

Dorrance Dance

Michelle Dorrance, Artistic Director

Wed, Mar 8 / 8 PM / Granada Theatre

Dance Series Sponsors:

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ACT I

Excerpts from *SOUNDspace* (2013)*

Direction and Choreography: **Michelle Dorrance**, with solo improvisation by the dancers

Dancers: **Ephrat “Bounce” Asherie, Elizabeth Burke, Warren Craft, Michelle Dorrance, Carson Murphy, Leonardo Sandoval, Byron Tittle, Nicholas Van Young**

*Originally a site-specific work that explored the unique acoustics of New York City’s St. Mark’s Church through the myriad sounds and textures of the feet, “SOUNDspace” has been adapted and continues to explore what is most beautiful and exceptional about tap dancing – movement as music.

The creation of “SOUNDspace” was made possible, in part, by the Danspace Project 2012-2013 Commissioning Initiative, with support from the New York State Council on the Arts. As part of Danspace Project’s Choreographic Center Without Walls, Dorrance received a production residency supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

A Note From the Artistic Director

During the winter of 2012-2013, when this piece was created, I was asked to consider my influences, lineage, legacy – “the web of connections that new generations of artists trace with the past through their work” – and I would argue that no dancers call upon specific individual influences of so many of their masters and their form’s innovators (our ancestors, if you will) more directly and more often than tap dancers. Their personalities and unique styles live deeply within most of us.

I have had the honor of studying with and spending time with a great number of our tap masters before they passed away: Maceo Anderson, Dr. Cholly Atkins, Clayton “Peg-Leg” Bates, Dr. James “Buster” Brown, Ernest “Brownie” Brown, Harriet “Quicksand” Browne, Dr. Harold Cromer, Gregory Hines, Dr. Jeni Legon, Dr. Henry LeTang, LeRoy Myers, Dr. Fayard and Harold Nicholas, Donald O’Connor, Dr. Leonard Reed, Jimmy Slyde and Dr. Prince Spencer. I would also like to honor our living masters whom I am constantly influenced by: Arthur Duncan, Dr. Bunny Briggs, Brenda Bufalino, Skip Cunningham, Miss Mable Lee and Dianne Walker.

While we are exploring new ideas in this show, we are also constantly mindful of our rich history. Dr. Jimmy Slyde was the inspiration for my initial exploration of slide work in socks (in the original work) and his influence continues to guide that work. In order to tap dance on the original wood floor of St. Mark’s Church, we had to turn away from aluminum taps towards using different surfaces on the soles of our feet. Leather soles and wood taps pre-date aluminum taps as they were used in the late 1800s when the form was still called “Buck Dancing” or “Buck and Wing.” There is a bit of a historical reference in some of the leather-soled work we explored, in that we explore the sounds of early tap dancing (imagine Bill “Bojangles” Robinson on the balls of his feet) before introducing the power of the rich bass in the heels. Tap master, John Bubbles, the game changer, is known for revolutionizing the tap dance in this way. We invite you to experience tap dancing with fresh pairs of eyes and ears, with both an acknowledgement towards the past and a look into the future.

- Intermission -

ACT II

Excerpts from *ETM: DOUBLE DOWN* **

Created by **Michelle Dorrance** and **Nicholas Van Young**

Artistic Director: **Michelle Dorrance**

Original Tap Instrument Design: **Nicholas Van Young**

Choreography: **Michelle Dorrance** and **Nicholas Van Young**, with **Ephrat Asherie**, and solo improvisation by the dancers

Original Music Composed and Improvised by: | **Gregory Richardson, Donovan Dorrance, Nicholas Van Young, Aaron Marcellus, Warren Craft**, with **Michelle Dorrance**

Additional Music by: **Adele Adkins, Karin Dreijer Andersson, Olof Dreijer, Justin Vernon, Patrick Watson**

Dancers: **Ephrat "Bounce" Asherie, Elizabeth Burke, Warren Craft, Michelle Dorrance, Carson Murphy, Leonardo Sandoval, Byron Tittle, Nicholas Van Young**

Musicians: **Donovan Dorrance, Aaron Marcellus, Gregory Richardson**

Bass and Guitar: **Gregory Richardson**

Vocals: **Aaron Marcellus**

Piano: **Donovan Dorrance**

Drums and Percussion: **Nicholas Van Young** with **Warren Craft, Michelle Dorrance**

Controllerist: **Donovan Dorrance**

Original Lighting Design: **Kathy Kaufmann**

Costume Design: **Shiori Ichikawa** with **Amy Page** and **Len Burton**

** *ETM: The Initial Approach* was co-commissioned and created, in part, during a Creative Development Residency at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, with support from the Jacob's Pillow Dance Award Initiative.

Artist Statements

This work is the initial exploration of a new world and a new collaboration. Constantly inspired by the range of possibilities inherent in being both dancers and musicians, in the visual and aural, we also embrace embodying the organic and inorganic, the acoustic and the electric. None of this work is remotely possible without tap dancer, percussionist and innovator, my longtime friend, Nicholas Young. He is the man behind the curtain. He has been developing the instruments you see here and has been experimenting with the technologies you will see at work tonight for years in order to make this world possible. I also want to acknowledge our musical collaborators and friends, Gregory Richardson, Aaron Marcellus, Warren Craft and Donovan Dorrance who, with intuition, incredibly open minds and a wonderful sensitivity to collaborating with the sounds of tap dance, have created some inspiring compositions. It has been a dream of mine for almost a decade to collaborate with my dear friend and multi-form dancer, Ephrat "Bounce" Asherie, whose visual percussion, musical phrasing and dynamic range of movement inspire me tremendously. Tap dance was America's first street form and is deeply rooted in the foundations of Hip Hop and House dance. These communities have long been connected on the streets and in the club but are less likely to be found on the concert stage. As we enter the world of electronic music, looping and sampling, these worlds become even closer and that connection ever more important. Getting back to the beginning, I want to say thank you – Thank you Nicholas Young, for your artistry, your creativity, your tireless and endless work, your inventive mind, your friendship and your trust. I feel incredibly blessed to have been so warmly invited into your world to play and create.

– **Michelle Dorrance**

It started with the simple need to find a way to amplify tap dance without feedback, so I could dance with a live band. Many people have used contact microphones (Gregory Hines, Tap Dogs, etc.) so I knew that was a possibility, and it led me to experimenting with guitar pedals and effects. I started out looping hand and body percussion with live and affected tap dance. Being a drummer as well, and working with electronic music since the early days of EDM, I've stayed in touch with what's happening in the music production and DJ community. I knew contact mics could be doubled as drum triggers and I was already playing around with a masterful piece of software called Ableton: a live performance software, digital audio workstation. I got the idea to cre-

ate small trigger boards to dance on – essentially wooden drum pads. In conjunction with my main dance board and effects this added a whole new sound set for me to experiment with. Over time I took online courses in Ableton and began to understand the limitless possibilities. Soon I was able to play notes, arpeggios, chords, sound bites and quotes and began composing scores in real time with improvised tap dance. The synthesized possibilities are endless and the combination of this with the acoustic sound and attack of tap dance was a very exciting frontier for me to explore. The only thing missing was Michelle Dorrance. Being a company member of Dorrance Dance, Michelle had given me my first opportunity to perform a solo using this electronic set up in an evening length performance in Boston, presented by Thelma Goldberg in 2012. We, as kids, had dreams about experimenting with altered soundscapes for tap dance. We jokingly called it “Tap to the Max.”

I was creating solos with my “Compositional Tap Instrument” but had visions of several dancers across a number of platforms and boards. Dancing out elaborate choreographed phrases while simultaneously playing the musical composition. Once Michelle asked to me to collaborate on this show I knew it “was on.” Her expansive creativity in tap choreography and movement, along with her sophisticated musical phrasing started to unlock possibilities in our set that were getting us both so excited. Simple ideas led to large discoveries and every time we workshopped an idea, 20 more were born. Needless to say, here we are. Pushing ourselves to explore the sonic potential in tap dance and tap instruments. In some ways we have created the ultimate tap dancers playground. Where you can let your imagination and your feet run wild.

Enjoy.

– **Nicholas Young**

Company Profiles

Michelle Dorrance, founder and artistic director of Dorrance Dance, is one of the most sought after tap dancers of her generation and “one of the most imaginative tap choreographers working today” (*The New Yorker*). A 2015 MacArthur Fellow, 2014 Alpert Award Winner, 2013 Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award winner, 2012 Princess Grace Award Winner, 2012 Field Dance Fund Recipient and 2011 Bessie Award Winner, Dorrance performs, teaches and choreographs throughout the world. Mentored by Gene Medler, Dorrance grew

up performing with the North Carolina Youth Tap Ensemble and has since performed with: *STOMP*, Manhattan Tap, Savion Glover’s “Ti Dii,” JazzTap Ensemble, Barbara Duffy & Co., Rumba Tap, Derick Grant’s *Imagine Tap* and Jason Samuels Smith’s *Chasing the Bird* to rave reviews. She holds a bachelor’s degree from New York University and teaches on faculty at Broadway Dance Center.
www.michelledorrance.com

Ephrat “Bounce” Asherie (Dancer) is a New York City-based bgirl, dancer and choreographer. As artistic director of Ephrat Asherie Dance (EAD), she has presented work at the Apollo Theater, Jacob’s Pillow, New York Live Arts, Summerstage, the Yard and elsewhere. Ephrat has received numerous awards to support her work, including a Mondo Cane! commission from Dixon Place, a Workspace residency from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, a Travel and Study Grant from the Jerome Foundation and two residencies through the CUNY Dance Initiative. Ephrat is on faculty at Broadway Dance Center and the Joffrey Jazz and Contemporary Program. www.ephratasherie.com.

Elizabeth Burke (Rehearsal Director/Dancer) is a Chapel Hill, North Carolina native who spent eleven years under the direction of her mentor, Gene Medler, in the acclaimed North Carolina Youth Tap Ensemble. Burke has been with Dorrance Dance since the company’s inception in 2010-2011 and when not working with the company, enjoys dancing with Bessie Award winner Nicholas Van Young’s SoundMovement Dance Company and teaching and choreographing occasionally. She is an alumna of the School at Jacob’s Pillow and holds two bachelor’s degrees from Marymount Manhattan College.

Warren Craft (Dancer) is a New York City tap dancer who has trained in ballet with both the American Ballet Theatre and the School of American Ballet. He has been a member of Brenda Bufalino’s New American Tap Dance Orchestra, Max Pollak’s RumbaTap and Dorrance Dance. He moves with “bizarre physicality,” and “unconventional eloquence” (*The New York Times*).

Donovan Dorrance (Musical Director) hails from Chapel Hill, NC, where he studied piano, guitar, drums and voice before attending the University of North Carolina for a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy. After singing in an a cappella group, drumming in an indie-rock band and receiving a degree fit for waiting tables for the rest of his life, Dorrance moved to Brooklyn to assist his sister’s company and pursue his passion for music. In his spare time, he composes music with Greg

Richardson for Dorrance Dance, takes online business courses and is occasionally published in his UNC professors' books in the field of philosophy.

Aaron Marcellus (vocalist) singer, vocal coach, writer, musician, dancer and actor from Atlanta started in gospel music and has performed around the world. He has recorded albums and was voted top 24 on *American Idol* in 2011. After a world tour, Marcellus was featured in a ChapStick commercial, NBC's *Next Caller* and is a cast member of *STOMP*. Marcellus also hosts a burlesque show at Duane Park. Most importantly, he founded both Surrender To Love, LLC, a foundation that supports arts programs and seeks to feed the hungry, and Adventure Voice, a training program offering vocal classes for groups and individuals.

Carson Murphy (Dancer) is a NYC dancer, teacher, business owner and currently a member of Dorrance Dance, Nicholas Young's SoundMovement, and Hip Tap Project. She has performed with a multitude of companies throughout NYC, North America and Europe. She recently finished a tour with tap masters Sarah and Leela Petronio, and has taught at tap festivals in Paris, Canada and Stockholm. Carson holds a BA in both Dance and Philosophy from Loyola Marymount University. www.soundmovementny.com

Gregory Richardson (Musician/Bass Player) was born in Tucson, Ariz., and learned Rhythm and Blues at an early age from a family of musicians in which everyone could play at least a little piano and everyone was expected to sing. As a member of the band Darwin Deez, Richardson has performed at many of the world's largest music festivals. In recent years he's found a second home with the New York City tap dance community, composing for and/or performing in several shows with Dorrance Dance, including *Myelination*, which was commissioned by the Fall For Dance Festival and premiered at New York City Center.

Leonardo Sandoval (Dancer) is gaining a reputation in the tap world for his musicality and for adding his own Brazilian influence. Sandoval co-founded the Companhia Carioca de Sapateado in Rio de Janeiro, bringing tap dance to a wider audience in Brazil. In 2013, Sandoval moved to New York City and has performed at the Chicago Human Rhythm Project's Rhythm World, the D.C. Tap Fest, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Tap City and American Tap Dance Foundation's Rhythm in Motion as an artist in residence. Sandoval recently premiered his own show,

Music from the Sole, a creation with bassist and composer Greg Richardson.

Byron Tittle (dancer) has been dancing since the age of 7 in his hometown of New York. Starting with tap and ballet, he soon grew to enjoy the different genres and aesthetics in the entire realm of dance. He began tapping with the American Tap Dance Foundation's Tap City Youth Ensemble, where he met Michelle Dorrance. Continually taking her master classes and workshops, he joined the company in 2013 and has been consistently involved since then. Commercially, he has danced for Janet Jackson and Nicki Minaj but feels most at home on stage with Dorrance Dance.

Nicholas Van Young (Co-Creator/Musician/Dancer) is a dancer, musician and choreographer, and a 2015 Bessie Award recipient. He previously was a member of the off-Broadway sensation *STOMP*, where he performed the lead role, acted as rehearsal director and spent 10 years with the show. Van Young began his professional career at the age of 16 with Tapestry Dance Company of Austin, Texas. Since moving to New York City, Van Young has performed with multiple tap companies and shows and is thrilled to have found a home with Michelle Dorrance's Dorrance Dance. Van Young is currently working on *ETM: Double Down*, a collaborative effort with Michelle Dorrance.

Kathy Kaufmann (Lighting Designer) is a resident designer at Danspace Project whose work has been seen throughout the U.S., Canada and Europe. She is a two-time Bessie Award recipient and was nominated for her work on Rebecca Davis's *Bloowst Windku* at Here in 2015. She was also honored to be included in *Curtain Call: Celebrating 100 Years of Women in Design* at the New York Performing Arts Library and currently teaches lighting at Sarah Lawrence. Most recent projects include designs for Joanna Kotze, David Parker, Eiko & Koma, Jillian Peña, Larissa Velez Jackson and Dorrance Dance (*The Blues Project*, *SOUNDspace* and *ETM*).

Donald Borrer (Executive Director) from Columbus, Ohio, joins Dorrance Dance from Dunch Arts, a cultural management consulting firm. Donald was a producer for Lincoln Center Education and a company dancer for Ballet Hispanico. He serves as board chair of BEMOVING and the Dance/NYC Junior Committee. He holds a B.F.A. from The Juilliard School, and a M.A. from Columbia University.

Christopher Marc (Production Manager/Sound Engineer) Credits: The Kennedy Center Theater for

Young Audiences: *Elephant & Piggie's We Are in a Play!*;
National Tour: *Clifford the Big Red Dog Live!*; Lake
Tahoe Shakespeare Festival: *Forever Plaid, Comedy
of Errors, Romeo and Juliet, The Fantasticks*. Design
Credits: Off-Broadway: *The Black Book*; Aquila Theatre
National Tour: *Wuthering Heights, The Tempest,
Fahrenheit 451, Twelfth Night*.

Michelle Rose (Production/Admin Assistant) moved to New York City to pursue an M.A. in Multimedia Choreography from NYU Gallatin. She has worked with ABT II, Monica Bill Barnes & Company, Batsheva Dance Company, *This American Life*, as well as brief stints in Broadway Theater Production (*Wicked*) and reality TV. When she was 8 years old, Rose was featured in a K-Mart commercial with Martha Stewart.

Courtney Runft (General Manager) hails from Wichita, Kan., and presently resides in New York City. She is a graduate of Friends University and holds a B.A. in Business Management (magna cum laude). In addition to her work with Dorrance Dance, Runft is the former director of the American Tap Dance Foundation's Tap City Junior Ensemble, Tap City's summer youth program and education associate/registrant. A passionate educator, Runft is also the lower school dance teacher at St. Luke's School in New York City.

Serena Wong (Lighting Supervisor) is a Brooklyn-based freelance lighting designer for theater and dance. Her designs have been seen at New York Live Arts, Irondale Arts Center, the New Ohio and Danspace. She enjoys biking, beekeeping and bread baking.

Dorrance Dance Personnel

Artistic Director: **Michelle Dorrance**

Rehearsal Director: **Elizabeth Burke**

Executive Director: **Donald Borrer**

Musical Director: **Donovan Dorrance**

Lighting Designer: **Kathy Kaufmann**

Lighting Supervisor: **Serena Wong**

Production Manager/ Sound Engineer: **Christopher Marc**

Production/Admin Assistant: **Michelle Rose**

General Manager: **Courtney Runft**



*Funded in part by the Community Events & Festivals
Program using funds provided by the City of Santa
Barbara in partnership with the Santa Barbara
County Office of Arts and Culture*