

# **HARVARD DANCE CENTER SHOWINGS: INITIATION– IN LOVE SOLIDARITY**

**SATURDAY NOVEMBER 13, 4PM & 7PM**

Live performance, film screening, and conversation

## **Artistic Director, Choreographer**

Nailah Randall-Bellinger

## **Assistant to the Artistic Director**

Jenny Oliver

## **Dancers**

|                |                          |
|----------------|--------------------------|
| Imani Deal     | Jeryl Palana             |
| Patricka James | Nailah Randall-Bellinger |
| Jenny Oliver   | Toni S. Singleton        |

## **Spoken Word Composition**

Dancers

## **Music**

"Harmony With Nature" by Matthew Halsall

## **Production Manager & Lighting Designer**

Jon Gonda

## **Moderators**

Vincent Brown, Professor of African and African American Studies (4pm)  
Laura Rodriguez, aka LROD, Lecturer & Interim Head of Dance for Theater, Dance & Media (7pm)

## **Accessibility Services (4pm)**

Julia Barnes and Saafyr, ASL Interpreters

Alyson Osborn, Audio Describer

To access audio description:

Dial by phone: +1 301 715 8592 Meeting ID: 935 4453 3420

## **Harvard Dance Center Staff**

Elizabeth Epsen, Communications & Programs Coordinator for Dance

Kirsten Leonard, Administrative Manager for Dance

Daniel Rivera, Administrative Assistant for Dance

## **Special Thanks**

Dr. Robert Bellinger, Professor Vincent Brown, Dr. Ali Glassie, Lori Gross, Jill Johnson, Krishna Lewis,  
Felice León, LROD, Sara Rantanen, and Kathleen Schoer

## **Land Acknowledgment**

Harvard University is situated on the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Massachusetts people. The Dance Center pays its respects to elders of the Massachusetts, Nipmuck, and Wampanoag people both past and present.

*Initiation– In Love Solidarity* is a commission of the Harvard University Committee on the Arts and was made possible with the support of the Johnson-Kulukundis Family President's Fund for Arts at Harvard University.

Additional support from Harvard Radcliffe Institute and the Presidential Initiative on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery.

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## From the Creator, Nailah Randall-Bellinger

Initiation- In Love Solidarity is a choreographic narrative that explores identity through a corporeal and collective consciousness. As an African American woman, I have chosen the cowrie shell as a cultural symbol throughout the work, referencing its usage as currency for the commodification of the Black body, as well as its symbol of wealth, fertility, and beauty. The dance specifically examines the transformative identity of the Black female body, both imposed and self-proclaimed, linked and represented through the cowrie shell.

This dance narrative is about the collective-lived experience of my African ancestors, from the Middle Passage through an existence into a new space and time, charged with the mission of asserting a collective and evolved identity. The backdrop to the dance film captures the Atlantic Ocean at Ogunquit Beach and Green Acre, in Eliot Maine, from whence some of our ancestors landed in the new world. It is through their sea water baptism that we come to know their spirits and continue to receive their lessons of forgiveness, reclamation, creativity, and the resilience to begin anew. The film's third site, The Robbins House, in Concord, MA, represents our self-determination through ownership of property. This idea of ownership, both of property and of self, leads to agency and a realization of Black identity. The benches on which the dancers find stillness, provide a place of refuge, reflection, and contemplation from which true emancipation can take place.

Above all, the dance is an act of self-love, self-reclamation, and resilience.

[Learn more about Initiation– In Love Solidarity](#)

## About Nailah Randall-Bellinger

[Nailah Randall-Bellinger](#) is a dancer, dance scholar, educator, and founding artistic director of RootsUprising Dance Company. She has been teaching modern and contemporary dance for over 35 years throughout the United States and abroad and has studied, performed, and lectured in Brazil, Ghana, Haiti, The Czech Republic, and Senegal. After receiving a Masters degree from Lesley University with a concentration in Interdisciplinary Studies: Dance and African American literature, she began to focus and develop the concept of the “dancing text” as a means to explore the corporeality of dance. In 1998 Nailah presented her work Dancing Beloved as part of the Gendered Resistance Conference at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where her company RootsUprising retold Toni Morrison’s story of Margaret Garner through movement. Randall-Bellinger is one of the contributing artists/writers to the book Gendered Resistance, a written account of the conference, published in 2013.

Currently, she serves as the Chair of the Dance Department at The Cambridge School of Weston, in Weston, MA, where she has taught for the past ten years. She has also been Teaching Artist faculty at Harvard Dance Center for over a decade and continues to teach contemporary and body conditioning classes throughout the year.

## About Harvard Dance Center

The [Harvard Dance Center](#)'s mission is equity, dignity, and transformation through artistic, academic, and civic leadership in beloved community, and to advance dance literacy on campus and for the world. Dance education across all offerings aims to foster agency for students and promotes the arts as agents of social change in the world.

We aim to provide meaningful engagement through dance and the arts – on campus, and in our greater Cambridge and Boston communities and beyond them. Dance Center physical and virtual spaces cultivate inclusivity, reflection, dialogue, expression, fellowship, research, and invention. No matter the point of entry, from community dance classes and master classes, to student-led groups and the Theater, Dance & Media (TDM) concentration, our focus is to foster a transformative student experience and empower tomorrow's artists, innovators, and leaders.

Harvard Dance Center is funded through the Office for the Arts at Harvard, with additional support from  
Theater, Dance & Media.