

BIOGRAPHIES

Fran Spector Atkins is the Director and Founder of SpectorDance. She has directed venues in NYC, Cleveland, and Monterey and has been a guest artist throughout the United States and abroad. Some of her outstanding experiences include presenting her work at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C, Stanford University, Denmark, Italy, Egypt, England, Israel, the Island of Guam, and Taiwan. Fran has created numerous socially-relevant works and received numerous honors. She was featured in Carmel Magazine for making “altruistic contributions to the community” and in the film *Luminaries of Monterey County*. She has twice presented at TEDx Monterey. SpectorDance was selected by The Arts Council for Monterey County as the *Outstanding Arts Organization in Monterey County* and as a national finalist for the Ovation TV award for *Excellence in the Performing Arts*. In 2020, she received the Florence Haspel Zeve Award for Outstanding Female Artist in Monterey serving Women, Families, and the Arts. Fran founded the Choreographers Showcase in 1997.

Tsiambwom M. Akuchu is a street dance and theatre artist whose work has been presented on stages like the Kennedy Center and Joe's Pub at The Public. He often creates work for concert dance that stages hip-hop and street dance fused with physical theater to create a unique performance experience. He has been working for the past several years as a solo artist creating new work, performing his repertoire, and in stage plays for festivals and shows like the Arts On Site NYC, DANCE NOW New York Festival, TEDx Providence, Big Sky Summer Theatre Festival, and the Atlanta Spring for Spring Festival. Tsiambwom received his BA in Theatre from Georgia Southern University and his MFA in Theatre from the University of Montana. He's taught at Colby College and is currently an Assistant Professor of Dance at CSULB.

Danah Bella is an acclaimed choreographer who has performed, presented work, and been an artist in residence at festivals and universities throughout the United States and abroad. She is the artistic director of danahbella DanceWorks, a modern dance company focused on reclaiming evocative movement as social practice, and a founding member of Colectivo Caliban, an artist collective that transgresses disciplinary borders through sound and movement. Danah is currently the Founding Chair of the BFA Dance program at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University and the Artistic Director of the award-winning Peabody Dance Ensemble. She received the Maryland Dance Education Association's 2021 Dance Educator of the Year Award for Higher Education; she was named one of Baltimore Sun's 25 Women to Watch in 2018; and most recently, was conferred one of Musical America's Top 30 Professionals of the Year for 2022.

Deborah Brockus has been called a force of nature in LA dance. She is the artistic director of the internationally touring company BrockusRED, an award-winning producer of the Los Angeles Dance Festival and many other dance showcases, and Director of BPStudios which is a space for workshops, intensives, classes, and rehearsals for the community. A master teacher for college, professional, and pre-professional dancers. Both her choreographic and performing career covers both concert and commercial dance with works in Live Stage Performance, Site Specific works, TV, and Film. Ms. Brockus enjoys the freedom of working at the intersection of contemporary/jazz/modern styles.

Meredith Ventura is a multi-creative artist based out of Southern California with a B.F.A. and M.A. in Dance from UC Santa Barbara where she received numerous university awards. Ms. Ventura received her M.F.A. in dance at Hollins University and is now pursuing Ph.D. in Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies at UC Santa Barbara. As the founder and artistic director of Selah Dance Collective, Ms. Ventura has produced full evening-length performances and presented works throughout the United States and abroad, most recently in France, Estonia, Norway, Finland, and Italy. Ms. Ventura is currently on faculty at dance studios throughout the Southern California area and travels nationally and internationally as a dance educator and advocate for the arts. In addition to her creative work, Ms. Ventura also is the director of State Street Ballet's Professional Track training program.

Ramya Harishankar is the artistic director of the Arpana Dance Company (ADC), a premier school of Bharata Natyam in California, and has taught several hundred students since 1982. Was recently named Legacy artist by the California Arts Council, having previously received Art OC's Helene Modjeska Cultural Legacy award. Her solo performing career of five decades has taken her to India, Asia, Europe, Australia, and N. America. Since 2020, Harishankar has been sharing the intricacies of *abhinaya*/interpretive dance nationally and internationally both online and in person. She premiered a digital series, Dance Conversations, documenting her four-decade journey in the Diaspora through the 'lens & voice' of her mentors, colleagues, and collaborators. Short 'dance films' [Bhumika](#) & [Aasha](#) have been critically acclaimed. ADC has performed in the US, Europe, India, and Japan in aid of charities. ADC/Harishankar are recipients of prestigious grants from California Arts Council, Alliance for California Traditional Arts and she is a 2-time NEA's Choreographic Fellow.

Tracy R. Kofford holds a BFA in Dance from the University of California of Santa Barbara and a MFA from New York University, TISCH School of the Arts. Tracy has performed and choreographed nationally and internationally with his own work and Jennifer Muller/The Works, who he danced with for over 10 years in NYC. He has studied and worked with some of the world's most influential choreographers, performers, and dance companies. He also performed with Disney Cruise lines, featured as Tarzan. Mr. Kofford was featured in photographer Lois Greenfield: Still Moving. He has received numerous honors including the McCallum Choreography Award in 2016, ACDA Gala recognition, and the Audience Choice award at the Red Rock Dance Festival. His choreography has been presented at Lincoln Center in NYC, Switzerland, and has toured nationally and internationally. He is currently the Director of Dance at Santa Barbara City College and the Artistic Director of SBCC Dance Company.

Stephanie Mizrahi is a Los Angeles-based performer, choreographer, and educator. Her creations seek to bring awareness and a sense of commonality to the human experience, often with a focus on historical perspectives. She received her dance training from Yuri Grigoriev School of Ballet and Debbie Allen Dance Academy, both in LA, before moving to New York to attend the Ailey/Fordham BFA. She graduated in 2020 with a dual major in Dance and History. After returning to LA, Stephanie performed extensively for BrockusRED Dance Company and is in her second season with Psychopomp Dance Theater. Stephanie's choreography has been presented throughout the Los Angeles area, most notably Orange County Dance Festival and Mashup's International Women's Day Showcase. Her work has also been shown in New York City and Atlanta. When Stephanie isn't performing and choreographing, she teaches dance at West LA Academy of Dance and Pilates at Equinox.

Ryan Ruiz is a dancer, choreographer, and teacher from Sacramento, CA. He received his BFA in Dance Theatre at The American Musical and Dramatic Academy. Ryan is a company member of Diavolo: Architecture in Motion. He has worked within the commercial industry dancing/choreographing for artists such as Diplomacy, Jeff Waters, and Loud Forest as well as competing as a choreographer on Choreo Cage Fight hosted by Tinashe. He has also had the honor to perform works nationally and internationally for many Directors/Choreographers/Companies such as L.A. Contemporary Dance Company, Daniel Ezralow, French choreographer Radhouane El Meddeb, Micaela Taylor, Gregory Dolbashian, Whyteberg, Genevieve Carson, and Acts of Matter. He has his own throw pillow business called Tapered Nomad. Ryan is also a certified indoor cycling instructor and personal trainer.

Charlotte Katherine Smith is a LA and NYC-based choreographer, dance artist, award-winning filmmaker, and arts educator. She is the Artistic Director of Charlotte Katherine & Co. Her work addresses human physical and emotional experiences through multidisciplinary collaborations - her live theatrical and digital creations have been presented nationally and internationally, most notably at the Seoul International Dance Festival in TANK, Korea, the Ford Amphitheater (Los Angeles), and Los Angeles Dance Festival. Her accomplishments include commissions, international collaborations, and awards, including Luckman

Director's Pick of the Festival at LA Dance Festival 2020. She attended Idyllwild Arts Academy (receiving the Dancer of the Year Award 2008), the SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance (performing with the Purchase Dance Corps), and graduated Cum Laude from Cornish College of the Arts with a BFA in dance.

Margaret Wingrove is the Founder and Artistic Director of Margaret Wingrove Dance Company (MWDC), and guest choreographer for companies such as Palo Alto Ballet, Berkeley Ballet, sjDANCEco, San Jose Taiko, Opera San Jose, and the Symphony Silicon Valley. She holds a BFA in Dance from San Jose State University, and an MFA from the University of San Francisco, and performed and studied extensively on both the east and west coasts. Her works have been presented at Jacobs Pillow Dance Festival in Massachusetts, David Howard Showcase in NYC, San Francisco Dance Festival at Herbst Theatre, and seven of her original works have been performed across England. In 1993, Wingrove received the Women of Achievement Award for the Arts, and in 1998 was honored by SJSU's School of Music and Dance for her contributions to the Field of Dance. She was the recipient of the Silicon Valley Creates Fellowship Award for Choreography. In 2016, Wingrove celebrated 35 years as Artistic Director of MWDC and, to date, has created over 140 original works.

Allen Chunhui Xing is a dancer and choreographer based in Baltimore. He holds a BFA in Dance from the Shanxi Academy of Arts, an M.Ed. from Salisbury University, and an MFA in Dance from the University of Maryland. He currently is the Artistic Director of Xing Dance Theater and City Dance Festival. He is a former member of the Huajin Dance Drama Ensemble (China) and performed in the production *Forbidden Fruit Under the Great Wall* which internationally toured from 2007-2011. His work has been invited and selected to perform nationally and internationally including at the Dance Gallery Festival NYC, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Beijing Dance Festival, and many more! Xing is both the 2020 Baltimore and Maryland State Independent Artist Award awardee, 2021 Baker Artist Award recipient, and 2021 Russian Season School Government Choreography Grant recipient.

Flynn Cohen

Acoustic guitar player Flynn Cohen makes original music that's both experimental and traditional. Drawing from a range of techniques and influences, including flatpicking, strumming, Irish, and old-time music, Cohen pushes against convention with a mastery of many styles. Flynn has performed all over the world and venues from Carnegie Hall to the Library of Congress. When he's not playing solo, he tours with the award-winning folk band Low Lily.