

January, 25-29, 2022

## The International Association of Blacks in Dance to Honor Germaine Acogny, John Alleyne, Rosemary James, Don Jordan & Ola Skanks

Company: The International Association of Blacks in Dance  
Venue: Sheraton Centre Toronto  
Location: Toronto, ON

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The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) in partnership with dance Immersion will honor Germaine Acogny, John Alleyne, Rosemary James, Don Jordan, and Ola Skanks at the 33rd Annual International Conference and Festival of Blacks in Dance, Globally Connected: What Does Our Tomorrow Hold?, being held on January 25-29, 2023 at the Sheraton Centre Toronto, Ontario, Canada. These five distinguished individuals have made outstanding achievements in the art of dance and are highly respected for their professional accomplishments, which have advanced the art of dance, enhanced the rich cultural landscape and legacy of the art form, and inspired audiences and artists. They will be acknowledged and honored for their service during the Awards Luncheon at the Sheraton Centre Hotel on Friday, January 27. For more information and to register for the conference and festival, visit [iabdassociation.org/mpage/conference2023](http://iabdassociation.org/mpage/conference2023).

### Germaine Acogny: Joan Myers Brown "Keeper of the Flame" Legacy Award

The Joan Myers Brown "Keeper of the Flame" Legacy Award is given to someone who is one of a kind and consistently explores new and groundbreaking approaches to dance in our community. The award recognizes exceptional choreography, performance, and uniqueness of the Dance Artists creative voice. This award recipient has demonstrated a genuine commitment to the mission of IABD and its philosophy which emphasizes the continued responsibility of "carrying the torch" by preserving and promoting dance by people of African ancestry or origin.

Germaine Acogny is a Senegalese dancer and choreographer who has had a big influence on Contemporary African Dance, as well as on the creation of several dance schools in both France and Senegal. She has been decorated by both countries, including being an Officer of the Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in France, and a Knight of the National Order of the Lion.

Born in Benin in 1944 to a Senegalese civil servant, Germaine Acogny was also a descendant of the Yoruba people through her grandmother. She moved to Dakar, Senegal at 10, where she spent the remainder of her childhood. After showing a natural ability in dancing, she decided to pursue this as a career, moving to France in the 1960s to study modern dance and ballet. Learn more about Germaine Acogny [here](#).

### John Alleyne: Dunham/Primus International Acclaim Legendary Artist Award

The Dunham/Primus International Acclaim Legendary Artist Award is given to an individual who exhibits exemplary dedication to the field of Black dance. This award honors legendary work in choreography, performance, education, and academia in the international field. This honoree is honored for professional presence and commitment to the Aboriginal and Black dance sector.

John Alleyne was born in Barbados and immigrated to Canada in 1965. After graduating from The National Ballet School in Toronto in 1978, he joined the Stuttgart Ballet where he began his choreographic career, creating numerous compelling works for the Noverre workshop and the company's repertoire, including Phases (1983), In Variation on a Theme (1984), as well as his first commission, Weiderkehr (1985).

In 1984, Alleyne returned to Canada and joined The National Ballet of Canada as a First Soloist, accepting the position as the company's resident choreographer from 1990 to 1992, creating "innovative and challenging works." Alleyne was appointed Artistic Director of Ballet BC in 1992. His leadership marked the beginning of a creative and prosperous period in the company's history where he created one act and full-length ballets to expand Ballet BC's contemporary ballet repertoire. Learn more about John Alleyne [here](#).

### Rosemary James: Charles Augins Inspirational Artist Award

The Charles Augins Inspirational Artist Award is given to an artist who has deepened and extended dances' value, including their ability to foster new connections and to exemplify creativity and innovation. This award recipient has demonstrated outstanding work as an entrepreneur, performer and educator across the country.

Rosemary James has been the Rehearsal Director of Toronto Dance Theatre since 1992 after a successful career performing as a dancer with the company. Throughout her training and profession, she has had an eye for detail. Her observations of coaching and directions given during rehearsals, led Rosemary to explore how particular phrases demonstrated through movement provided unique counts or musical phrases. She has used this process to develop a method that links new choreography to existing vocabulary found in company repertoire. Learn more about Rosemary James [here](#).

### Don Jordan - Jazz Dance Factory: Jeraldne Blunden Local Innovators Award

The Jeraldne Blunden Local Innovators Award recognizes an individual or organization for breaking new ground, exploring new processes or approaches, or using existing knowledge in a new way.

Don Jordan was born in Montreal and is a choreographer, jazz dance teacher, actor and singer. He has been seen in numerous films, in

television series and commercials, on Canadian, American, European, and Haitian stages.

After completing his training in the United States and Montreal, Don's experiences as an actor for stage, film, television and voice, continuously fed his choreographic works that are thematic and rousing. Don opened the Dance Factory Inc. dance school with husband Phillip Cole in Montreal. The school offered contemporary jazz dance that encompassed a genre of dance styles from Broadway to the Concert Stage, from Cabaret to Video and Latin Dance. [Learn more about Don Jordan here.](#)

Ola Marie Skanks: Dunham/Primus International Acclaim Legendary Artist Award

The Dunham/Primus International Acclaim Legendary Artist Award is given to an individual who exhibits exemplary dedication to the field of Black dance. This award honors legendary work in choreography, performance, education, and academia in the international field. This honoree is honored for professional presence and commitment to the Aboriginal and Black dance sector.

Ola Marie Skanks (Shepherd) passed away August 13, 2018, in Toronto, Ontario, after a short illness. Skanks was a pioneering figure in the development of African diasporic dances in Canada and instrumental in growing Canada's emerging modern dance scene in the early 1960s. After teaching herself how to tap dance at a young age, Skanks began performing professionally in her home city of Toronto. She studied Eurocentric dance styles with highly esteemed dancer and choreographer Willy Blok Hanson before becoming more interested in dances stemming from her African heritage. She reached out to universities in Ghana and Nigeria while also learning dances directly from Nigerian students who were on exchange at the University of Toronto in the 1950s. She also studied with American dancer, choreographer and anthropologist Pearl Primus. Award in 2002. [Learn more about Ola Marie Skanks \(Shepherd\) here.](#)

The event, for everyone of all ages, is a pioneering four-day dance experience where attendees will engage in a multitude of invaluable opportunities expanding their understanding of dance history and technique through Conference and Festival programming that includes an awards celebration, meals and social events, a membership town hall, performances and sessions. Now – 33 years later – the conference and festival draws hundreds of people, and boasts an economic impact on the communities that it serves. All are invited to the conference and festival.

Continuing its legacy as the broadest international gathering of Black Dance professionals, agents, artistic directors, artists, choreographers, company managers, executive directors, historians, presenters, scholars, teachers, and many others, the conference and festival remains the most diverse place to share ideas, cultures and experiences.

"After a two-year hiatus, we are thrilled to be back!" said Denise Saunders Thompson, President and CEO of The International Association of Blacks in Dance. "The opportunity to gather again in person to share, learn and grow is invaluable, and we are pleased to also offer the opportunity for virtual attendance this year."

"It's been a minute, but what a Blessing it is to come together in person, feel the vibes, be real in our networking, and most of all, dance our way towards a better tomorrow," said Vivine Scarlett, Founder and Executive Director of dance Immersion. "We are thankful and appreciative of the contributions that have been made by those who have paved the path for us to follow and are proud to be honoring four of these extraordinary way-makers at this year's event."

This gathering of the national and international dance community is the perfect opportunity to learn from and share experiences with dance artists from around the world. The Conference and Festival engages each registrant to promote a vibrant future for dance. The curated programming is designed to make participants move, talk and learn.

The 33rd Annual International Conference and Festival of Blacks in Dance is funded in part by: Canada Council for the Arts; The Department of Canadian Heritage; Ford Foundation; Howard Gilman Foundation; Mertz Gilmore Foundation; the Harkness Foundation for Dance; Mellon Foundation; Ontario Arts Council; Toronto Arts Council, and the Toronto Arts Foundation Resiliency Fund. The Conference and Festival is sponsored in part by Madison Square Garden Entertainment- The Radio City Rockettes and TO Live.

#### About dance Immersion

dance Immersion is a charitable non-profit organization established by Vivine Scarlett in 1994 to produce, promote, and support dancers and dances of the African Diaspora. The African Diaspora refers to communities around the world that are descended from the historic, primarily forced, movement of peoples from the continent of Africa. We offer presentation, skill development, and networking opportunities for Blacks in dance, serving artists who practice contemporary and traditional movement forms from Africa, the Caribbean, North America, South America, and Europe. With over 27 years in service, dance Immersion experiences considerable success in connecting dance artists across Canada and around the world.

#### About The International Association of Blacks in Dance

For 30 years, The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) has preserved and promoted dance by people of African ancestry or origin and has assisted and increased opportunities for artists in advocacy, audience development, education, funding, networking, performance, philosophical dialogue, and touring. IABD serves a diverse, national and international membership of agents and managers, dance companies and studios, educators and educational institutions, individual artists, researchers, and supporters of the Dance field. [iabdassociation.org](http://iabdassociation.org)

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<https://www.iabdassociation.org/mpage/conference2023>

Schedule  
January 25, 2022: 8:00pm  
January 26, 2022: 8:00pm  
January 27, 2022: 8:00pm  
January 28, 2022: 8:00pm  
January 29, 2022: 8:00pm

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