

# DANCE SERIES

## bkSOUL

dance • poetry • music



Saturday, April 12, 2025

7:00 p.m.

Esch Studio, Warch Campus Center



## **The Movement Keeps Calling Me**

Choreography: grace shinhae jun with the dancers

Music: Kaytranada feat. Syd, Kaytranada feat. H.E.R. (Instrumental)

Original Music: Jesse Mills with Loren Kiyoshi Dempster

Spoken Word Poetry: Ant Black

Dancers: Lawrence University dancers

## **Moving Back to Forward**

Choreography: grace shinhae jun

Music: Jesse Mills with Loren Kiyoshi Dempster

Spoken Word Poetry: Ant Black

Dancers: grace shinhae jun and Keomi Tarver

**bkSOUL** was founded in 2001 by Dr. grace shinhae jun as a space to explore the relationship between Hip Hop culture and modern dance, debuting with the evening length work *Women Warriors in Love & Hip Hop*. The company began as a bi-coastal company (San Diego – Brooklyn), teaching and performing at various venues in Southern California, Brooklyn, New York City, Chicago, Seattle, Philadelphia, Indiana, San Francisco, and Mexico. In 2006, bkSOUL deepened its roots in San Diego and began collaborating with Collective Purpose (Ant Black, Kendrick Dial and Rudy Francisco), blending together movement, poetry, and live music to center on issues of social justice and communities of color through a Hip Hop framework. This award-winning performance company has created seven evening length works: *The Movement* (2007), *Hip Hop Saved My Life* (2009), *Love H.E.R.* (2013), *Illegible* (2015), *Still Moving* (2016), *The Lioness* (2017), *Get Free* (2019) and received “Best Musical Performance” (2016), “Outstanding Performance” (2017), and “Outstanding Multidisciplinary Production” (2019) for their work at the San Diego International Fringe Festival. bkSOUL was in residence at Lawrence University and performed their critically-acclaimed work *Illegible*. In 2016, celebrating the 10 years of working together the dancers, the poets, and musicians fully merged to perform solely as the conscious performance group bkSOUL. As educators, mothers, fathers, activists, and artists, bkSOUL is committed to education through the arts, to courageous insight and truth, and to helping strengthen our justice movement today.

*From rehearsal director of Lawrence University dancers for bkSOUL and co-director of Dance: Embodied Collaborative Practice minor and Interdisciplinary Area, Margaret Sunghe Paek:*

In February, Dr. grace held a weekend residency at Lawrence, working with eight dance students to create the first piece of tonight's performance, and they have been practicing showing up for each other, rigorously playing and dancing together since then. These Lawrentians came together from various departments and backgrounds, building a community of support, energy, and connection through movement. We couldn't be prouder.

This is bkSOUL's second residency at Lawrence University, and each time they visit, campus is transformed through their practices of dance, poetry, music, and love. They have guest taught classes across disciplines, created with students and faculty, and been so generous with their gorgeous, creative, human selves. We are honored to share bkSOUL with this community.

#### **Artist Bios:**

**Anthony Blacksher (aka Ant Black)** (PhD-Cultural Studies Claremont Graduate University) is a distinguished poet, professor, and avid vinyl collector. His academic expertise spans sociological practices, Ethnic Studies, Hip Hop Studies, and Digital Humanities. At San Bernardino Valley College, Blacksher has significantly impacted leadership, notably in the Sociology department and the establishment of the Ethnic Studies program. He has been actively involved in diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives and contributes to academic research with publications in respected journals. Furthermore, he plays a crucial role in enhancing teaching practices among community college instructors through the Puente Program. As a celebrated poet, Blacksher has led a poetry slam team to national stages, is a key member of the performance collective bkSOUL, and supports poetry and the arts as a publisher and board member, all while cherishing music that embodies the spirit of social justice and liberation.

**grace shinhae jun** (PhD-Theatre/Drama UCSD/UCI, MFA-Dance Sarah Lawrence College) is a mother, wife, artist, scholar, educator, organizer, and mover. The daughter of a South Korean immigrant and a North Korean refugee, she comes from a lineage of deep love and commitment

to serve the people. grace directs bkSOUL, an award-winning performance company that merges together movement, poetry, and live music to create work that directly challenges the systems of violence and oppression steeped in anti-Blackness. She is a founding core member of Asian Solidarity Collective, a grassroots organization committed to expanding Asian American social justice consciousness and co-conspires with the artists and healers of Street Dance Activism. She co-edited with MiRi Park Dance Studies Association's 2022 *Conversations Across the Field of Dance Studies* "Cyber-Rock: A Virtual Hip Hop Listening Cypher." grace is an educator at San Diego City College where she also serves on the Sankofa Social Justice & Education Conference committee, is a teaching artist with transcenDANCE Youth Arts, and is on faculty at UC San Diego where she was the recipient of the 2022/2023 Barbara and Paul Saltman Distinguished Teaching Award.

**Jesse Mills**, (PhD-Ethnic Studies UCSD) has been writing and playing music since age 11. His musical influences range from Jimi Hendrix to Nina Simone, Jeff Buckley to Maxwell, B. B. King to Megadeth, Guns N Roses to Public Enemy. Jesse has sung with the New England Conservatory Gospel Choir, the Coro Alegro Italian folk choir (Santa Rosa, CA), and has performed solo and in ensemble settings in schools and coffee shops in Northern and Southern California. As a guitarist and singer, he has been collaborating with bkSOUL, cellist Loren Kiyoshi Dempster, and percussionist Don Nichols. Currently Associate Professor in the Ethnic Studies Department at the University of San Diego, Jesse proudly serves the community as an artist, activist, and scholar. With degrees in African American Studies and Ethnic Studies his research and teaching challenges racism, imperialism, and injustice to contribute to collective social transformation.

**Loren Kiyoshi Dempster** uses a combination of cello, computer, electronics, composition, improvisation, notated scores, movement, and world music influences to create, teach and perform music. He has created and performed music with many collaborators, including Jonah Bokaer, Harrison Atelier, bkSOUL, and Lower Left. He toured with Merce Cunningham Dance Company performing *Interscape* and *Biped* from 1999-2011. With Dahlia Nayar, he nationally toured *2125 Stanley Street* from 2016-2017. His recent compositions include *Breathe*, a critically acclaimed March 2019 water dance opera he co-directed with projectLIMB

at Lawrence University Swimming Pool, *Unquantifiable*, a February 2019 dance theater performance with Chris Ferris and Dancers at Roulette in Brooklyn, NYC, and *Circle*, a home recorded 2020 Bandcamp album of experimentally tinged Singer Songwriter music. In addition to his teaching at Lawrence University, Dempster is also a regular guest teaching artist at Renaissance School for the Arts.

**Keomi Tarver** is a traveling performer, choreographer, and Artistic Holistic Healer. She has performed in San Diego, Yale University, South Carolina and worked in New York City for over 12 years. Throughout the last decade, Keomi Tarver has performed on stages for more than 20,000 people, led private classes with celebrity clients including supermodel, Ashley Graham, taught dance classes for brands such as Nordstrom and Aerie and has delivered over 100 workshops across the country. She has written, choreographed, and directed many productions, films and performances, infused with dance and poetry, and welcoming vulnerability and showing the power of choice and duality. Her art expands and transforms ways of thinking and living and encourages her community to heal, create, live, and love abundantly. Keomi is the Founder and Master Facilitator of AbunDANCE with Keomi®, which serves a global community of teen performers, wellness enthusiasts, and corporate partners through wellness retreats, private sessions, and customized learning experiences.

### **Lawrence University dancers:**

**Aimsley Shearer** is a second-year student passionate about performing and creating theatre. She discovered dance last year and has, ever since, been spending as much time as possible in the studio.

**Atlas Wagner '26** is a music major with a minor in dance at Lawrence, with a passion for investigating how queer and trans bodies fit into the worlds of dance and music.

**Billy Greene** is a junior at Lawrence with keen interests in poetry, music, travel, decolonial feminisms, and movement. They savor cups of coffee after long days of hiking.

**Ella Fajardo-Wilde** is a second-year student who beams with creativity. She hails from Brooklyn, New York and takes all their cultural backgrounds to express their artistry.

**Jasmine Germany** is a second-year student from Queens, NY. She's a creative and future educator who takes every opportunity to present her skills, such as, tutoring, dancing, and mentoring.

**Madison Tracy '27** is a double-major in music and psychology with a minor in dance. She's a passionate choreographer and educator from Lancaster, Wisconsin who ties her love of singing, art-making, and connection into her work.

**Martin Tran** is a second-year student majoring in computer science and minoring in dance, who was born and raised in the Bay Area. Martin loves to push his limits.

From the moon and back, **MeiSi Chang** is an aspiring theatre and dance artist who is a sophomore at Lawrence University. During her free time MeiSi likes to participate in public speaking as it's the number one thing that people fear most in the world, and MeiSi loves challenging herself for fun.

*[Lawrence University's](#) Appleton and Door County campuses are located on the ancestral home of the [Menominee](#) and [Ho-Chunk Nations](#). Currently there are 11 federally recognized and other non-federally-recognized Native American sovereign nations in Wisconsin. We acknowledge and honor these indigenous communities who have stewarded this land throughout the generations and pay respect to the elders past and present. We also acknowledge the foundational and often invisibilized [influence of Native American culture, practice, and traditions](#) on theatrical concert dance.*