THE HARVARD DANCE PROJECT PERFORMS THREE WORLD PREMIERES BY PREEMINENT CHOREOGRAPHERS AT FARKAS HALL ON APRIL 26-29, 2018

(Cambridge, MA) The Harvard Dance Project presents three world premieres by choreographers Chanel DaSilva, Peter Chu, and Shamel Pitts featuring Harvard student dancers at Farkas Hall on April 26-29, 2018. The Harvard Dance Project (HDP) is a Theater, Dance & Media academic course that focuses on performance research and is led by Jill Johnson, HDP Founder/Artistic Director, Dance Director, and Senior Lecturer on Theater, Dance & Media. The works were created especially for The Harvard Dance Project student dancers over the 2018 spring term.

As artists-in-residence at Harvard Dance Center this spring, DaSilva, Chu, and Pitts have created distinct works that reflect upon and consider resonant themes in the greater culture. “DaSilva, Chu, and Pitts are remarkable artists and educators with a diverse set of artistic approaches and ideas. Their work helps to advance our Dance Center mission which aims to offer students the chance to be active participants in dance making with preeminent dance makers who engage with wide-ranging topics, approaches, and traditions. It has been a thrilling opportunity for our student dancers to have original roles created for them by these powerful, generous, and courageous arts leaders,” said Johnson.

DaSilva’s work, PUBLIC/private, responds to issues around the sexual harassment of women and the structures of power in our culture. DaSilva articulated her process with HDP: “Because of the provocative nature of PUBLIC/private I knew that I needed to create this work with a team of artists who are intelligent, honest, and brave human beings that understand the power that art has to foster change in the world. I knew this year with The Harvard Dance Project was the perfect time and the place to dig deep and crack open an issue that far too often gets swept under the rug.”

Chu’s Fitting Out explores fragility of character as bodies groove through rhythms reminding us that moving together can create community and connection. Chu said, “Playing with curiosity, Fitting Out moves through the hidden truths of change, slips into a coat of compassion, soaks in forgotten rhythms, and vacillates between waving emotions.”

Pitts’ piece, WILL, is inspired by the title’s multivalence and the power of slowing down during turbulent times. “I have a huge interest in researching the many identities that construct our society and the ease in which, through the language of movement, we can reconstruct the titles and its associations in order to give room and space for a new possibility,” said Pitts.

Widely recognized and acclaimed performers, choreographers, and educators, each guest artist brings impressive accolades to their Harvard residency. Chanel DaSilva was a member of the Trey McIntyre Project from 2008-2014 and has performed works by Ohad Naharin, Eliot Feld, Doug Varone, Jose Limon, Alvin Ailey, Robert Battle, Camille A. Brown, and Lar Lubovitch. She won the 2004 Presidential Scholar in the Arts, is a 2011 Princess Grace Dance Honorarium Awardee, and is currently on faculty at LaGuardia High School. She is also the Co-Founder/Director of MOVE(NYC), a New York City-based arts organization whose mission includes providing tuition-free dance and leadership education to talented NYC teenagers, cultivating greater diversity and equity within the dance profession.
Peter Chu is the Founding Artistic Director and Choreographer of chuthis., a Las Vegas-based multi-disciplinary dance company, and has choreographed internationally including a work for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and the ninth and tenth seasons of So You think You Can Dance. This spring he also premièred a commissioned work for the Charlotte Ballet. As a dancer, Chu performs internationally, recently in Crystal Pite’s works A Picture of You Falling and Betroffenheit in Canada and Europe.

Shamel Pitts was a member of Ohad Naharin’s Batsheva Dance Company for seven years, Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal, and Mikhail Baryshnikov’s Hell’s Kitchen Dance. He is a teacher of Gaga, Naharin’s movement language, and has been on faculty and a guest teacher at Nederlands Dans Theater Summer Intensive, SUNY Purchase, and The Juilliard School. Pitts has collaborated in the creation of several performance art works, most recently a dance film which includes Pitts’ poetry, with Brazilian artist Mirelle Martins entitled BLACK VELVET: Architectures and Archetypes.

“Dance is a deeply Socratic practice – one that exists beyond words on the page, and is sustained by profound non-verbal, physical research. Artists lean into what Dr. Cornel West calls ‘catastrophic consciousness.’ Dr. West says, ‘…when catastrophe is met with creativity and compassion, there is possibility for transformation – that’s a blues sensibility, a way of life.’ So too in dance. Each of our extraordinary guest artists exemplifies these practices through the deep engagement of their distinctive artist citizenship. In these works, they have laid bare what they are contending with and reflecting upon in our culture, at this moment – with tenderness, honesty, and courage,” said Johnson.

Performances on April 26-28, at 7pm, and April 29, at 2pm, are at Farkas Hall, 12 Holyoke St. Tickets are available online at boxoffice.harvard.edu or in person at the Harvard Box Office, 10 Holyoke St. (Tues-Sun., 12-6pm). A pre-performance talk with the choreographers will be held at 6:30pm on Thursday, April 26, and a post-performance talk will immediately follow the Friday, April 27 performance. The Thursday, April 26 performance will also include an open community cypher immediately following the performance, led by Aysha Upchurch (AIE ’15) and accompanied by musician Ryan Edwards.

Advance priced tickets: $5 students/seniors and $10 general. Tickets at the door: $10 for students/seniors, $20 general admission. Group discounts available, contact Harvard Dance Center directly. For more information visit ofa.fas.harvard.edu/dance or call the Harvard Dance Center main office: (9:30am-5:30pm) 617-495-8683.

The Harvard Dance Project Spring 2018 Performances are supported by the Blodgett Distinguished Artist Program, Bromley Innovation Fund for Dance, Office for the Arts, Provostial Fund for the Arts and Humanities, and Theater, Dance & Media at Harvard University.

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**ABOUT HARVARD DANCE CENTER**

The Harvard Dance Center is a site that leads through equality and dignity for all, aims to foster agency through dance for students, and promotes the arts as agents of social change in the world. Dance offerings at Harvard Dance Center include curricular courses led by Dance faculty in Theater, Dance & Media, as well as non-credit Harvard community dance classes which span a wide range of genres for students at all levels of dance experience. The Dance Center regularly hosts guest artists and choreographers who teach master classes and hold residencies throughout the academic year, fostering exceptional opportunities for students to work with luminaries and innovators in the field and in disciplines linked to dance. The Dance Center partners with departments and organizations across campus to provide workshops and dialogues that address important campus and cultural issues. It provides mentorship, support, and residency opportunities for student emerging choreographers, as well as for student-led dance groups which represent over 20 traditions from across the globe.
ABOUT THEATER, DANCE & MEDIA
Harvard's newest concentration, Theater, Dance & Media, invites students to become art makers and researchers ranging across theater, dance, and performance-based media. Using Harvard's immense resources, from the Theatre Collection to the Dance Center and the American Repertory Theater, students learn to hone their creative instincts, work collaboratively in small groups, and participate in professional departmental productions. Courses range from physical movement, directing, and design to creative writing, aesthetics, and digital humanities and emphasize the combination of theory, history, and practice. Equally invested in technical skills and a broad liberal arts education, the concentration aims to launch a generation of graduates who will use their experience in storytelling, performance, and media for careers inside and outside the arts.

Dance studies in the TDM interarts concentration are rooted in tradition, and committed to innovation. Courses support studies in dance composition, improvisation, performance, choreographic design, and history of dance with an emphasis on collaboration and trans-disciplinary inquiry. Opportunities to perform wide-ranging repertory, commissioned work, and installations are a focal component of coursework, and digital technology is leveraged to devise new methods for making and capturing the form. Guest artist faculty teach master classes, courses, hold residencies, and create original work each academic year, fostering exceptional opportunities for students to work with luminaries and innovators who engage diverse and dynamic perspectives in the field and in disciplines linked to dance.