

March, 21-22, 2025

## Catherine Gallant/DANCE presents *Escape from the House of Mercy*

Company: Catherine Gallant/DANCE

Venue: The Performance Project @ University Settlement

Location: New York, NY

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Catherine Gallant/DANCE presents *Escape from the House of Mercy* on Friday, March 21, 2025 and Saturday, March 22, 2025 at 8pm at The Performance Project @ University Settlement, 184 Eldridge Street, NYC. Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased online at <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/6506171>.

*Escape from the House of Mercy* is a 21st-century women's view of our social support systems measuring both the ground gained and the distance yet to be traveled. It is an abstract choreographic rendering of sensations and images evoking the spirits of women whose lives were forever changed by the workhouses and laundries in the US and Ireland. Flesh and tears haunt the dreams and shattered hopes of escape. The ghost-filled air surrounds the dancers as they wrap themselves in transparent net fabric, both isolating and protective, from the forces at work against them. Catherine Gallant/DANCE now invites audiences to wonder and reflect upon why these places from the past are important now and how history connects us to the present condition of women's rights around the globe. Our work shines a thought-provoking light onto these stories.

The House of Mercy was one of several institutions at Inwood Hill Park in NYC. It was a home for abandoned and troubled women; most inhabitants were brought there against their wills. A young woman could be locked up for years for an offense such as dancing in public or walking alone at night. Inhumane and demoralizing treatment was disguised as rehabilitation as the rights of the poor, especially women were completely denied.

The 50-minute work unfolds in segments and contains recorded soundscapes/music, spoken text (poetry and fragments of interviews and research citations), songs, and props including rope, men's shirts, 50 yards of tulle and tea cups. Our background research made us think more about our responsibility as a society to care for and protect the most vulnerable. We learned about workhouses, asylums for the mentally ill, hospitals, and prisons in NYC, around the country, and the world. We read the chilling interviews collected by the Justice for the Magdalenes organization and went on to study the Irish Workhouse system through a residency at Portumna's Irish Workhouse Centre.

Choreography: Catherine Gallant in collaboration with dancers: Anne Parichon-Buoncore, Erica Lessner, Charlotte Hendrickson, Cecly Placenti, Kelli Chapman,

Megan Minturn, Halley Gerstel, Jessie King and Jasmine Oton

Costumes: Ivana Drazic

Video Design: Erica Lessner

Various music selections by Dana Lyn and Kyle Sanna, among others

Catherine Gallant/DANCE has been supported in part with funds from Creative Engagement- Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The Harkness Foundation for Dance, Jody and John Arnhold, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, Partnership for Parks/City Parks Foundation, and Indie Spaces.

Catherine Gallant, (choreographer) has been creating work in NYC over the past 30 years. Catherine Gallant/DANCE brings dance to new audiences through direct interaction with the public. Ms. Gallant's work has been performed in Times Square, a pedestrian block of E. 91st Street in Manhattan, Green-Wood Cemetery, and Inwood Hill Park. She has also presented work at the 92NY Harkness Dance Center, WestFest Dance, Danspace (Dance Access), American Dance Guild, and Jacob's Pillow's Inside/Out Series. Catherine is also the director of Dances by Isadora which, since 1989, performs, teaches, and collaborates with dancers worldwide. Catherine is the US performer of Jerome Bel's work, Isadora Duncan. She began her study of the technique of Isadora Duncan in 1982 with Julia Levien and is a founding member of the Duncan Archive ([duncanarchive.org](http://duncanarchive.org)). Catherine was the full-time NYCDOE dance educator at PS 89 in Manhattan from 1998-2023. She and her students were featured in the Emmy-nominated PBS documentary, PS DANCE! Catherine is on the faculty of the Dance Education Laboratory (DEL) and Hunter College. Ms. Gallant is a graduate of the Boston Conservatory and holds an MFA in Dance from Temple University. [www.dancesbyisadora.com](http://www.dancesbyisadora.com) [www.catherinegallantdance.com](http://www.catherinegallantdance.com)

Hailed as "first-rate, versatile musicians" by The New Yorker and "a top-notch fiddle-and-guitar duo" by The New York Times, Dana Lyn and Kyle Sanna connect the dots between their experience as composers and improvisers in New York City's rich musical community and their deep admiration for traditional Irish music. Rooted in this tradition, the branches of Lyn and Sanna's collaboration extend to include projected animations, augmented reality, dance, video, and orchestral compositions. The duo has collaborated with some of the greatest interpreters of Irish music, including Martin Hayes and Dennis Cahill, Cillian Vallely, Kevin Burke, and Mick McAuley, and with choreographers Darrah Carr Byrne and Seán Curran.

Ivana Drazic (costume design and construction) is a freelance designer from Belgrade, Serbia. She has been living in NYC since 1998 and has designed costumes for Dances by Isadora, Catherine Gallant/DANCE, Sokolow Theater Dance Ensemble, and Dances We Dance.

University Settlement partners with 40,000+ New Yorkers in Lower Manhattan and Brooklyn every year to build on our collective strengths as we achieve healthy, stable, and remarkable lives. For nearly 140 years, we've fought poverty and systemic inequality by building highly effective social services in collaboration with our neighbors. Established in 1886 as the first Settlement House in the United States, we bring the values of that movement into the 21st century by meeting New Yorkers where they live, listening deeply to all perspectives, and creating space for responsive collaboration. We build community strength by joining with our neighbors to make stable foundations where people can grow and pursue their dreams. <https://www.universitysettlement.org/>

#### Catherine Gallant/DANCE

Catherine Gallant/DANCE was formed in 1999 after Ms. Gallant began working with her present group of dancers, creating works ranging from solos to large group dances. Ms. Gallant's work often explores themes of chance, doubt, and the body as a source of comfort and torment. In addition to traditional theatrical settings, Ms. Gallant has created works to be performed in train stations, abandoned piers, rose bushes, church balconies, in the middle of streets, in cemeteries, at the beach, in soccer fields, and on rooftops. Catherine Gallant/DANCE has been seen at Danspace St. Mark's Dance Access, The Figment Festival, Chashama, GreenSpace, American Dance Guild, and the 92nd Street Y Harkness Dance Center. Since 2007 Catherine Gallant/DANCE has focused on non-traditional sites for its work. The company's goals include cultivating new audiences for dance and building an awareness of dance in the fabric of everyday life in both urban and natural environments.

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Catherine Gallant/DANCE  
184 Eldridge St New York, NY 10002  
New York, NY, 10002  
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Schedule  
March 21, 2025: 8:00pm  
March 22, 2025: 8:00pm

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