arts Suitcase Fund (2013-14), the Alvin Ailey New Directions Lab Choreographer Award (2013-14), the CUNY Dance Initiative (2014-15), a Bessie award for Outstanding Performer (2017) as part of the ensemble of Skeleton Architecture, and the CUNY Incubator Grant (2018-19). She is currently the BAX Racial Equity Advisor, and Adjunct Professor at Queens College, Hunter College and The New School. In Spring 2018, she was the Movement Research Exchange Guest Artist/Lecturer at UCLA’s Department of World Arts and Culture/Dance. In addition to her own work, she is the co-founder of LOVE|FORTÉ the collective.

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