

P U S H

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Pictured: Kao Vey Saephanh, Photo courtesy of PUSH Dance Company

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**PUSH DANCE COMPANY ANNOUNCES
3RD ANNUAL *PUSHfest* DANCE FESTIVAL
FEATURING THE WORLD PREMIERE OF *MOTHERSHIP (PART I)*
BY ARTISTIC DIRECTOR RAISSA SIMPSON**

September 23-25, 2016 at ODC Theater in San Francisco

Tickets: \$15-\$30 or \$50 Festival Pass; 415.863.9834 or www.pushdance.org/festival

SAN FRANCISCO, June 16, 2016 — **PUSH Dance Company (PUSH)** kicks off its eleventh home season with ***PUSHfest***, a mixed genre showcase of dance works by mid-career to emerging choreographers aimed at gathering wider audiences, **September 23-25 at ODC Theater**. This exciting new season will feature three world premieres, including ***Mothership (Part I)*** by **Artistic Director Raissa Simpson**, new works by Resident Choreographer Katerina Wong, and PUSH Dancers Ashley Gayle and Noah James, and performances by local artists and visiting artists from Chicago and St. Louis.

"I'm thrilled to be presenting artists all of whom are either new to us or making their San Francisco debut with **PUSHfest**," says Simpson. "Since its inception three years ago, **PUSHfest** has become a cornerstone of our annual season through which I am especially proud to showcase different dance styles." Simpson announced expanded programming this year through the launch of **PUSHLab**, a performance workshop for pre-professional artists who will be selected from an audition process this summer. For five weeks, **PUSHLab** participants will immerse themselves in a creative process culminating in Wong's third piece for the Company and a new work co-choreographed by PUSH Dancers Ashley Gayle and Noah James.

Performance highlights for **PUSHfest 2016** include solo works by Mary Carbonara and Bay Area Bharatanatyam performer Lalli Verkant, a group work by Afro-contemporary powerhouse Red Clay Dance Company, and a virtuosic ensemble work by Inside/Out Contemporary Ballet. (See below for complete lineup.)

World Premiere of Simpson's *Mothership (Part 1)*

Following recently critically acclaimed performances at the Los Angeles Women's Theatre Festival and the 9th Annual Emerson Spring to Dance Festival in St. Louis, MO, the PUSH Dance Company presents the world premiere of ***Mothership (Part I)***, the first installment of a three-part series by Simpson commissioned by AATAIN- a William & Flora Hewlett Foundation program, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, and the Zellerbach Family Foundation, with additional support by University of California, Davis.

For *Mothership* Simpson investigates the body as a site for racial discourse. This first part of the series will be performed by the full six-member company, joined by two apprentice dancers. Simpson's collaborators include composer Erica Mulkey and lighting designer Grisel Torres.

Mothership is inspired by black diaspora, particularly the formation of identity after slavery, and how these migrating identities change under harsh conditions like Emancipation, Jim Crow, Great Migrations, Mass Incarceration, and the Black Lives Matter movements. Combined with Simpson's exploration of Afrofuturism -- a concept emerging from the mid-1990s describing an artistic movement predicated on imagining the past, examining the present, and predicting the future, often in somewhat science fiction-like terms -- *Mothership* explores in separate parts the past, present, and future.

"I'm drawn to this notion of what makes America great, how our founders imagined the future, and how we might imagine the future," Simpson explains. "What cultures and histories have we ignored and how can we imagine the identity of Blacks in the future. For instance, what will the Black diaspora look like? Will there be Blacks in outer-space?"

About PUSH Dance Company

Described as "emotional and kinetic" (*S F Bay Guardian*), Raissa Simpson's **PUSH Dance Company** (founded 2005) has performed to critical acclaim while building upon the philosophy that pure movement and intellect can coexist and with a commitment to outreach and dance education programs, including **PUSHfest** (founded 2013). Recent major presentations include the 2014 *Point Shipyard Project*,

a collaboration with 3rd Street Youth Center & Clinic in San Francisco's Hunters Point district and the Museum of the African Diaspora.

Hailed by *Dance Spirit Magazine* as “reflective contemporary choreography,” Raissa Simpsons’ work has been performed in 50 venues across the country, including Dance St. Louis Spring to Dance Emerson Festival, Links Hall in Chicago, Ferst Center for the Arts at Georgia Tech, Joyce SoHo, Washington Ensemble Theater, Evolve Dance Festival in NY, Los Angeles Theater Center, Black Choreographers Festival, UC Davis, Sacramento State, Stanford University, SF State University, ODC Theater, Museum of the African Diaspora, Renberg Theater, and other venues. Simpson and PUSH have received support from the SF Arts Commission, Zellerbach Family Foundation, CA\$H, Dancers’ Group Lighting in Dance Award, SF Foundation, ODC Theater’s Fleishhacker Opportunity Fund, The Kenneth Rainin Foundation, Grants for the Arts and the African American Theater Alliance for Independence (AATAIN) a project of the Hewlett Foundation.

Simpson is a former company member of Robert Moses’ Kin and Joanna Haigood’s Zaccho Dance Theatre, among others, performing throughout the United States. She has been honored with the Magrit Mondavi Award, ChoreoProject’s People’s Choice Award, BADw’s Choreographer of the Year 2012, and AATAIN in association with Hewlett Foundation. She has held residencies at the Garage Artspace, Zaccho Studio, African American American Culture Complex, and Margaret Jenkin’s CHIME.

PUSH Dance Company's 2016 season is generously supported by the African American Theater Alliance for Independence (AATAIN) in association with the Hewlett Foundation, San Francisco Arts Commission, Grants for the Arts, Zellerbach Family Foundation, and individual support.

Tickets for **PUSHfest 2016** are priced at \$28 in advance, \$30 at the door, \$15 for seniors and students, or \$50 for a Festival pass to both programs. Tickets and Festival passes can be purchased online at www.pushdance.org/festival.

Hi-Res Photos are available for download at <http://www.pushdance.org/ourphotos>.

Company Website: www.pushdance.org

PUSHfest ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

PROGRAM A: Friday September 23, 8pm & Sunday September 25, 4pm

MARY CARBONARA founded Mary Carbonara Dances in 2001, for which she has created critically-acclaimed works. She is a former member of Margaret Jenkins Dance Company, Robert Moses' Kin, Liss Fain Dance and Project Bandaloop. With Robert Moses, Mary founded Studio 200, a dance teaching and learning studio in San Francisco.

AMY FOLEY created Bellwether Dance Company in 2016 after dancing with Robert Moses' KIN for over a decade and with many other Bay Area choreographic luminaries. Bellwether Dance Company examines physical/conceptual versions of time and unsettling human experiences, ranging from the deeply personal to the laughably universal.

JOSLYNN MATHIS REED hails from Detroit, Michigan and founded Mathis Reed Dance Company in 2014. Joslynn's movement and choreography is driven by a high-energy fusion of hip-hop, modern and ballet forms, resulting in her own unique style.

LIV SCHAFFER is a multidisciplinary artist and artist educator in the Bay Area, whose passion for creation is rooted in providing others with expressive platforms. Find Liv sharing work with a variety of organizations such as Youth Art Exchange, Dance Mission, Jacob's Pillow Curriculum in Motion®, and The JUNTOS Collective.

RAISSA SIMPSON received a BFA from the Conservatory of Dance at SUNY Purchase before moving to the Bay Area, where she performed with Robert Moses' Kin and Joanna Haigood's Zaccho Dance Theatre. She recently earned an MFA from the University of California, Davis. Raissa founded PUSH Dance Company in 2005.

MARIAH STEELE is Artistic Director of Quicksilver Dance, a modern dance company originally based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and now in California's Bay Area. Using anthropological inquiry and artistic exploration, Quicksilver's dances delve into contemporary and timeless issues to inspire reflection and imagination and to spark new perspectives and cross-cultural dialogue.

SHREELATA SURESH, through Vishwa Shanthi Performing Arts, has had the privilege of performing in several events, amidst several types of audiences who are often mesmerized by the symmetry and the synchronized movements of the dancers, the dramatic expressions and the ability to convey stories to uninitiated audiences.

ALYSSANDRA KATHERINE WU holds a BA from UCLA in World Arts & Culture/Dance and an MA from London Contemporary Dance School. She founded AKDP in London in 2015. Most notably, Alyssandra has been listed as one of the most promising emerging choreographers of 2015 on londondance.com.

PROGRAM B: Saturday September 24, 8pm & Sunday September 25, 7pm

TODD THOMAS BROWN is a multi-practice artist whose work spans visual arts, interdisciplinary performance, and social practice. Named one of the 2015 YBCA 100 creative minds in the arts, Todd's work has been supported by the SF Arts Commission, Zellerbach Family Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, and the de Young Museum.

ASHLEY GAYLE has studied various forms of dance and was honored to train and perform at the Alvin Ailey studio in New York. A Bay Area native, Ashley graduated in 2012 from UC-Irvine with a BFA in Dance-Performance and a Business Management minor. She joined PUSH Dance Company in 2014.

NOAH D. JAMES is a California native living with Sickle Cell Disease. While studying Theater Arts at California State - East Bay, he worked with Eric Kupers, Nina Haft and Laura Ellis. Inspired by his battle with Sickle Cell, he hopes to translate his experience into a work of art.

ANGELA DICE NGUYEN created The MoveMessenger(s) in 2015 to explore her choreographic voice while working alongside artists in the Bay Area and beyond. The project has performed Nguyen's creations throughout San Francisco, San Jose, the Monterey Peninsula, and New York City at showcases, festivals, and the LINES Ballet Training Program.

KAMERON N. SAUNDERS is based in St. Louis, MO. *Without Warning* is a male duet that explores the musical nuances of the piece's electronic sound score by Moderat. Saunders contrasts a traditional modern dance vocabulary with repetitive pedestrian movements to complement the syncopated nature of the music.

CASEY LEE THORNE founded Inside Out Contemporary Ballet in 2012, utilizing extensive community outreach and site specific work to re-imagine ballet as social practice, with an ultimate goal of developing new works that offer visions of our shared humanity.

LALLI VENKAT is an Indian classical dancer and choreographer trained in the art of bharatanatyam. She aims to create new choreography that maintains the integrity of bharatanatyam by showcasing both the storytelling and athleticism involved in the dance form. She has performed and competed for the past eighteen years.

VERSHAWN WARD, Founder and Executive Artistic Director of Red Clay Dance Company in Chicago, holds a MFA in Dance from NYU and a BFA in Dance from Columbia College. Her company performs and teaches on Chicago's South Side, bringing socially conscious performances and dance education to underserved communities.

JAVAN WILSON is a native of Las Vegas, where he trained in popular street dance styles such as Popping, Locking, and Boogaloo. At City College of San Francisco's dance program, he focused on Modern and Afro Haitian. He is currently a member of Alafia Dance Ensemble, and studying Brazilian Samba.

KATERINA WONG graduated from Princeton University and has performed with RAWdance, LEVYdance, Printz Dance Project, Concept o4 and others. Her choreography has been presented at ZSPACE, ODC Theater, CounterPulse and Fort Mason. She has danced with PUSH Dance Company since 2012, serving as its Resident Choreographer since 2014.

P U S H

CALENDAR LISTING

DANCE, PERFORMING ARTS

"Ambitious" – *The New Yorker*
"Pushing the standard." – *SF Chronicle*
"Sleek and sexy." -- *SF Guardian*

WHO/WHAT:

PUSH Dance Company Presents

11th Home Season and Third Annual PUSHfest Dance Festival

Featuring two different programs of local and visiting artists over four evenings;

Mothership (Part I) - World Premiere, choreography by Raissa Simpson;

World Premiere by Resident Choreographer Katerina Wong;

World Premiere by PUSH Dancers Ashley Gayle & Noah James

WHEN:

Program A:

Friday September 23, 8pm

Sunday September 25, 4pm

Program B:

Saturday September 24, 8pm

Sunday September 25, 7pm

WHERE:

ODC Theater, 3153 - 17th Street, San Francisco, CA 94110

TICKETS:

\$28 in advance, \$30 at the door, \$15 for seniors and students

\$50 for a Festival pass that includes both programs.

Tickets and Festival passes can be purchased online at

<http://odcdance.org/buytickets.php>.

MORE INFORMATION:

Hi-Res Photos: www.pushdance.org/ourphotos

Company Website: www.pushdance.org

More About PUSHfest: www.pushdance.org/festival

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