

PRESS RELEASE

Luna Launch commences renovation and capital campaign for Berkeley's newest dance space September 8, 2022, 5-6:30pm

Berkeley, CA – Luna Dance Institute will begin the renovation of 931 Ashby Avenue with ***Luna Launch***, an event for the community on Thursday, September 8, 2022, 5-6:30pm. The program marks the official start of Luna Dance's capital campaign to develop the site as the East Bay's new permanent community-based dance center for creativity, education and social justice. The event will feature a preview of Luna's plans, acknowledgements from Berkeley officials and Luna stakeholders, as well as site-specific dance presentations by Crane and Crocodile, Samad Raheem Guerra, Louisa Mann, Heather Stockton, and others.

The new dance space will become the first permanent home for Luna, an influential innovator and authority in the dance education field, which until now had been itinerantly occupying temporary rental spaces throughout the East Bay.

"Luna is a valuable member of our community, providing services that benefit citizens of Berkeley of all ages.... Luna's move to South Berkeley will also bring a valuable community resource to an under-resourced part of our city."

Susie Medak, Managing Director, Berkeley Repertory Theater

For Berkeley's District 2 and its surrounding communities, the project and campaign will establish a vibrant cultural center with rippling regional, national and global impact. ***Luna Launch*** will inaugurate Berkeley's first and only dance space designed for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-accessibility and will fortify Luna's stalwart commitment to access and equity.

"I am one of the co-founders of AXIS Dance Company, an internationally acclaimed professional dance company comprised of dancers with and without physical disabilities. We got our start in Berkeley some 35 years ago.... In our quest to become better teachers we discovered Luna Dance and their teaching institute. Everything I know today about teaching dance I credit to Luna.... I felt welcomed and valued as a person with a disability which at that time was a rarity.... Luna is a breeding ground for training teachers...to awaken and foster creativity in their students in an inclusive, supportive environment."

Bonnie Lewkowitz, Co-Founder, AXIS Dance Company

Luna Launch bridges the organization’s 30-year history of arts and education leadership to its next stage of exceptional, expansive programming and service.

Studio KDA (studiokda.com), Berkeley’s international award-winning architecture firm, will design Luna’s new space with its vision toward “creating community and connection through unique, soulful environments.” The location, which was undeveloped until around 1950, has since been at various times a parking lot, U.S. Government Office, neighborhood market, East Bay Express’s office, chiropractic and health center, and technology business. The new, redesigned space will offer an inspirational haven for dance innovators and life-long learners of any age and ability.

The renovation and capital campaign marked by **Luna Launch** will establish and sustain a permanent place—with at least two dance studios, workspaces for artists, adaptive and broadband technology, and elevator—for a

- Dynamic, inclusive community of children, families, artists and teachers to gather, learn, dance and create.
- Collaborative laboratory for research and development in creativity and dance education for thousands of prospective and professional innovators and change agents across California and beyond.
- Dedicated incubator and workspace for the next generation of leaders to evolve Luna’s impact on equity and access in dance.
- Unique hub for investment in a region that prides itself as a statewide and national leader in arts and culture.

ABOUT LUNA DANCE INSTITUTE

Founded in 1992, Luna has become the most comprehensive dance education organization on the West Coast. Luna is a recognized arts leader and nationally acclaimed institution that supports families, dance artists, teachers, leaders, schools, community and cultural arts organizations through a variety of programs that promote creativity and self-determination through the transformative power of dance and education. Locally, Luna serves children and families through partnerships with schools, social service agencies, and arts and culture organizations. Luna will resume programs for children and families in its fully renovated studios in 2023.

Luna produces continuing education programs for artists and educators that embody multiple pedagogies, perspectives and processes of creativity. The organization’s vital policy work impacts communities throughout the state of California, across the United States, and around the world to spark innovation and activate community. Last year alone, Luna’s programs helped more than 35,201 children, 415 artists and educators, and 76 families.

Crane & Crocodile are Rosemary Hannon and Miriam Wolodarski, two shape-shifters adrift in the performance of contemporary life. Through their perennially in-process performance work, *Domestic*

Interrogations, they sift through inherited aesthetics, inevitable influences, constructed identities and conflicted responsibilities, searching for new notions of value and meaning, turning up old mysteries and abominations. Crane and Crocodile have slowly emerged from their pandemic burrows to host an improvisational dance laboratory entitled **COMPOSTABLE FEMINISMS**, which you can read about at www.compostablefeminisms.wordpress.com

Samad Raheem Guerra, 2022 Luna Dance Fellow, is a director, multidisciplinary performing artist and arts educator based in the San Francisco Bay Area. He received his BA in World Arts and Cultures/Dance from UCLA in 2014. Since graduating, he has worked as a teaching artist, program coordinator at a youth homeless shelter and toured internationally with CONTRA-TIEMPO. He has also performed at the Hollywood Bowl and Ford Amphitheater with Viver Brasil and Sergio Mendes, and co-produced his own work at the LACMA, Main Museum in downtown Los Angeles, Hamburger Bahnhof and daadgalerie in Berlin, Germany. Currently, Guerra directs the World Dance program at Ruth Asawa San Francisco School of the Arts, an audition-based performing arts high school. He is grateful to the community of Navajo elders and teachers who introduced him to the ancient healing practice of sweating, prayer and meditation that continues to be a source of inspiration in his life. Aho Mitákuye Oyás'ij (To All My Relations, from the Lakota language).

Louisa Mann was born and raised in Brattleboro, VT. She began her dance training at the age of 3 at the Brattleboro School of Dance, under the direction of Kathleen Keller. She has a BFA in dance from the University of Missouri-Kansas City and a Masters in Dance / Movement Therapy from The Pratt Institute. Louisa lived and danced in NYC for 10 years and started working with physically integrated dance companies on the East Coast in 2015. She has worked with Heidi Latsky Dance, Abilities Dance Boston and Marked Dance Project, as a teaching artist, company dancer, choreographer and administrator. She is a teaching artist at Dance Project of Washington Heights. She teaches creative movement and ballet virtually for children and adults of all abilities. Louisa is passionate about making dance accessible to all people. Louisa is a dancer with AXIS Dance Company.

Heather Stockton is a choreographer, educator and multidisciplinary collaborator with a passion for collective, creative growth, systemic change and community practices with an intersectional lens. Heather is the founder of the local dance collective, Wax Poet(s), where she dances between roles as co-director, choreographer and performer. Heather has choreographed and produced evening-length shows locally and nationally at ODC Theater, CounterPulse, Joe Goode Annex, Noh Space, On the Boards Theater, Velocity Dance Center, Littlefield Concert Hall, Temescal Arts Center, Lisser Theater, Harvard University and Landis Performing Arts Center. Originally from Riverside, CA, Heather has danced in works by Amy O'Neal/Tiny Rage, Katie Faulkner, Sheldon Smith, Shinichi Iova-Koga, Merce Cunningham (staged by Holley Farmer) and Wade Madsen. Heather received her BFA Cum Laude and MFA in Choreography and Performance with an emphasis in social justice at Mills College where she was awarded the E.L. Wiengand Foundation Award for outstanding merit in performance and choreography. Heather is a Luna Teaching Artist.

For more information on Luna's capital campaign, visit <https://lunadanceinstitute.org/leap-land-soar/>. To see a video about Luna's capital campaign, visit <https://vimeo.com/699538868>.