

NEWS

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WALKER ART CENTER PRESENTS CHOREOGRAPHERS' EVENING 2021

Announcing Eleven Selected Participating Choreographers



Photos by Awa Mally.

“As a snapshot of a community, Choreographers’ Evening might be the best annual curated event in Minnesota.”
 —*Vita.mn*

MINNEAPOLIS, OCTOBER 29, 2021 —Since 1972 this post-Thanksgiving tradition has celebrated an array of up-and-coming and established contemporary and experimental movement makers in Minnesota. This year’s program—curated by queer, performance-based artist Valerie Oliveira—showcases a fresh lineup of provocative, compelling, and diverse works that speaks to the past year in our communities.

Choreographers’ Evening 2021 features Jessika Akpaka, Kealoha Ferreira, Judith Holo Shuǐ Xiān, Khary Jackson, Sachiko “La Chayí,” José A. Luis, Marcela Michelle, Pedro Pablo, Kayla Schiltgen, Yuki Tokuda, and Wattanak Dance Troupe.

Choreographers’ Evening 2021: Curated by Valerie Oliveira
Saturday, November 27, 2021, 4pm and 7pm
\$28.50 (\$22.50 Walker members)

This event is held in the McGuire Theater; the 7 pm performance will also be live streamed and the link will be posted [here](#) on the night of the show.

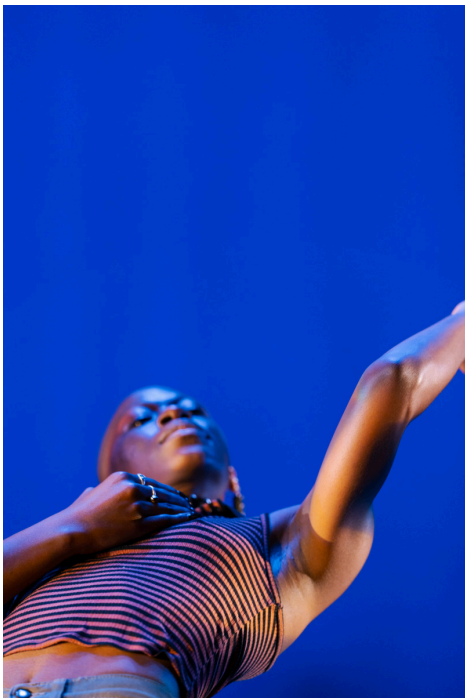
Some performances contain mature content and nudity.

NOTE FROM THE CURATOR, VALERIE OLIVEIRO

This entire process has been a loving salve - especially the honor of being with so many gorgeous makers and the deeper exchanges that have already surfaced through the process. For the majority, it was the first time they were in the theater since March 2020. A few took the time to walk around on stage, or lay on the floor, or marked the moment in some other way. We gave in to those moments, together. It was a unique, shared feeling, a special joy.

I have such deep gratitude to our community for showing up in such a passionate, sensitive and thoughtful way. It was as if these choreographies were bursting forth - there was so much to say, and everyone had something beautiful to offer.

There are so many to lift up, and the alchemy of these 11 stunning choreographers nourished me for the ways they have shifted, reached into, even opened toward the complexities of their own practices, perspectives, research, location and making - moving through the last 20 months. They have shown me that the way is to move *through* - to ground, to hold, to grieve, to shine, to share, to step, to love, to change, to learn, to skin, to bone, to reach, to be, to dance, to dance, to dance...



Jessika Akpaka. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Jessika Akpaka is a freelance interdisciplinary artist and entrepreneur born in Memphis, Tennessee, and based in Minneapolis/St. Paul. At age six, while living in Memphis, she would often choreograph and perform for her mom. She, her sisters, and cousin, would also choreograph and perform for themselves and for their family while growing up. Jessika participated in cheer and was her elementary school's mascot while living in Memphis. The first place she formally trained was North Minneapolis' Lundstrum Performing Arts in 2012. Jessika attended Perpich Center for Arts Education and trained at TU Dance while attending Perpich. After graduating from Perpich in 2015, she studied dance at the University of Minnesota for three years. Jessika has received scholarships to study at ARENA DANCES and Garth Fagan's Summer Intensives. She has trained in Krump with Ololade Gbadamosi-Alashe and Popping with Nebiy Esayas Tesfaldet. Jessika has performed at The Kennedy Center, The Lincoln Center, The Minnesota Science Museum, The Cowles Center, The Ordway, The O'Shaughnessy, XCel Energy Center, The Frey Theatre, All My Relations Gallery, Intermedia Arts, The Lab Theatre, The Wellstone Center, and Orchestra Hall. She has performed with and in Rosy Simas Danse, ROOTED: Hip Hop Choreographer's Evening produced by Maia Maiden, Atlantis13, MIXTAPE 3 and 4, SHAPESHIFT, Drop The Mic with Curio Dance, and STRONGmovement.



Kealoha Ferreira is a Native Hawaiian, Filipino, and Chinese dance artist from Nu‘uanu, O‘ahu, now residing in Mni Sota Makoce, land of the Dakota Oyate. She is a performing and teaching artist of Ananya Dance Theatre, the company’s Artistic Associate and a Co-Leader of its St Paul space, the Shawngnam Institute for Performance & Social Justice. As a practitioner of Yorchhā, ADT’s contemporary technique, and an emerging student of Oli and Hula, Kealoha interweaves these transnational feminist and Aloha ‘Āina embodied practices to create work that explores reclamation, ritual, relationality, and continuum while remaining rooted in cultural and kinesthetic specificity. Kealoha is part of the first online cohort of Hālau ‘Ōhi‘a, a land and water stewardship training program and is in her third term with the lākea cohort. In 2020, she created two dance films at the Mississippi which premiered in festivals by Red Eye Theater and Theater Mu.

Kealoha Ferreira. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.



Judith Holo Shuǐ Xiān is an interdisciplinary choreographer, improviser and sound artist. Her work prioritizes and centers the experiences of QTPOC, and stands an allyship to those of other marginalized identities. She has presented works at venues including Fresh Oysters Performance Research, Walker Art Center, Bryant Lake Bowl, Tek Box, The Southern Theater, Intermedia Arts (Minneapolis, MN), Rochester Art Center, and 9 Herkimer Place (Brooklyn, NY) and has recently enjoyed collaborating with others including Dua Saleh, Emily Gastineau, Rosy Simas, HIJACK/Galia Eibenschutz, Valerie Oliveiro, Leila Awadallah, Judith Howard, Pramila Vasudevan, Megan Meyer, and Erin Drummond. She is a 2017 Q-Stage: New Works and 2019 Momentum: New Dance Works recipient.

Judith Holo Shuǐ Xiān. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.



Khary Jackson. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Khary Jackson is a writer, dancer and musician. Khary has written several plays, one of which (*Water*) was produced in 2009 at Ink and Pulp Theatre in Chicago. In 2020/21 Khary co-composed a MNiatures commission with MN Opera. As a previous artist in the 2018 Choreographers' Evening, Khary is excited to be back. Khary has been a recipient of several generous grants including the 2019 Jerome Artist Fellowship, the 2016 McKnight Artist Fellowship in Writing, the Minnesota State Arts Board's 2012 Cultural Community Partnership Grant and 2010 Artist Initiative Grant for Poetry, the Many Voices Fellowship from The Playwrights' Center in 2005 and 2007, as well as the 2009 VERVE Spoken Word Grant from Intermedia Arts. Khary is an alumnus of Cave Canem, the esteemed writing fellowship for Black writers. Khary's poetry book, *Any Psalm You Want*, was published with Write Bloody Publishing in the spring of 2013.



Sachiko "La Chayi" Nishiuchi. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

A native of Osaka, Japan, **Sachiko "La Chayi" Nishiuchi** is a Twin Cities-based Flamenco dancer, teacher, choreographer and organizer. Her artistic focus is to express the human power and beauty sharing the raw and authentic emotions through Flamenco dance embedded in its music and singing and to communicate with the audience beyond cultural barriers. She also identifies herself as an immigrant woman of color in the U.S. context. Sachiko is the recipient of a 2017 McKnight Dancer Fellowship, administered by the Cowles Center and funded by the McKnight Foundation. www.sachikolachayi.com



José A. Luis. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

José A. Luis was born in Veracruz, Mexico, and raised in Racine, Wisconsin. Having lived in Milwaukee, Chicago, and now Minneapolis, moving has been part of José's identity. Considered a "late-dancer," he began his formal training at UW-Milwaukee where he graduated with a BFA in dance. He performed and created works locally before moving to dance professionally in Chicago. Collaborative pieces as an undergraduate and post-undergraduate saw their way into festivals, residencies, and progress showings during this time. Minneapolis now presents him as an empowered independent solo choreographer - often performing in his own pieces. Merging art and life informs his introspective works, allowing deeper connections with his audiences. New ventures in teaching and dancing for companies again (after a six-year hiatus) renews his energy and commitment to community. His nine-year dream in self-producing an evening length show became reality on September 17th and 18th, 2021. Further details available at www.jose.dance.



Marcela Michelle. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Marcela Michelle is the Artistic Director of 20% Theatre Company and the Artistic Co-Director of Lightning Rod - a Trans-led arts organism focused on legacy, development, and opportunity for QTGNC Artists and Activists. As an educator/facilitator, Marcela has worked with Walker Art Center, Uprising Theatre, U of MN Twin Cities, Macalester College, Augsburg University, Hamline University, and the University of Houston. As an artist, she has worked with Red Eye Theatre, Pangea World Theater, Guthrie Theater's Dowling Studio, History Theatre, Mixed Blood Theater, Pillsbury House + Theatre, Rough Magic Performance Company, Mission Theatre Company, Pioneer Place Theater Company, Patrick's Cabaret, Umbrella Collective, Queertopia, and more. Her performance work focuses primarily on simultaneity, im/mutability, and the platonic ideal host. She is a mentee of Pangea World Theater and Art2Action's National Institute for Directing and Ensemble Creation. For more info about past/present/future works visit www.tctwentypercent.org and follow @lightningrodrepresents on instagram.



Pedro Pablo. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Pedro Pablo (they/them) is a Venezuelan-raised, Minneapolis-based queer dancer / performance maker. Founder/director of Viva la Pepa (www.vivalapepa.org). VLP's works are fueled by the overlapping values of Latinx and Queer cultures: melodrama, passion, decadence, and sensuality. An inaugural Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, Pedro continues a transnational collaboration with Argentinian choreographer Celia Argüello, spending time in natural landscapes researching the nature of the encounter. Pedro developed their recent work *Contained, Alive* as a U of MN Cowles visiting artist, in the Berkshires (MA), with Red Eye Theater, and through Candybox festival. Their previous work, *Holy Doña*, re-imagines the crucifixion as a queer performance ritual; they performed a preliminary iteration of this work in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Pedro co-directs a children and family theater program *Drag Story Hour*, and entertains the adults at night as their draglesque persona *Doña Pepa*. Pedro is currently a teaching artist with Upstream Arts and with the Pillsbury House Theater.



Kayla Schiltgen. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Kayla Schiltgen, a multidisciplinary artist based in Two Harbors, Minnesota, creates emotive experiences through the use of dance, film, visual art, design, and construction. Her live performance work has been presented at the Walker Art Center, the Southern Theater, and the Tek Box, among others, and her screendance films have been shown at festivals both locally and internationally. She also owns a sustainable farm and lodging retreat on Minnesota's North Shore, where much of her design and construction work can be seen. Recently, Kayla has turned her attention to practicing her craft in the outdoors looking to the natural world as teacher, healer, and collaborator. Playing with improvisation, pace, subtlety, and simplicity, Kayla's work employs the visceral attunement she experiences as a Highly Sensitive Person and the fervor of compassionate embodiment. Feeling and sensing are the uniting forces for Kayla's work becoming tools to explore imagination and intuition. Follow her work @kaylaschiltgen.



Yuki Tokuda. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Yuki Tokuda, originally from Japan, moved to the United States in 2000. Ms. Tokuda has danced professionally with USA Ballet, Peoria Ballet, and the Metropolitan Ballet, and was the principal dancer at Continental Ballet for seven years. She is an international guest dancer and choreographer. She trained at the Joffrey Ballet School in New York, the Boston Ballet, Connecticut Ballet, and at Steps on Broadway as one of the first International Visa Program students. She is on faculty at Minnesota Dance Theatre, Interlochen Center for the Arts, and a certified STOTT Pilates teacher. She is recipient of Minnesota State Arts Board and St. Louis Park Arts & Culture Grant. Her choreography was chosen for Choreographer's Evening at The Walker Art Center, Wayzata Symphony Orchestra, Wooddale Church, Japan America Society of Minnesota and Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists. She is the designer and owner of *Yukitard*, a custom leotard company.



Wattanak Dance Troupe. Photo: Awa Mally, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Wattanak Dance Troupe was founded and established in 2000 by Sodanny Eir and Yousedy Peov who both studied at the Royal University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Wattanak Dance Troupe is a non-profit organization who strive to preserve and cultivate the Cambodian culture through the art of dance. Through the arts, Wattanak Dance Troupe hopes to advance and propel the Cambodian culture for generations to come throughout the state of Minnesota. Wattanak Dance Troupe performs at a number of annual cultural festivals such as The Festival of Nations in Saint Paul, Minnesota, The Khmer New Year celebration at Watt Munisotaram, the International Festival of Burnsville, Minnesota, the Pan Asian Arts Festival and much more.



Valerie Oliveira. Photo courtesy the artist.

ABOUT THE CURATOR

Valerie Oliveira is a queer artist in the performance field, based in the Twin Cities and born in Singapore. She embraces complexity and transdisciplinarity in her practice and creates work using dance and movement as the primary motor for expression. Her current research excavates notions, realities, and imaginations of vastness. Oliveira has performed for Jennifer Monson, Morgan Thorson, Rosy Simas, Pramila Vasudevan, and Emily Gastineau at venues across the Twin Cities, including Fresh Oysters, Red Eye Theater, Walker Art Center, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts, MOVO, and Cowles Center for Dance. She has also performed at national venues such as Danspace, New York Live Arts, MANCC, Portland Art Museum, BASE Seattle, ADI, Fischer Center for Performing Arts, Vermont Performance Labs, and Maui Arts and Cultural Center. She maintains a long-term creative practice with Jennifer Monson. Oliveira is one of seven artistic directors of Red Eye Theater, an ensemble member of Lighting Rod, and co-runs MOVO SPACE, an incubator for dance and performance.

Mn Artists

Valerie Oliveira designed a series of articles in conjunction with Choreographers' Evening, which will be published the week of the performances on the Walker's locally-focused arts writing platform, Mn Artists. Local and national choreographers will contribute essays, conversations, and experimental text pieces in conversation with the live performances.

Attendance Requirements

Mask-wearing is required for this event.

For this event, the Walker will require either proof of a completed COVID-19 vaccination regimen or proof of a negative COVID-19 test (taken within 72 hours).

The COVID-19 vaccination card must show a completed regimen that concluded at least 14 days before the date of the event.

Proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test must be shown at time of entry and must match the ticket holder's ID.

Attendees may present a physical vaccination record card, a physical negative test result, or a digital document on a mobile device (such as a photo image of a vaccination record card).

Refunds: Any ticket holder not meeting the above requirement(s) is eligible for a refund.

To find out more about the Walker's response to COVID-19, visit our [COVID-19 guidelines page](#).

We will continue to share updates to the Walker's response to COVID-19 as health guidelines evolve. If you have questions or require additional assistance, please email info@walkerart.org or call 612-375-7600.

Accessibility

The 4pm performance on Saturday, November 27th, will have ASL interpretation.

The 7pm live-streamed version on Saturday, November 27th, will have automated closed captioning.

Assistive-listening devices are available at the Main Lobby desk. Please contact us at least two weeks in advance for ASL interpretation, audio description, and CART captioning to allow time to schedule these services.

For more information about accessibility or to request additional accommodations, call 612-375-7564 or email access@walkerart.org.

For more information about accessibility at the Walker, visit our [Access page](#).

Ways to Save

Members Save 20%

Become a Walker member and enjoy a 20% discount on performance tickets, unlimited free gallery admission, special events, and more. Join at walkerart.org/membership or call 612-375-7655.

Students Come Early!

Arrive an hour before showtime for \$10 in-person rush tickets. One ticket per person with valid student ID.

Buy More and Save

Groups of 10 or more save 15% on tickets. Purchase group tickets online, over the phone, or in person. Discount automatically applied at checkout on orders of 10 or more tickets to the same performance.

Prices include all applicable fees.

Drinks and Dining

Enjoy dinner at [Cardamom](#) before the show or grab a drink at the Cityview Room Bar an hour before or after the performance.

Walker Performing Arts

For more on Performing Arts, visit

<https://walkerart.org/visit/stage/>.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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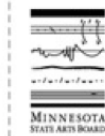
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Thank you, Walker members, for your generous support.