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Strange Fruit

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Spectrum Dance Theater

Strange Fruit

Artistic Director Donald Byrd
Executive Director Tera Beach

Choreography and Direction Donald Byrd
Facilitator/Speaker Thomas F. DeFrantz
Scenic Design Jack Mehler
Lighting Design Sara Torres, reconstructed by David Mackie
Video Design Travis Mouffe
Sound Design Robertson Witmer
Costume Design Doris Black

Music
“Dr. Watts Prayer”
“Low Down Death Right Easy”
“Gotta Find My Way Back Home”
“Ain’t No Grave Can Hold My Body Down”
“Soon I Will Be Done”
“My Soul Is a Witness”

Cast
She Who Sees ................................................................. Nia-Amina Minor
The Man ............................................................................ Davione Gordon
The Woman ........................................................................... Nile Alicia Ruff
The Singer ............................................................................. Josephine Howell
The Mob .............................................................................. Chloe Brown, marco farroni, Hutch Hagendorf, Justine Hannan, Marte Osiris Madera, Kaitlyn Nguyen, Lillie Pincus, Nathanaël Santiago, Mary Sigward (understudy), and Jaclyn Wheatley
Guest Artists marco farroni, Davione Gordon, Josephine Howell, Nia-Amina Minor, Mary Sigward

Spectrum Company Artists Chloe Brown (apprentice), Hutch Hagendorf, Justine Hannan, Marte Osiris Madera, Kaitlyn Nguyen, Lillie Pincus (apprentice), Nile Alicia Ruff, Nathanaël Santiago, Jaclyn Wheatley

World Premiere: April 25, 2019, at Washington Hall (Seattle, WA)

Duration: *Strange Fruit* is a total of 80-minutes, including a 40-minute performance, 10-minute break, and concluding with a 30-minute conversation led by Thomas F. DeFrantz, Professor, Northwestern University. “Rather than a typical ‘post-show’ experience, the talkback, in this case, is an integral part of *Strange Fruit.*”—Donald Byrd

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.


This season is made possible, in part, with funds from: The Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund, PEAK Performances Patrons, The New Jersey State Council on the Arts
The Music

African-American Spirituals
The African-American Spiritual, also called the Negro Spiritual, constitutes one of the largest and most significant forms of American folksong. A spiritual is a type of religious folksong that is most closely associated with the enslavement of African people in the American South, and the songs proliferated in the last few decades of the 18th century leading up to the abolishment of legalized slavery in the 1860s.

Spirituals are typically sung in a call-and-response form, with a leader improvising a line of text and a chorus of singers providing a solid refrain in unison. Many spirituals, known as “sorrow songs,” are intense, slow, and melancholic, describing the struggles of enslaved people and drawing parallels with the suffering of Jesus Christ. Other spirituals are fast, rhythmic, and often syncopated and are known as “jubilees,” or “camp meeting songs.”

Spirituals are also sometimes regarded as codified protest songs and incitements to escape enslavement. Because the Underground Railroad used terminology from railroads as a secret language for assisting enslaved people to reach freedom, it is often speculated that some songs may have been a code for escape. While hard evidence is difficult to identify, a spiritual that was certainly used as a code for escape to freedom was “Go Down, Moses,” used by Harriet Tubman to identify herself to enslaved people seeking to flee north.

Spirituals played a significant role as vehicles for protest during the 20th and early 21st centuries. Many of the “freedom songs” associated with the Civil Rights Movement of the ’50s and ’60s were adapted from old spirituals, sometimes combined with gospel hymns. Freedom songs based on spirituals continue to help define struggles for democracy today, both in the United States and in many countries around the world.

—Adapted from loc.gov/item/ihas.200197495
A Note on Strange Fruit

Strange Fruit draws its title from the 1937 poem and song of the same name by Abel Meeropol and made famous by the great jazz singer Billie Holiday. The song makes the metaphor of the swinging body of the lynching victim and fruit hanging from a tree. The song is not used in the piece.

The impetus for this work is lynching and its usage as a tool of racial terrorism during the Jim Crow Era. Lynching emerged as a vicious and horrific tool of racial control and as a way to reestablish white supremacy and suppress Black civil rights in the South at the end of Reconstruction. While there are more than 4,075 documented racial terror lynchings of African Americans in Southern States between 1877 and 1950, most white Americans and young African Americans have very little to no knowledge of this brutal campaign of racial violence. For this dance/theater work, the facts of lynching act as a springboard into an interior space, a state of mind. Strange Fruit tracks my feelings as a response to these acts of terror and plays out as a series of Expressionist vignettes. The piece is abstract but informed by the reality of these brutal acts of violence and terrorism.

—Donald Byrd

About the Company

Under Donald Byrd’s artistic leadership since 2002, Spectrum Dance Theater has become the foremost contemporary modern dance organization in the Pacific Northwest, gaining recognition nationally and abroad. For over 30 years, Spectrum
Dance Theater has brought dance of the highest merit to a diverse community, working to make dance accessible to all through contemporary dance performances and high-quality dance training in a variety of dance styles. Three components compose the organization: the professional Company, the School, and Community Engagement programs. With Donald Byrd’s visionary artistic leadership, the organization has embarked on an exhilarating transformation that has attracted world-class dancers, produced some of the most ambitious works in contemporary dance, and generated local and national praise. spectrumdance.org

For more information about booking Spectrum Dance Theater for touring, please contact: David Lieberman Artists’ Representatives, info@dlartists.com or 714-979-4700.

For more about sponsoring or contributing to Spectrum Dance Theater, please contact: Tera Beach, tera@spectrumdance.org or 206-325-4161

About the Artists

Donald Byrd (Choreographer, Director, Libretto) has been the artistic director of Spectrum Dance Theater since December 2002. Formerly, he was artistic director of Donald Byrd/The Group, a critically acclaimed modern contemporary dance company, founded in Los Angeles and later based in New York, that toured both nationally and internationally. His career has been long and complex, and his choreographic and theatrical interests are broad. The New York Times describes him as “a choreographer with multiple personalities … an unabashed eclectic.” He is a Tony-nominated (The Color Purple) and Bessie Award–winning (The Minstrel Show) choreographer.

Byrd has frequently been referred to as a “citizen artist,” a descriptive that perfectly aligns with an important component of Spectrum Dance Theater’s mission and Byrd’s personal beliefs—“dance as an art form and as a social/civic instrument.”

Early projects that were the beginnings of his citizen artist work at Spectrum are Interrupted Narratives/WAR (2007), a critique on the war in Iraq, and The Theater of Needless Talents (2008), a memorial to the artist victims of the Holocaust. Byrd’s early repertoire also includes three evening-length works that sought, through dance, to stimulate dialogue around a post-9/11, globalized America: A Chekhovian
Resolution (2008), a personal, diary-like reflection on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict; Farewell: A Fantastical Contemplation on America’s Relationship with China (2008), inspired by the novel Beijing Coma from Ma Jian and the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square; and The Mother of Us All (2010) a dense, collage-like abstract meditation on contemporary Africa.

Spectrum’s recent seasons, conceived, choreographed, and directed by Byrd, are a testament to his commitment to art as a Credible Partner of Social Justice:

- Season 2015/16 #RACEish—An Exploration of America’s 240 Years of (failed) Race Relations
- Season 2016/17 AMERICAN—IDENTITY, RACE, CULTURE?
- Season 2017/18 Bringing It Home—DANCING TOWARDS A MORE JUST AND EQUITABLE AMERICA
- Season 2018/19 WOKE???
- Season 2019/20 and Season 2020/21 Race and Climate Change

He continues to demonstrate this by creating dance/theater that is meant to question, to create awareness, to activate, and to move audiences and citizens into action around the persistent social issues that plague contemporary American society and the world: racism and white supremacy, climate change and the climate gap, gender equality, gender identity biases, xenophobia, and police brutality.

Throughout the 40+ years of his choreographic career, Byrd has created numerous works for his companies as well as works for many leading classical and contemporary companies. This list includes Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, the Joffrey Ballet, the Philadelphia Dance Company (Philadanco), Dance Theatre of Harlem, and many others. He has worked extensively in theater and opera, both in America and abroad, including Seattle Opera, the Atlanta Opera, the Israeli Opera, New York City Opera, San Francisco Opera, the New York Public Theater, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Intiman Theatre, and Center Stage (Baltimore).

Byrd’s many awards, prizes, and fellowships include the Doris Duke Artist Award; Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts, Cornish College of the Arts; Masters of Choreography Award, The Kennedy Center; Fellow at the American Academy of Jerusalem; James Baldwin Fellow of United States Artists; Resident Fellow of The Rockefeller
Foundation Bellagio Center; Fellow at the Institute on the Arts and Civic Dialogue, Harvard University; and the Mayor’s Arts Award for his sustained contributions to the City of Seattle.

A high point of Byrd’s career was a solo museum exhibition, *Donald Byrd: The America That Is to Be*, at the Frye Art Museum in Seattle in 2019. It was the culmination of his 2016 James W. Ray Distinguished Artist Award, which was funded by the Raynier Institute & Foundation through the Frye Art Museum | Artist Trust Consortium. The award supports and advances the creative work of outstanding artists living and working in Washington State.

Donald Byrd’s upcoming projects:
*Orpheus & Eurydice*—Seattle Opera
*Romeo and Juliet*—Houston Grand Opera
*Insidious*—Spectrum Dance Theater, spring season 2022

**Thomas F. DeFrantz** (Facilitator/Speaker) is a professor at Northwestern University who specializes in African diaspora aesthetics, dance historiography, and intersections of dance and technology. DeFrantz has a long and rich relationship with Donald Byrd and, by now, with Spectrum Dance Theater, having acted as dramaturg for at least six productions. DeFrantz also curated the show *Donald Byrd: The America that Is to Be* for the Frye Art Museum in Seattle in 2019. DeFrantz received the 2017 Outstanding Research in Dance award from the Dance Studies Association and contributed concept and voice-over for a permanent installation on Black Social Dance at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. DeFrantz has taught at the American Dance Festival, ImPulsTanz, Ponderosa, and the New Waves Dance Institute as well as at MIT, Stanford, Yale, New York University, Hampshire College, Duke, Northwestern University, and the University of Nice. DeFrantz’s books include *The Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance* (with Kathy Perkins, Sandra Richards, and Renée Alexander Craft, 2018), *Choreography and Corporeality: Relay in Motion* (with Philipa Rothfield, 2016), and *Black Performance Theory: An Anthology of Critical Readings* (with Anita Gonzalez, 2014). DeFrantz believes in our shared capacity to do better and to engage our creative spirit for a collective good that is anti-racist, proto-feminist, and queer affirming.
Designers and Production Staff

**Doris Black** (Costume Design) has designed costumes for Spectrum Dance Theater since 2011. A few of her favorite productions include *Strange Fruit*, *(Im)Pulse*, *A Rap on Race*, *LOVE*, and *The Beast*. Other collaborations with Donald Byrd include *Geography of the Cotton Fields* for Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, *Love and Loss* for Pacific Northwest Ballet, and *Greenwood* for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Black designs costumes for many different production companies, including Seattle Shakespeare Company, The Seagull Project, Seattle Gilbert and Sullivan Society, Intiman, ArtsWest, theater simple, Freehold, and Book-It. She is the company designer for the Seattle Men’s Chorus and Seattle Women’s Chorus. Her film credits include *Cthulhu*, *The Dark Horse*, and *Police Beat*. Black received her MFA in Costume Design from the University of Washington.

**David Mackie** (Technical and Lighting Director) is from the Pacific Northwest and has a passion for lighting emotion on stage. He has enjoyed working with Spectrum in the past and is looking forward to future collaborations. Prior work spans from international productions of *Porgy and Bess* to local productions of *Angels in America* and working as Village Theatre’s master electrician. After realizing that full-time freelancing wasn’t for him, Mackie settled in Mt. Vernon to start a farm with his wife, Bonnie. They, along with a 3-year-old, tend to 12 acres of mixed veggies, pigs, and chickens, and while the farm is now his full-time job, Mackie will always continue to find his way back to the soul-satisfying art of lighting emotion on stage.

**Jack Mehler** (Scenic Designer), based in New York for 30 years, designs for a wide variety of dance, theater, and related projects, several of which have been award winning. He has designed scores of projects with Donald Byrd including *Lyric Suite*, *Strange Fruit*, *A Rap on Race*, *SHOT*, *(Im)Pulse*, and *Theater of Needless Talents* for Spectrum Dance Theater; *Motown Suite* and *To Know Her* for the Joffrey Ballet; *Greenwood*, *Burlesque*, and *Fin de Siècle* for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; and many others for Donald Byrd/The Group. He was the co-creative director for Spectrum’s Race and Climate Change Festival. Other dance projects include work with Ballet Austin, Ballet Memphis, BalletMet, Ballet West, Buglisi Dance Theatre, Houston Ballet, Hubbard Street, Joffrey Ballet, José Limón, Lar Lubovitch, and San Francisco Ballet, among many others.
Travis Mouffe (Video Design), from Steamboat Springs, CO, studied film at the University of Colorado in Boulder and first began projection design for dance thesis concerts with CU’s School of Theater and Dance. After moving to Seattle, he worked with MODE Studios and created his first professional video design for Mt. Baker Theatre’s production of *Into the Woods*, later working on projects for Microsoft, Nordstrom, Holland America Line, the off-Broadway tour of *Catch Me If You Can*, and music tours including Paramore and Postmodern Jukebox, and was principal video designer for Seattle Opera’s *An American Dream* and Pacific Music Works’ *Orphée et Eurydice* as well as Spectrum Dance Theater’s productions *SHOT* and *(Im)Pulse*. Mouffe currently works full-time with Commerce House, a strategic branding agency, in Dallas.

Sara Torres (Lighting Design) is a lighting designer, technical director, and stage manager based in Seattle, WA. She graduated from Cornish College of the Arts in 2008 with a degree in performance production. Her body of work includes serving as touring technical director and stage manager for Solo Magic (2019); production manager, lighting designer, and stage manager for Spectrum Dance Theater (2015–19); and technical director, stage manager, and lighting designer for the Seattle International Dance Festival (2007–17). In addition to her work in dance, she exercises her talents designing lights for theater, circus, and events. Select examples of her work can be found at penumbralux.com.

Rob Witmer (Sound Design) previous worked with Spectrum Dance Theater on *Strange Fruit*, *SHOT*, *Im(Pulse)*, and *H.R. 3244*. Other recent credits include *Dracula* (ACT Theatre); *Richard III, Bring Down the House* (Seattle Shakespeare Company); *Flight, Tosca* (Seattle Opera); *The Ghost of Splinter Cove* (Children’s Theatre of Charlotte); *Black Beauty* (Seattle Children’s Theatre); and *Greenwood* (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater). His designs have also been heard at Seattle Rep, Village Theatre, and Teatro ZinZanni. Witmer is a lecturer in sound design at the University of Washington and is a member of United Scenic Artists 829. He also plays with several bands, including the Love Markets and “Awesome.”

Guest Artists

marco farroni started life in Bonao, Dominican Republic. He emigrated to the United States in the sixth grade and ten years later earned a BFA in dance from the University of the Arts. In fall of 2017, they joined Spectrum Dance Theater as a
Davione Gordon is from Fort Washington, MD. He studied at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia as a ballet major. He performed with Spectrum Dance Theater for four seasons, first as an apprentice and then as a company artist. Gordon has also worked with The 5th Ave Theatre, Village Theatre, and several operas in the DC metropolitan area and has danced for the NBA as a Washington Wizards dancer. He currently resides in DC and teaches low-impact workouts with Pure Barre DC while also freelancing as a dancer on the East Coast. IG: @only1davione

Josephine Howell was born in Chicago. “Josie” possesses a God-given endowment for the arts. Howell’s range of talent extends from singing, activism, dancing, and acting to the very production and direction of the arts. Howell has performed in world-renowned venues and most recently won the Seattle-Kobe Jazz Female Vocalist Competition in 2019 while performing her finale in Kobe, Japan. Her artistic curriculum vitae is extensive, and she has graced stages solo as well as sharing stages with amazing artists in Chicago, Seattle, Philadelphia, Juneau, Michigan, Indiana, Virginia, Oklahoma, Nashville’s The Grand Ole Opry, Kenya, Austria, Mombasa, the White House, London, Alaska, Los Angeles, the MTV Awards, the Grammy Awards, and for 10 years as lead artist in Seattle’s acclaimed Black Nativity production.

Nia-Amina Minor, originally from Los Angeles, is a movement artist residing in Seattle. Her creative work converses with Black realities and investigates the intersection of movement, memory, and rhythm. Minor holds an MFA from UC Irvine and a BA from Stanford University. She has taught and guest lectured at UC Irvine, Saddleback College, Cypress College, and University of Washington. Minor is co-founder/former curator of LA-based collective No)one Art House. She was a company dancer and community engagement liaison with Spectrum Dance Theater for five seasons, performing in acclaimed works created by Donald Byrd including Rap on Race, Shot, and Strange Fruit. Minor is Velocity Dance Center’s 2021 Made in Seattle Artist and was recently recognized as one of Dance Magazine’s 25 Artists to Watch in 2021.
Mary Sigward was born and raised in Cincinnati, OH. In 2015 she graduated from the University of South Carolina with a BA in dance performance and a minor in biology. Upon graduating she moved to Seattle to join Spectrum Dance Theater as a company artist under the direction of Donald Byrd, where she performed with the company for four seasons before leaving in 2019 to freelance in the Seattle area. Sigward has had the joy of being the academy coordinator for the School of Spectrum Dance Theater since 2017, where she continues to work and mentor young aspiring students. Her work has been performed at 12 Minutes Max (WA), Seattle International Dance Festival, and by the Academy Program at the School of Spectrum Dance Theater.

Company Artists

Chloe Brown is from Seattle, WA, and trained at Pacific Northwest Ballet School from 2007 to 2019. Brown received additional training at Boston Ballet, Miami City Ballet, and the Royal Danish Ballet. Brown attended Alonzo King’s LINES Ballet Training Program under Alonzo King and Karah Abiog. In the Training Program, Brown performed works by Sidra Bell, Erik Wagner, Alonzo King, and Gregory Dawson. Brown is also the co-founder and director of the Ancient Lakes Dance Festival, an annual contemporary dance performance based in the Pacific Northwest. Brown is excited to be back performing in her home city. This is her first season as an apprentice with Spectrum Dance Theater.

Hutch Hagendorf, originally from Houston, TX, began dancing at age nine at West University Dance Center under Evelyn Ireton. During high school, he danced with his studio’s competition group Soul Discretion (artistic director Kelly Ann Vitacca) and performed with Exclamation Dance Company (Kenneth Epting, director). He received his BFA in dance at the University of Arizona School of Dance. Workshops include Perry-Mansfield, David Parsons, Alvin Ailey Extension, Paul Taylor, Doug Varone, NW Dance Project Launch, and Axis Connect. After graduating in 2015, he completed two cruise contracts with Royal Caribbean International before moving to New York City in 2017 and working with i KADA Contemporary Dance Company and De Funes Dance. Hagendorf is in his fourth season with Spectrum Dance Theater and his first as a teaching artist.

Justine Hannan grew up in Tucson, AZ, and trained at Tucson Dance Academy under Tammy Booth until high school graduation. She spent summers training at
Pacific Northwest Ballet, LINES, Hubbard Street, Complexions, Perry-Mansfield, and Juilliard. Hannan continued her pre-professional dance training at the University of Arizona School of Dance under directors Melissa Lowe and Jory Hancock and other world-class instructors: Tamara Dyke-Compton, Christopher Compton, Autumn Eckman, Amy Ernst, Elizabeth George, and Hayley Meier. While at UA, she performed works by Paul Taylor, Jessica Lang, Christopher Wheeldon, Jerome Robbins, Larry Keigwin, and George Balanchine. In May 2021, she graduated with her BFA in dance. Hannan is honored and excited for the opportunity to dance in her first season with Spectrum Dance Theater.

Marte Osiris Madera was born in Guadalajara, Mexico. He graduated with an MFA in dance from the University of Washington and a BFA in dance from San Jose State University. Madera has danced professionally with companies across the US, including Dance Kaleidoscope, Lustig Dance Theatre, Central West Ballet, Oakland Ballet, Menlowe Ballet, Robert Moses’ KIN, sjDANCEco, and the Margaret Wingrove Dance Company. He has also choreographed and taught dance at various institutions to students of all ages and abilities. This is Madera’s third season with Spectrum Dance Theater.

Kaitlyn Nguyen, from Diamond Bar, CA, started dancing at age seven under Janaina Watkins at Fine Arts Academy of Dance. She trained at The Ailey School and received a BFA in dance and a minor in management at UC Irvine. During her time at UCI, she had the privilege to dance in Donald McKayle’s Etude Ensemble, performing new works and repertory. She has danced with NYC-area companies including Nimbus Dance Works, i KADA Contemporary Dance, and Armitage Gone! Dance and Southern Californian companies such as Re:borN Dance Interactive and Nouveau Chamber Ballet. Nguyen became a mother to Lucile in 2018 and is grateful to be a full-time mom while contributing to Spectrum Dance Theater’s important work. This is her third season with Spectrum Dance Theater.

Lillie Pincus is originally from Rochester, NY, where she trained in ballet and performed with contemporary fusion company FuturPointe Dance. She continued her training at Walnut Hill School of the Arts. In 2020, she graduated magna cum laude from USC’s Glorya Kaufman School of Dance under the direction of Jodie Gates and William Forsythe. While in school, she performed works by William Forsythe, Jiri Kylian, Barak Marshall, and Rauf “RubberLegz” Yasit. Since graduating, she has performed with New York State Ballet and in various festivals in Rochester. Pincus is excited to be joining Spectrum Dance Theater this season as an apprentice.
Nile Alicia Ruff was born and raised in Washington DC’s “Chocolate City” and began dancing with Kankouran West African Dance Company and Coyaba Dance Theater. Ruff attended Jones-Haywood School of Ballet, Duke Ellington School of the Arts, and Point Park University, earning a BFA in modern dance. Ruff has danced professionally with Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Attack Theatre, and Dayton Contemporary Dance Company. Ruff joined Spectrum Dance Theater in March 2021.

Nathanaël Santiago was born in Puerto Rico and began his ballet studies at age 10 at Ballets de San Juan. In 2006 he studied at Orlando Ballet School and later attended Miami City Ballet School in 2008. He danced with Ballet Concierto de Puerto Rico (2009–12), Andanza Contemporary Dance Company (2013–16), and Cleveland’s Verb Ballets (2016–18). During the summer of 2018, he danced for Visceral Dance Chicago and worked as a guest artist with Ballet Memphis from fall 2018 until spring 2019. Santiago holds a BA in modern languages from the University of Puerto Rico and the University of Coimbra, Portugal. This is Santiago’s third season with Spectrum Dance Theater.

Jaclyn Wheatley, from Vancouver, British Columbia, received her early dance training under K.M. Robbins, Rachael Poirier, and Li Yaming. Wheatley graduated summa cum laude from the Alvin Ailey/Fordham University BFA program in 2014. In addition to performing works by Alvin Ailey, Ronald K. Brown, Joshua Beamish, Alex Crozier, Vincent Michael Lopez, and Arch Contemporary Ballet and appearing in aerial dance productions with the Cabiri, Wheatley has traveled to Central America to participate in dance outreach activities with the JUNTOS Collective. At Spectrum Dance Theater, Wheatley has performed featured roles in Donald Byrd’s Drastic Cuts, The Minstrel Show, and The Harlem Nutcracker and Merce Cunningham’s Crises, and appeared as Minnie in West Side Story at The 5th Avenue Theater. This is Wheatley’s eighth season with Spectrum Dance Theater.

Spectrum Dance Theater

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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.