

DeAunna S. Blackwell is a performer, teacher, and alumna of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy and The New School: Lang. She holds a degree in Global Studies with a minor in Dance Education. With ten years of experience teaching in New York City, Ms. Blackwell is experienced in teaching all levels of ballet, modern, and jazz dance, as well as acting. She is a dance education teacher at EL Haynes Public Charter School in Washington, DC. She also runs a youth dance company called Inspired Collective Dance Company. The company is dedicated to uplifting the next generation through performance, leadership, and community. Ms. Blackwell is highly active in dance performance and production, with two new works to be showcased at the Atlas Theater in Spring 2024. Ms. Blackwell believes that dance is the embodiment of the soul in motion. It unites humanity through storytelling, providing a path to freedom and healing.

Therese Gahl is a freelance contemporary ballet choreographer, dance teacher, and artist from Alexandria, VA. With a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from George Mason University and former member of Ballet West II, Therese has performed with DC local dance companies such as Gin Dance Company, Movius Dance, Teatro de Danza Contemporanea, and Motion X Dance. As an instructor and choreographer, she has worked alongside Berrend Dance Centre, CityDance Conservatory, Maryland Youth Ballet and the Washington School of Ballet. Therese has also worked as an adjunct professor and guest choreographer at Towson University, and created works at Georgetown University and Columbia University. While currently abroad with her military service spouse, Therese frequently returns to Washington, DC to create works and teach at esteemed dance institutions.

Madeline Maxine Gorman is talkative and loud. That's partly due to being hard of hearing, but primarily because she embraces queer, disabled, and neurodivergent identity. Featured in Dance Magazine's 25 to Watch, Max's choreography is "intellectually probing, politically minded, and personally revelatory" (Dance Magazine). Described as a "raw talent" and "a treasure that can push her and the dance community in the right direction" (Charm City Dance), she examines the relationships between mass media, mental health, and movement as the Artistic Director of GRIDLOCK Dance in Washington, DC.

Rey Harris began her training at White Marsh Ballet Academy under directors Sandra Prehoda and Shari Vasquez-Bickel, as well as George Washington Carver Center for Arts and Technology, with Maria Royals and Stephanie Powell. She participated in Ballet Theatre of Maryland's Summer Intensive, as well as performing in their professional productions of Cinderella and Excalibur under the direction of Diana Cuatto. Rey then went on to receive her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Dance at Shenandoah Conservatory where she performed works by Tiffanie Carson, Daniel Padierna, Maurice Fraga, Ting-Yu Chen, Lauren

Carnesi-Daniels, Yoshito Sakuraba, Danielle Sten-Guillermo, and Shylo Martinez. Rey has premiered many solo and group composition pieces, including her recent work, “the pool is not a play thing”, which premiered in May 2023.

Tabata Vara is a Mexican-American choreographer based out of Maryland. She began her dance training at the age of 18. In 2022, Tabata earned a BFA in Dance Performance and Choreography from Towson University, where she received the Outstanding Achievement in Choreography Award under the mentorship of Alison Seidenstricker.

Tabata's artistic passion centers on crafting immersive environments and narratives that transcend boundaries, delving into the darker aspects of human existence with a captivating macabre element. In 2022, inspired by academic research and personal experiences, she founded Totema Dance Company, pushing boundaries to evoke raw emotions. Noteworthy works like "Obruo" and “When Tongues Collide” graced local stages, such as Nachmo DC 2021 and DC Summer Dance Showcase 2023. In 2023, Tabata presented "Immolatio" internationally at Kyoto's Shipukunji Temple during The Attune Dance Festival, where she also led a creative movement workshop for children.

Baylee Wong is in her first season with DC-based Modern Dance Company, Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company. Baylee received a BFA in Dance Performance and Choreography at Towson University and is the recipient of the Jim Synder Award for Technical Excellence and Choreography Award. She trained in various styles including ballet, tap, jazz, modern, and ballroom and loves to find ways to fuse multiple styles.

Honorary Participant

Alexandra F. Light is originally from Washington, DC where she trained at the Maryland Youth Ballet, attending summer programs with the School of American Ballet, San Francisco Ballet School, Kaatsbahn, and others. She is an anti-disciplinary artist and choreographer and a current principal dancer with Texas Ballet Theater where she is in her 12th season. She completed a BS in Psychology from the University of Maryland Global Campus, magna cum laude, throughout her early dance career. Her choreographic works encapsulate her multidimensional approach to dance through her varied interests, artistic pursuits, and studies. Her works have been performed at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Steps on Broadway, the Katzen Arts Center at American University, and in 2023 she was the inaugural recipient of the Frank Lloyd Wright Martin House creative residency for choreography.