

June, 21-23, 2024

## Queer the Ballet in partnership Baruch Performing Arts Center presents Dream of a Common Language

Company: Queer the Ballet

Venue: Baruch Performing Arts Center

Location: New York, NY

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Queer the Ballet presents the world premiere of *Dream of a Common Language* from Friday, June 21 to Sunday, June 23, 2024, with performances at 7:30pm on June 21 and 22, and 2pm matinees on June 22 and 23. Performances will take place at Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Avenue (25th Street between Lexington and 3rd). Tickets are \$40, with student tickets available for \$25, and can be purchased online at <https://bpac.baruch.cuny.edu/>.

*Dream of a Common Language* is a new evening-length ballet inspired by lesbian writer and activist Adrienne Rich's 1978 poetry collection by the same name. Directed by Adriana Pierce, founder of Queer the Ballet, the program includes choreography by Adriana Pierce, Minnie Lane, Rosie Elliott, and Lenai Alexis Wilkerson with dramaturgy by Emily DeMaioNewton. The story follows six dancers' journeys through community, friendship, romance, and heartbreak, bringing to light the similarities between Adrienne Rich's yearning for queer community in the 70s and queer ballet dancers' current struggles to find each other. From mountaintops to dimly lit bars, this new ballet illuminates the struggles and joys of LGBTQ+ people through history and queer dancers today: all dreaming of a common language to connect them.

All performances are presented in partnership with Baruch Performing Arts Center, with support by CUNY Dance Initiative performance residency grant.

### About the Performers

Lenai Alexis Wilkerson hails from Washington, D.C. where she attended the Baltimore School for the Arts, under the direction of Norma Pera. She graduated from the inaugural class at the University of Southern California as a Gloria Kaufman scholar with a BFA in Dance and a minor in Political Science.

Upon graduation, Wilkerson became a company artist with Ballet Hispánico, where she toured internationally for three seasons. With the company, she delved deeper into community engagement opportunities and has taught youth at institutions around the world. For the last two seasons, she was a corps de ballet dancer with Cincinnati Ballet, expanding her community engagement in organizations such as Black Art Speaks. Wilkerson has performed works by choreographers including George Balanchine, William Forsythe, Jiri Kylian, Martha Graham, Barak Marshall, Azure Barton, Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Gustavo Ramirez Sansano, d.Sabela Grimes, and Dwight Rhoden. Additionally, she has assisted Patrick Corbin in setting a Paul Taylor work for Miami City Ballet.

She has trained seasonally with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Bolshoi Ballet, Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Miami City Ballet, Jacob's Pillow and with legendary ballerina Suzanne Farrell. Wilkerson was awarded the JarriTODOS dance artist grant in 2022, was a YAGP Top 12 finalist and was one of the seven 2016-17 dance scholars to be awarded a scholarship from Nigel Lythgoe's Dizzy Feet Foundation. With aspirations to achieve more in life, she currently is in graduate school at The George Washington University to receive her Master's of Arts degree in Organizational Leadership.

Annia Hidalgo began her training in the province of Holguín and continued at the Cuban National Ballet School in Havana under Professor Ramona de Saa. In 2004, she was awarded the Gold Medal in the International Ballet Competition. That same year, she joined the Cuban National Ballet as a soloist under Alicia Alonso. Her repertoire includes soloist and principal roles in *La Fille Mal Gardée*, *Coppélia*, *Giselle*,

Swan Lake, Don Quixote, Paquita, The Nutcracker, The Sleeping Beauty, La Bayadère, Scheherazade, and Prince Igor. Hidalgo has performed as a principal with Media City Ballet and a soloist at Los Angeles Ballet.

During her career as a Principal Dancer with the Milwaukee Ballet, Hidalgo danced as Alice in Septime Webre's ALICE (in wonderland) and nearly every featured role in Michael Pink's ballets, including Masetta in La Bohème (created for Hidalgo), Odile in Swan Lake, both Lucy and Mina in Dracula, Snow White in Mirror Mirror, Clara, Marie, and the Snow Queen in The Nutcracker, Belle in Beauty and the Beast, and the title roles in Giselle and Cinderella. She also appeared in the winning pieces from Genesis 2013 (Gabrielle Lamb's Manifold), 2015 (Garrett Smith's Mortal Form), 2019 (Aleix Mañé's Exilio), and 2022 (Price Suddarth's Aftermath).

Hidalgo has danced as a guest artist with Rockford Dance Company, Traverse City Dance Project, Madison Ballet, Engage Dance Academy, Ballet Juvenil Costarricense in Costa Rica, Alma Dance Theater, Dawn Springer Dance Projects and was proud to appear in the premiere performance of Refuge Foundation for the Arts. She enjoys sharing her knowledge of classical ballet as a teacher in various summer programs and schools around the country.

Kiara Felder began their ballet training at age 6 in Cary, N.C., at Cary Ballet Conservatory. After graduating from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, they continued their training as a Professional Division student at the Pacific Northwest Ballet School. Kiara joined Atlanta Ballet in 2012. In 2017, they joined Les Grands Ballet Canadiens. Kiara was promoted to demi-soloist in 2022. Kiara had the pleasure of dancing Juliet in Ivan Cavallari's world premiere of Romeo and Juliet and the role of Olympe in Peter Quanz's Dames aux Camelias.

Ayla O'Day began her ballet training at the age of 3. She trained at Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet under Marcia Dale Weary starting at age 13. In 2016, she became a trainee at Boston Ballet and in 2018, she became a trainee at Carolina Ballet. She was promoted to corps de ballet in 2019 and soloist in 2022. Throughout her time at Carolina Ballet, Ayla has performed roles in ballets choreographed by Robert Weiss, Zalman Raffael, George Balanchine, Adriana Pierce and Lynne Taylor-Corbett.

Mia Domini began training at the School of Ballet Arizona with Nancy Crowley. She later continued her training at Ballet Etudes in Gilbert, Arizona before being invited to the winter term at The School of American Ballet in New York City. There she studied for five years under Kay Mazzo, Susan Pilarre, and Suki Schorer. At SAB, she performed featured roles in Workshop performances as well as in the New York Choreographic Institute. She also spent summers training at Pacific Northwest Ballet, Boston Ballet, Carolina Ballet, and Miami City Ballet. She joined Carolina Ballet in 2020 and was promoted to the rank of Soloist in 2023.

Demi Trezona is from Eugene, OR and began her training at the Eugene Ballet Academy under the direction of Sara Lombardi. She performed and toured extensively with the Eugene Ballet Company, directed by Toni Pimble. Demi attended summer programs on scholarship at Pacific Northwest Ballet School, International Dance School, San Francisco Ballet School, and was a part of Boston Ballet's inaugural Choreographic Intensive. Demi attended Pacific Northwest Ballet School's Professional Division program, training and performing with the company in numerous ballets. She guested with Grand Rapids Ballet under the direction of Patricia Barker performing George Balanchine's The Four Temperaments in spring of 2013 before joining the company that fall. During her four years at Grand Rapids Ballet, Demi danced many soloist and principal roles, including Sugarplum Fairy in Val Caniparoli's The Nutcracker and the lead in Gerald Arpino's Light Rain. Demi danced with Czech National Ballet in Brno, Czech Republic during the 2017-2018 season and has worked with Eugene Ballet, Quixotic Fusion, and Aspen Santa Fe Ballet. She joined Boston Ballet in the fall of 2021 and danced numerous works by Mikko Nissinen, George Balanchine, William Forsythe, among others. She is currently based in New York City as a freelance artist.

#### About Queer the Ballet

Choreographer Adriana Pierce created the initiative Queer the Ballet, along with Patricia Delgado, to broaden the scope of classical ballet to authentically include LGBTQ+ voices and narratives. Focusing on queer cis women, trans people of all genders, and nonbinary dancers in ballet, Queer the Ballet seeks to "queer" our ballet spaces and explore choreography often absent from ballet stages. By developing and producing works by queer artists, providing community support for LGBTQ+ dancers and creators, and facilitating outreach and education, Queer the Ballet hopes to expand ballet partnering and choreography, offering a genuine representation of queer and gender-diverse ballet dancers.

For more information, visit <https://www.queertheballet.com/>.

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Schedule  
June 21, 2024: 7:30pm  
June 22, 2024: 2:00pm, 7:30pm  
June 23, 2024: 2:00pm

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[< back](#)

[< previous listing](#) • [next listing >](#)