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Thursday, June 23, 2016

Forum for Dance Community Speaker Bios

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Charles Rice-González is an author and long-time LGBTQ activist. In 1998, he co-founded, with choreographer Arthur Aviles, BAAD! The Bronx Academy of Arts and Dance, a cultural organization/theater that presents empowering works for women, people of color and the LGBTQ community. He's a Distinguished Lecturer at Hostos Community College and is an Associate Artistic Director of Hostos Center overseeing the CUNY Dance Initiative. He's on the boards of BCA and NALAC.

Gabri Christa came to filmmaking after a successful career as a choreographer and dancer with companies such as Danza Contemporanea de Cuba and the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company. Awards include the Guggenheim for Choreography, an ABC television award for creative excellence for her short film "High School and Pangea Day Festival's one World's 100 most promising Filmmakers distinction. Her film KASITA won best short at the Harlem International Film Festival. She just finished her documentary about Caribbean Yoga Master Leo Floridas. Per July 1, she starts as Assistant Professor Professional Practice at Barnard College Dance Department developing Dance on Camera and teaching dance. She continues at Snug Harbor Cultural Center as a curator.

A lifelong resident of Western Queens, Jimmy Van Bramer was first elected to the New York City Council in 2009. In 2014, Council Member Van Bramer was elected Majority Leader of the New York City Council. He was also appointed by Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito to co-chair the newly constituted Budget Negotiating Team (BNT) which plays an integral role in formulating the City's budget process. Council Member Van Bramer chairs the Council's Cultural Affairs Committee. As Chair of the committee, he has direct oversight over 200 libraries and thousands of cultural organizations, institutions and programs throughout New York City. The ideals that Council Member Van Bramer has worked for over his entire career — respect for working people, equality for all, and the importance of improving quality of life in our community — were instilled in him by his family and strong Catholic upbringing in Queens. His father and mother were both members of local unions. Majority Leader Van Bramer currently lives in Sunnyside Gardens with Dan Hendrick, his partner of 15 years. They were married in 2012, making Council Member Van Bramer the first openly-gay elected official to get married in Queens.

Jonah Bokaer has been active as a choreographer and exhibiting artist since 2002. The creator of 55 works in a wide variety of media, Bokaer's work has been produced in venues around the world, including Jacob's Pillow, Festival d'Avignon, Spoleto Festival, La Triennale di Milano, the Guggenheim Museum, P.S.1 MoMA, and The New Museum in NYC.

Linda Shelton is the executive director and a Trustee of The Joyce Theater Foundation. Prior to 1993, Shelton served as general manager of The Joffrey Ballet and managed tours for the Bolshoi Ballet, Bolshoi Ballet Academie, Moscow Virtuosi, and Sankai Juku. She worked with Philip Glass productions and held various management positions at The Twyla Tharp Dance Foundation. Shelton began her work in the dance field as an intern at the New York State Council on the Arts, Dance Program after receiving her B.A. degree in Dance from New York University. Shelton currently sits on two prominent dance boards, Dance/NYC and Dance/USA, serving as a trustee for Dance/USA from 1996 to 2006 and chair from 2000-2002. In 2013, Shelton became a Tony Award nominator for The Broadway League. In 1999, Shelton was appointed Chevalier of France's Order of Arts and Letters for her contribution to furthering the arts. In 2004, she was the recipient of The Documents of Dance Award given by The Dance Library of Israel. With her leadership, The Joyce Theater received the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Liberty Award in 2011. Shelton is an adjunct professor in the graduate program of Arts Administration at New York University and has also taught at Marymount Manhattan College. She has served on panels for the National Endowment for the Arts, the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, American Masters: Dance, Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Toyota Choreography Award in Tokyo, and the Benois de la danse in Moscow.

Randall Bourscheidt is the founding director of the Archive of New York City Cultural Policy. Established in 2014, the Archive is a dynamic resource for planning the evolving cultural policy of New York City government, reflecting a partnership covering almost 150 years between the City and the nonprofit cultural organizations which enrich its life and contribute to its social and educational improvement and economic strength. He is also a member of the steering committee of One Percent for Culture, a citywide advocacy group. He was Deputy Commissioner of Cultural Affairs for New York City from 1981 to 1987, including a period as Acting Commissioner in 1982-83, and Chairman of the New York City Advisory Commission for Cultural Affairs from 1995 to 1998. Mr Bourscheidt became President of the Alliance for the Arts in 1989. Under his direction, the Alliance—a nonprofit advocacy and research organization which published a series of influential reports on the economic impact of the arts in New York City and State. Mr Bourscheidt is dedicated to strengthening cultural organizations, assisting artists and encouraging new projects that contribute to education, community stabilization, resilience and the quality of life for New York City. He is the New York board member of Artspace, the nonprofit developer of artists housing, the City Center of Music & Drama to Moving Theater, and the Center for Performance Art in Brooklyn. He was previously a board member of Creative Time, the National Assembly of Local Arts Organizations, and the New York Landmarks Preservation Foundation.

Sheila Lewandowski is Executive Director and co-founder of The Chocolate Factory Theater an award-winning incubator for experimental performance in Long Island City. She is on the Executive Committee of her local Community Board, on the Board of the Non-Profit Coordinating Committee of NY and is a member of the % For Culture Steering Committee. She advocates for artists; works to increase awareness of the importance of the arts in policymaking in everything from education to housing to labor.

Simone Eccleston is the Interim Director of Programming at Harlem Stage, where she is responsible for envisioning, defining and executing the programmatic direction of the institution in service of its mission. As such, she is responsible for the oversight of the creation and development of all program series and initiatives including WaterWorks, Harlem Stride, Uptown Nights, E-Moves, Theater, Film and Multidisciplinary Programs. She is also responsible for all humanities and education programs.

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