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Look Who's Coming to Dinner

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Alexander Kasser Theater | Montclair State University

THE 2021/2022 SEASON

COMPANY SBB // STEFANIE BATTEN BLAND

LOOK WHO'S COMING TO DINNER



Photo by Carlos Cardona

November 4 | 5 | 6 | 7, 2021

Alexander Kasser Theater

**Large
Print**

**Arts + Cultural Programming
Montclair State University**

Daniel Gurskis, Dean, College of the Arts
Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director, Arts + Cultural Programming

PEAK Performances presents

COMPANY SBB // STEFANIE BATTEN BLAND

LOOK WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

Choreography, Installation, and Direction by **Stefanie Batten Bland**

Music by **Paul Damian Hogan**

Costumes by **Shane Ballard**

Lighting Design by **Yuki Nakase Link**, adapted from **Clifton Taylor**

Dramaturge **Guillaume Segouin**

Technical Director **Emma Rivera**

Collaborating Dance Artists

**Claire Gieringer, Mio Ishikawa, Nando Morland, David Lee Parker,
Ryan Rouland Smith, Rachel Watson-Jih, Latra A. Wilson**

Duration: 55 minutes, no intermission.

In consideration of both audiences and performers, please turn off all electronic devices. The taking of photographs or videos and the use of recording equipment are not permitted. No food or drink is permitted in the theater.

Look Who's Coming to Dinner was originally created for the 2019 Crossing the Line Festival. Coproducers La MaMa Experimental Theatre and Alliance Française FIAF. Additional funding from Jerome Robbins Foundation, Crojiks Croft, The Juilliard School, and University Settlement.

This season is made possible, in part, with funds from:

The Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund

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The New Jersey State Council on the Arts,
a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts



From the Artist

Inspired by the 1967 Stanley Kramer film *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* starring Sydney Poitier, Katherine Hepburn, and Spencer Tracy, *Look Who's Coming to Dinner* pays tribute to those who paved the way toward acceptance in love and life. Set around a transformative dinner setting, seven dance-theater artists excavate interlaced universal traumas through imagery and ritual as they seek a seat at the table.

Land Acknowledgement: In the spirit of this work, which invites us to a literal and metaphorical table, I would like to take this moment to recognize that Montclair State University sits upon ancestral Lenape homelands, and recognize the longstanding significance of these lands for Lenape nations past and present. I am also conscious that Montclair State University is developing its land language. I believe that historical awareness of Indigenous exclusion, amongst others, and erasure is critically important and I am committed to working to overcome their effects in our own educational institution.

—Stephanie Batten Bland

Artists' Biographies

COMPANY SBB // STEFANIE BATTEN BLAND

Jerome Robbins awardee Stefanie Batten Bland (she/her) is an interdisciplinary global artist who interrogates contemporary and historical culture, and situates her work at the intersections of dance-theater, film, and installation. A 2021 commissioned artist by Baryshnikov Arts Center and 2021 Toulmin Creator for

New York University's Center for the Ballet Arts, Batten Bland is a choreographer for American Ballet Theatre's inaugural Women's Movement Initiative. Her 2021 Baryshnikov Arts Center dance-cinema production *Kolonial* was nominated for two Bessie Awards, including outstanding production and visual design.

Based in New York since 2011, Company SBB was founded in France in 2008, where it quickly caught the attention of presenters, fellow artists, and audiences with its award-winning choreographic installations, riveting performers, and intellectually ambitious creations. The company creates work that aims to impact local and global communities. Company SBB's social and philosophical messages are visceral and accessible to a diverse public, enabling people to embrace emotional content from a place of kinetic empathy. The company is in permanent residence at University Settlement in the Lower East Side of Manhattan, is regularly produced by La MaMa Experimental Theatre of New York City, and is supported by the Jerome Robbins Foundation.

Performance highlights include the 2021 American Ballet Theatre world premiere of *monuMEnts* at the 5 Moons Festival invited by the Osage Nation; Bessie-nominated dance cinema piece *Kolonial*, commissioned by Baryshnikov Arts Center; 2020 Duke Performances digital commission *Current*; 2019 Crossing the Line Festival commission of *Look Who's Coming to Dinner* in partnership with La MaMa Experimental Theatre; and 2018 and 2019 tour to France and the Spoleto and Lecce Festivals of Italy of *Bienvenue* 欢迎 Welcome Bienvenido أهلاً بك, an interdisciplinary performance that examines the various definitions of walls and our willingness to share space with others.

The company has been seen throughout the United States at such festivals as the Lincoln Center Restart Stages, Ringling International Arts Festival, Jacob's Pillow, and Kinderhook, Saratoga, etc., and throughout Europe in internationally renowned theaters and festivals such as Spoleto Italy, Lecce Italy, Prague, Brussels, Montpellier, the Paris Opéra, Festival Avignon Off, and Festival Onze Bouge. The company is artist in residence at the Center of American Art and Culture in Paris, France.

Company SBB has well established humanities and educational programming presented in association with touring works as well as within residency workshops. Physical Perspectives allows participants of any discipline, spanning a broad age

demographic, to discover their physicality in space and in relationship to Company SBB installation and dance-theater approaches. Residencies and workshops have included Montclair State University, NYU Tisch, The Yard on Martha's Vineyard, Alliance Française FIAF, Ithaca College, Cornell University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Jacksonville University, Santa Fe College, Richmond University, Rutgers University, Skidmore College, and Ohio University.

In addition to live performance creations, SBB has also created 15 dance-cinema films and has been commissioned by several lifestyle brands including Louis Vuitton, Guerlain, and Hermes.

Featured in the *New York Times*, *New York Times Style Magazine*, *Dance Magazine*, *Dance Europe*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Marie Claire*, Dance Data Project, TV 5 Monde, and *Dance Teacher Magazine*, among others, SBB is assistant professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance at Montclair State University. She received her MFA in interdisciplinary arts from Goddard College and lives in NYC SoHo with her family, where she grew up the daughter of artists.

Shane Ballard, Costumes, (he/him) is a costume designer and illustrator for stage and screen. His costume design credits include *Kolonial*, a 2021 Bessie Award–nominated film commissioned by Baryshnikov Arts Center for Company SBB. Recent collaborations with Company SBB this year also include *Look Who's Coming to Dinner* for Lincoln Center's Restart Stages performance series and *Embarqued* for The Yard performance space on Martha's Vineyard. Other costume design credits include *Cardboard Piano*—The Juilliard School, *Innovative Works; Beyond the Mint*—Charlotte Ballet; *Both/And*—Gibney Dance Company; *Hair*—Berkshire Theatre Group; *An Octoroon*—Rutgers Theater Company; *Madame Infamy*—NY Musical Theatre Festival; and *One Day*—3LD Art Technology Center.

Ballard has worked as a costume concept illustrator on the design teams for the forthcoming Whitney Houston biopic *I Wanna Dance with Somebody*, Steven Spielberg's remake of *West Side Story*, Aretha Franklin biopic *Respect*, Oscar-nominated film *Harriet*, Emmy Award winner *The Wiz Live!*, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, HBO's prequel to *Downton Abbey*, *The Gilded Age*, and the Broadway musical *Ain't Too Proud*. Ballard currently teaches costume design and illustration at Rutgers University, Mason Gross School of the Arts.

Paul Damian Hogan, Music, (he/him) writes and records music for film, dance, installations, and albums. He earned his doctorate in music composition from Columbia University with a focus on chamber and electronic music. He has collaborated with choreographer Stefanie Batten Bland on works premiered at La MaMa Moves Dance Festival, Lincoln Center's New Dances, and Crossing the Line Festival, as well as multiple dance videos. He scores narrative and documentary films, earning an Emmy nomination for his soundtrack for *Birders: The Central Park Effect*. His music is featured in artworks in the permanent collections of the Whitney Museum and MOMA. In his spare time, he also makes albums about dreams, traveling, and dreaming about traveling.

Yuki Nakase Link, Lighting Designer, (she/her) is a lighting designer for theater, dance, opera, performing arts, television, and fashion productions. Previously designed with Company SBB // Stefanie Batten Bland: *Embarqued: Stories of Soil Performance* (Martha's Vineyard Museum), *Look Who's Coming to Dinner* (La MaMa). Recent design credits include *Stick Fly* (The Juilliard School), *Seven Deadly Sins* (Meatpacking District, NYC, and Lincoln Road, Miami Beach), *The Cubans*, *Queen of Basel* (Colony Theatre), *Blood Moon* at Prototype 2020 (Baruch Performing Arts Center), *Triptych* (Eyes of One on Another) (Disney Hall, Power Center, Kennedy Center, and BAM), *Rakugo* (New World Stages), *Sell/Buy/Date* (New York Live Arts), *Resonance III* (LaGuardia Performing Arts Center), *Theo*, *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, *The Women of Padilla* (Two River Theater), and *Tiny Beautiful Things* (Long Wharf Theatre). She was born in Tokyo, grew up in Kyoto, Japan, and currently lives north of NYC in the woods of Hudson Valley. Link holds an MFA from NYU. <https://yukinlink.com/>

Jennifer Payán, Associate Artistic Director, (she/her) is a Dominican-American New York-based movement artist, Pilates practitioner, and Yoga instructor. She currently takes the role of an artistic associate for UNA Productions and associate artistic director for Company SBB. Payán has helped set company repertoire for students, in person and virtually, at the Juilliard School, New York University Tisch School of the Arts, Lines Ballet Dance Program, the Ailey/Fordham Dance Program, and Salt PRO Contemporary Dance Company. In 2021, she joined Montclair State University as an adjunct professor for their spring semester and is setting work with Company SBB this fall semester. She is also currently setting work with UNA Productions at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University. Before the

2020 shutdown, Payán performed for Punch Drunk's *Sleep No More* but has since returned to freelancing in both live performance and film productions. Recent affiliations include Trisha Brown Dance Company, LeeSaar the Company, Netta Yerushalmy, Bobbi Jene Smith, Pam Tanowitz Dance, Yara Travieso, Jasmine Hearn, Maleek Washington, Kelly Ashton Todd, Amy Gardner, Loni Landon, Troy Ogilvie, and Marla Phelan.

Emma Rivera, Technical Director, (she/her) is the space and production manager at The Performance Project @ University Settlement (NYC). Select freelance work includes Company SBB // Stefanie Batten Bland (*Look Who's Coming to Dinner*, La MaMa, NYC; *Bienvenue* 欢迎 *Welcome Bienvenido* أكب الءاء, Spoleto Festival dei Due Mondi 2018, Spoleto, Italy; *The Winter Yard*, Martha's Vineyard, MA, Karen Bernard (*Showgirls*, NYC; *Poolside*, NYC; *Lakeside*, NYC); and André Zachery/Renegade Performance Group (*Dapline!* NYC; August Wilson Cultural Center, Pittsburgh, PA; *Untamed Space*, Wexner Center for the Arts, OH).

Claire Gieringer, Collaborating Dance Artist, (they/them) is a dance/performance artist, writer, tarot reader, ritual facilitator, and witch living and working on occupied Lenape land (Brooklyn). Upon graduating with their BFA in Dance from New York University, Gieringer was one of 15 international dancers selected by Marie Chouinard to perform work by William Forsythe and Benoit Lachambre at the 2017 Venice Dance Biennale. Since then, they had the pleasure of working with Stefanie Batten Bland, Raja Feather Kelly, Alexis Zaccarello, and Bill T. Jones (apprentice). As a psychic channel, Gieringer experiences art making as a natural extension of their spiritual practice, utilizing dance/movement, song, poetry, meditation, energy work, and tarot reading as avenues for personal and collective reflection, storytelling, and healing. Their work explores ownership/agency of the gender nonconforming body, shapeshifting, boundaries, goddexe mythology, pleasure, spiritual channeling, dissolution of karmic contracts, lunar-, solar-, and earth-based rituals, and the healing of generational wounds, abuse, and trauma. In their spare time, you can find Gieringer making semi-holy pilgrimages up mountains, saying thank you to mirrors, and sending prayers to the moon.

Mio Ishikawa, Collaborating Dance Artist, (she/her) is a dancer and a collaborator based in New York City. She is a native of Tokyo, Japan, where she began dancing at the age of six. Her training in both classical and contemporary dance forged her

strong interest in the performing arts and led her to study at the Juilliard School in New York City, where she received BFA in 2019. Ishikawa has performed the repertoires by Iván Pérez, Alejandro Cerrudo, Roy Assaf, Twyla Tharp, and Mark Morris among many others. She currently works as a co-director for BODYSONNET, contemporary dance makers and performers committed to making work in nontraditional space. During the time of pause, she was based back in Tokyo, working as an assistant for Mariko Kakizaki (former dancer of L-E-V) and Ryu Suzuki (associate choreographer of Dance Base Yokohama). She has collaborated with visual artists Shana and Robert ParkeHarrison, cello player Ken Kubota, jazz pianist Isaiah Thompson, jazz bass player Felix Moseholm, and High Line Nine gallery in Chelsea, Manhattan, and continues to make her own multidisciplinary art and collaborate across mediums. Ishikawa is excited to be certified as Ilan Lev Practitioner in spring 2022, which allows her to explore movement language as a healing tool and to share with the community.

Nando Morland, Collaborating Dance Artist, (he/him) was born in Colombia and raised in Denver. Morland made his Broadway debut in the revival of *West Side Story*. He played the Fiddler in the 1st National Tour of *Fiddler on the Roof*. Morland has danced with Rashaun + Silas, Madboots Dance, Gallim, and Company SBB. Morland was featured in *Dance Magazine's* "25 to Watch" (2019). He is a graduate of NYU Tisch Dance.

David Lee Parker, Collaborating Dance Artist, (he/him) is a native of Long Island, NY. He started his dance training at Long Island High School for the Arts and continued his studies at Mason Gross School of the Arts, where he graduated with honors and received his BFA in Dance Performance. Parker has trained at the Alvin Ailey Summer Intensive, American Ballet Theatre Summer Collegiate Program, and Gibney Summer Contemporary Dance Program and has had the privilege to study abroad for a year in Israel at the Jerusalem Academy of Music and Dance. He has performed works by Antonio Brown, Camille A. Brown, Netta Yerushalmy, Ohad Naharin, Noa Zuk, Reggie Wilson, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Noa Wertheim, and Maxine Doyle. He has also had the special opportunity to perform at the Suzanne Dellal Theatre in Tel Aviv and the Joyce Theater in New York City. Parker was an apprentice for Ronald K. Brown and has danced for Brian Brooks Moving Company, QBC Company, and Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*.

Ryan Rouland Smith, Collaborating Dance Artist, (he/him) hails from Denver, CO, and graduated cum laude from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) with a BFA in Dance and Choreography. At VCU in 2010, Smith gained the opportunity of working with Stefanie Batten Bland when she was guest artist in residence. While a student at the American Dance Festival in 2012 and 2013, Smith had the pleasure of dancing in works by John Jasperse, Reggie Wilson, and Bill T. Jones's first re-staging of *Love Redefined*, with Leah Cox. In 2019 Smith was a part of Nicole Vaughan-Diaz's duet *A Portrait of Them*, which took first place in Dance Now at Joe's Pub. Smith has danced with Kate Weare Company from 2014 to present and has been a guest performer with ODC in San Francisco, recently filming *Up for Air/Decameron*. Smith joined the cast of *Look Who's Coming to Dinner* in 2019 and is overjoyed to be returning to work with Company SBB; he is thrilled to be a part of the magic.

Rachel Watson-Jih, Collaborating Dance Artist, (she/her) began her dance training at the age of four in Raleigh, NC. After attending the University of North Carolina School of the Arts summer dance program in 2008, she was recruited to attend school there, where she received her BFA in Contemporary Dance in May 2012. Since relocating to New York, she has performed at Lincoln Center Outdoors and Joe's Pub with Mark Dendy, Karen Harvey Dances, and Mari Meade Dance Collective and apprenticed with Camille A. Brown and Dancers. She made her Public Theater debut in *Eve's Song* in the fall of 2018. Her TV and commercial work include ABC's *Manhattan Love Story*, PC Richard and Sons commercial, SKYPE, Aetna, and Tic Tac, and she danced with Ryan Heffington in New York Fashion Week, Desigual Couture line. She has been a part of SheThinx and Coach campaigns and was featured in music videos for *Vanity Fair* and VICE/Black Coffee. Some of her commercial print work includes Lyft, Aetna, Target, and Knoll. Watson-Jih is currently a teaching artist with the Alvin Ailey Arts in Education and Community Programs, and she is the founder and artistic director of Blue Morph Collective. Watson-Jih joined Company SBB in 2019.

Latra A. Wilson, Collaborating Dance Artist, (she/her) is a Texas native and graduate from University of Missouri at Kansas City with a BFA. Wilson has since danced with artists and institutions across the creative spectrum, from Paul Taylor 2 (NY) and Opera Theatre of St. Louis (MO) to the Public Theater's annual Shakespeare in the Park (NY). Wilson also shares dance with the community at large as a teaching artist

with both the Kansas City friends of Alvin Ailey (MO) and Ailey Arts in Education (NY). Wilson, in addition to singing, dancing, and teaching, continues to hone her craft by assisting some brilliant artists such as Stefanie Batten Bland (*Eve's Song*), Josh Prince (Dance Lab New York), and Karen Sieber, to name a few. Currently Wilson is seeking her Level 1 Gyrotonic teacher certification and continues to co-artistic direct TheDynamitExperience, a dance project she co-founded with her husband in 2018. Wilson is presently being represented by LDCArtists.

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Arts + Cultural Programming (ACP) produces and presents dance, music, theater, opera, and circus performances in the Alexander Kasser Theater, on the campus of Montclair State University, for MSU students and the general public. Through its internationally acclaimed live performing arts series PEAK Performances, ACP defies convention by supporting new performance ideas without compromise. ACP believes that for the performing arts to be sustainable, audiences must evolve and that the way to achieve this goal is to empower the best artists of our time to achieve new heights of imagination. With its newly launched PEAK Plus video-capture program, ACP makes live performances accessible worldwide, drastically expanding audiences for new work. Through its Creative Thinking course, ACP engages artists to participate in a groundbreaking research laboratory, illustrating for students of all fields of study that art and science are symbiotic. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are core values manifested in ACP's long-standing embrace of work by artists not yet supported by other major institutions in the region. Because ACP provides the highest-quality production values, audiences have an opportunity to engage with creative viewpoints that are bold and insightful and fully realized. PEAK Performances is credited with 57 world premieres, 54 US premieres, and 66 commissions. ACP Executive Director Jedediah Wheeler has been awarded the William Dawson Award for Programmatic Excellence and sustained Achievement in Programming from the national organization Association of Performing Arts Professionals. For five successive years The New Jersey Council on the Arts awarded ACP a Citation of Excellence in performance programming.

ACP gratefully acknowledges our student staff and volunteers.

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