

October 25 - November 20, 2024

CUNY Dance Initiative announces Fall 2024 Master Classes and Workshops

Company: CUNY Dance Initiative

Venue: Various Locations

Location: New York, NY

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CUNY Dance Initiative announces its Fall 2024 Master Classes and Workshops. As part of its residency program for NYC choreographers, the CUNY Dance Initiative (CDI) sponsors classes, workshops, and guest lectures for CUNY students at partner colleges across New York City. and

"CDI has been an incredible resource for us, exposing our students to a rich array of NYC artists and dance forms," comments Aviva Geismar, director of the dance program at Queensborough Community College. "Our students have had transformational experiences taking master classes in dance styles that we are not able to offer as part of our curriculum. These experiences boost student confidence and have even led to ongoing professional relationships between the students and working artists."

From July 2024 to June 2025, CDI has awarded residencies to 24 choreographers at 13 CUNY colleges, and most artists will lead at least one master class or workshop during their time on campus.

UPCOMING CLASSES

André Zachary / Renegade Performance Group

York College, Art History Department

Friday, October 25: 1:30-4:50pm

Interdisciplinary artist André Zachary explores the history of the cakewalk using works by three artists, including Houston Conwill, who has a large sculpture on the York College campus. This workshop is held in conjunction with an exhibition of Zachary's work at the York College Art Gallery, on view through November 22.

Sekou McMiller

Queens College, Dance Program

Thursday, November 7: 10:45am – 12pm

Deeply rooted in Caribbean culture (Salsa/Mambo, Cha-cha, Rumba, etc), Sekou McMiller's class blends African American Jazz, African modern dance and other dances from West Africa, the Caribbean and the US. McMiller, a leader in the Afro-Latin dance movement, is performing at Queens College on November 16 as part of the CUNY Dance Initiative's 10th Year Anniversary program.

Camryn Stafford

Queensborough Community College, Dance Program

Tuesday, November 12: 10:10 – 11:50am / 12:10 – 1:50pm

Camryn Stafford shares a master class in improvisation and composition guided by storytelling concepts (10:10 – 11:50am), followed by a class in contemporary movement (12:10 – 1:50pm). Camryn is creating new work during her studio residency at Queensborough Community College.

Nelida Tirado

Queens College, Dance Program

Tuesday, November 12: 11am-12pm

Nelida Tirado teaches an introductory level Flamenco class. Nelida is creating new work during her studio residency at Queens College.

Professional Development Talk with Julia Bengtsson & Austin Coates

Lehman College, Dance Program

Wednesday, November 20: 8:30-9:30pm (via Zoom)

A candid conversation with Lehman College's CDI resident choreographers about life as a professional dance artist.

PAST CLASSES

Nicole von Arx

Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College

Thursday, September 26: 12:15 –1:40pm

Nicole gave a guest lecture to classes in John Jay's environmental justice program, and shared an open rehearsal with students. The Company used their stage worklight rehearsal time to develop *Cry Wolf*, a dance-theater piece that reimagines the classic fable of "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" as a modern allegory about the dangers of ignoring warnings about climate change.

Quilan "Cue" Arnold

Queensborough Community College, Dance Program

Tuesday, October 15: 10:10 – 11:50am / 12:10 – 1:50pm

Quilan taught two House and Hip-hop playshops. Students participated in movement games, dance technique, meditation, and dialogue to better understand how Street/Club Dance philosophies intersected with their own inner truths.

ABOUT THE CUNY DANCE INITIATIVE

In 2024, CUNY Dance Initiative (CDI) marks a decade of supporting the NYC dance field by connecting artists with CUNY communities. The program was developed in response to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's 2010 report, "We Make Do," which cited how destabilizing the shortage of affordable rehearsal space in New York City is to the dance sector. A successful pilot supporting residencies on four CUNY campuses in 2013 led to CDI's formal launch in 2014. Since then, CDI has become a key player in New York City's performing arts ecosystem, leading a consortium of 13 CUNY colleges and three arts organizations to host 20+ residencies for NYC choreographers and dance companies each year. In the past 10 years, CDI has granted 247 residencies to emerging and established choreographers, providing invaluable resources to artists, while enhancing CUNY students' education and cultural experiences. The CUNY Dance Initiative's 10th Year Impact Report can be seen at https://www1.cuny.edu/sites/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2024/01/cdi_impact_report.pdf.

From July 2024 to June 2025, CDI is underwriting residencies for 24 early- to mid-career choreographers. These dynamic NYC-based artists, selected from an open call that drew 245 applicants, work in a wide range of dance styles and forms, from ballet to musical theater to flamenco to contemporary and culturally specific traditions. In addition to providing space and financial support for the development of new and existing projects, all residencies include master classes, guest lectures, or open rehearsals to directly connect artists with CUNY communities.

The CUNY Dance Initiative receives major support from the Howard Gilman Foundation and the Mertz Gilmore Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund's Charles E. Culpeper Arts & Culture program, SHS Foundation, Harkness Foundation for Dance, and the National Endowment for the Arts. www.cuny.edu/danceinitiative

ABOUT THE ARTISTS-IN-RESIDENCE

Founded in 2007 by Artistic Director André M. Zachery, Renegade Performance Group (RPG) is a Brooklyn-based performing arts collective exploring Black artistic aesthetics and expressions through dance theater, visual performance, film, and other media. The company was formed as an artistic outlet to foster dialogue compelled by the human experience and considers local activism and education an important part of its activities, geared towards engaging a new generation of audiences, especially those underrepresented in mainstream culture. André M. Zachery is an interdisciplinary artist, scholar, researcher, and technologist with a BFA from Ailey/Fordham University and an MFA in Performance & Interactive Media Arts from CUNY/Brooklyn College. He is a 2016 New York Foundation for the Arts Gregory Millard Fellow in Choreography, a 2019 Jerome Hill Foundation Fellow in Choreography, and is an Assistant Arts Professor at the Tisch School of the Arts in the Dance Department at NYU.

Sekou McMiller is a pioneer at the forefront of a new movement in Afro Latin dance. His choreographic style, rich with Afro-Caribbean essence – salsa/mambo, cha-cha-cha, rumba, and Yorubá – combined with urban dance, modern, jazz, and contemporary styles, has earned him recognition worldwide. Sekou's career ranges from performing off-Broadway in Celia: the Musical and Afro-Tango, to choreographing for Bravo TV, NUVO TV and Good Morning America. Known for his explosive energy on and off stage, he has worked with top artists including

Gilberto Santa Rosa, Willie Colón, Cheo Feliciano, Johnny Pacheco, Tito Rojas, Tito Nieves, Pit Bull, and pop icon Madonna. As an instructor and choreographer, Sekou has worked with the Radio City Rockettes, The Alvin Ailey School and Joffrey Ballet School. McMiller appears in the Warner Bros. theatrical feature *In the Heights* and in the newly released documentary *Uprooted: The Journey of Jazz Dance*. In addition, he was a special guest performer/ choreographer for the United Nations Unveiling of the Monument the Ark of Return, which honors the victims of Slavery and lives lost through the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade.

Camryn Stafford is a NYC-based dancer, choreographer, and educator. Her journey began at Dallas Black Dance Academy and Booker T. Washington HSPVA, where she danced with the Allegro Performing Ensemble and Repertory Dance Company II. Camryn is a graduate of Princeton University with a degree in African American Studies, Dance, and Entrepreneurship. Her undergraduate senior dance thesis, "There She Is," received the Toni Morrison Prize, the Outstanding Creative Work award, and accolades from Dr. Brenda Dixon Gottschild. She received funding from the Lewis Center of the Arts through The Peter B. Lewis Fund, The Mellor Fund, and the Mallach Fund to pursue creative and choreographic research. Camryn has worked with renowned artists, including Kyle Abraham, Ehizojé Azeke, Ronald K. Brown, Peter Chu, Misty Copeland, Gregory Dalboshian, Mike Esperanza, Francesca Harper, Madison Hicks, Netta Yerushalmy, and Urban Bush Women. She has trained at Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, San Francisco Conservatory of Dance, Gibney, Joffrey Ballet School, and Dance Theatre of Harlem. Camryn's choreographic works have premiered at various venues, including Booker T. Washington HSPVA, Theater Intime, McCarter Theater Center, Mignolo Arts Center, and Arts On Site. In 2017, Camryn founded Turning Tables Inc., a non-profit organization committed to challenging discriminatory practices in dance and increasing diversity in the field. She is a 2024-2025 CUNY Dance Initiative Choreographer in Residence.

Nelida Tirado, hailed as "magnificent and utterly compelling" (The New York Times), began her formal training at Ballet Hispanico of New York at the age of six. Barely out of her teens, she was invited to tour the U.S. with Jose Molina Bailes Españoles and be a soloist in Carlota Santana's *Flamenco Vivo*. She also has worked as a soloist/dance captain of Compañía María Pagés and Compañía Antonio El Pipa, performing at prestigious flamenco festivals and on television through Europe and Asia. She has performed in Carmen with the MET Opera, WMI's "Gypsy Caravan 1", with Noche Flamenca, and was featured in Riverdance on Broadway and the national tour. Ms. Tirado was recipient of the 2007 and 2010 BRIO Award for Artistic Excellence, and the 2017 Rosario Dawson Muse Fellow through BAAD. She opened with her company for Buena Vista Social Club at the Celebrate Brooklyn! Festival in summer 2010. Additional highlights include HarlemStage E-Moves, "Amores Quebrados" at the Repertorio Español, Valerie Gladstone's "Dance Under the Influence" 2011 and 2012, and the 2016 premiere of her solo show Dime Quien Soy in the Flamenco Festival NY. Dime Quien Soy has since been presented at Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture, the Albuquerque Flamenco Festival 35, Queens Theater and the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Summer 2022. Nelida can be seen in Lin Manuel Miranda's film adaptation of *In The Heights*, *Dancing with the Stars*, and was featured in Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch".

Austin Warren Coats is an interdisciplinary artist with a Bachelor of Arts in dance studies from Kent State University and a Master of Fine Arts From New York University. He has worked with artists such as Silvana Cardell, Angela Luem, Catherine Meredith, Jess Pretty, and Jamal White. Coats also has interests in the arts including writing, illustration, dance, film, and fashion design. His film work has been showcased in the Dance On Camera Film Festival and other institutions. Coats currently performs with Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE, a Dance Company. Coats has presented work at Dixon Place Theater, Tisch's Summer High School Program, and at the Jamaica Center for Arts and Learning.

Julia Bengtsson (The New York Baroque Dance Company) was born in Sweden, and has choreographed for venues including Carnegie Hall, The UN Headquarters, Lincoln Center, and The Kennedy Center. Her over 20 original works span from classical ballets and baroque operas to contemporary dance and shadowplays. Her stage direction of Opera Lafayette's production of "Venus and Adonis" was praised by The Washington Post as "a fine evening's entertainment" and her work has also been featured in The New Yorker, The Wall Street Journal, Norwegian National Television, and Scandinavia's most popular cooking magazine: Buffé! As the Director of the New Baroque Initiative of The New York Baroque Dance Company (NYBDC), Julia devises programs that link the past with the present. Founded in 1976 by Bessie-awarded director/choreographer Catherine Turocy, NYBDC is dedicated to promoting the advancement of public knowledge of historical dance and ensuring dance's presence in the future. In addition to reconstructing historical choreographies from Feuillet-notation, the choreographic notation system used widely in the 18th Century, Julia creates original choreographies, informed by history. Julia's original works and research have won her opportunities to direct and choreograph for performances nationally and internationally: Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Berkeley, Atlanta, Washington DC, St. Louis, and more. She has also held presentations and workshops at universities including Cornell University, NYU Steinhardt, University of Pittsburgh, Temple University, and Stanford University. She is a mentee of NYBDC-founder Catherine Turocy, a graduate of Royal Swedish Ballet School and was a Scholarship Student at the Joffrey Ballet School.

Nicole von Arx is an immigrant choreographer based in Brooklyn. Born outside of London, and raised in both Hong Kong and Switzerland, she's been creating under the name NVA & Guests since 2014. Her work has been presented in theaters in New York City, Switzerland, Houston, and also via film. Nicole has received choreographic commissions from NW Dance Project, Edmonton Opera, Whim W'Him, SALT2, Brooklyn Ballet and the LINK Choreography Festival. Commercial credits include creating for: V Magazine, Bombay Sapphire, K-Way, Target, and Kate Spade. The recipient of The Ann & Weston Hicks Choreography Fellowship At Jacob's Pillow (2020), she is currently a 2024-2025 CUNY Dance Initiative Artist in Residence at the Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College, and 2024 Brooklyn Arts Council grantee. Other awards include 2023 NYSCA grant recipient, 2023 Jamaica Center for Arts & Learning Major Commission, GLUE 2023 artist in residence, 2022 Dance Initiative artist in residence, 2022 Leimay Incubator, and 2020 Lauréate of a Gland Culture Grant.

Quilan "Cue" Arnold (MFA) is a movement artist who uses his God-given gifts to create systems that advocate for the liberation of all people. As a performer Quilan has been a member of companies such as The Metropolitan Opera (NY), onCUE Chronicles (NJ), Camille A. Brown and Dancers (NY), Rennie Harris Puremovement (PA), Netta Yerushalmy Dance Company (NY), Abby Z and the New Utility (NY), and Enzo Celli Vivo Ballet (NY). Quilan's most recent choreographic works, Grandbuelo's Quarter and The Third Rail, were presented at DancePlace (DC) and New Jersey City University (NJ) respectively in 2023. He is a 2023-24 CUNY Dance Initiative awardee, a 2022 New Directions Choreography Lab Artist-in-Residence at Alvin Ailey, and a featured artist in the ALL ARTS documentary, *Alvin Ailey New Directions*. Quilan is the founder and CEO of onCUE Chronicles, a kinetic storytelling company that uplifts historically oppressed demographics through performance and education. Through onCUE he hosts the Street/Club Dance podcast, The Good Foot Podcast; operates the dance education business, onCUE Center of Learning; and teaches the Searching for a True Move dance method.

