

## DIVERSITY STATEMENT

As an artist and educator, I work to cultivate awareness within myself and hold myself accountable to a personal, on-going practice of unconscious bias education. I strive to intentionally create space for everyone in the room to feel seen and heard. I take an active role in the life-long process of recognizing, acknowledging, and minimizing my potential blind spots to facilitate more open and honest conversations with my students, colleagues, and collaborators. I hope to fully support individual learners with diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and experience so that all students can bring their whole selves to the work at hand.

Conversation and action around diversity and inclusion in our educational institutions is vital and urgent, particularly in addressing the concerns and needs of underrepresented groups. When working within Eurocentric dance forms it is vital to create a sense of relevance and inclusivity for individuals who identify as Black, Latin, Asian, Native American and members of LGBTQIA+ communities. Despite the urgency, it should be remembered that the action of engagement must be a choice, and conversation surrounding potentially triggering subjects must be nurtured through trust. Part of creating that trust is in practicing active listening and empowering students to decide when, where, and how they wish to engage, amplifying their ideas and voices on their own terms.

Dance is an ever-evolving form of communication and connection: It has the potential to bridge cultures, cultivate conversations, and represent the lived experiences of its participants. The arts have, at times, been a refuge for marginalized voices, but as we look towards the future, it becomes even more important to consciously make choices and take actions which seek to include and provide access to all our communities. By placing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access in the forefront of our decisions we build the potential for art and dance that reaches beyond the stage, beyond the codified expectations of movement, and into the heart of acceptance. When we are comfortable in our own skin, dance on our own terms, and revel in our individual capacities, then we create that change. We lead by being.

I am committed to building a dance environment which challenges normative structures of race, body type, and classroom teaching/learning models. In “normative” western dance forms I ask, how is it that this innate gift of movement has been relegated to a singular body type of structure and composition? This most human of art forms reduced to an elitist discrimination of body, race, culture, and spirit. My passion for dancer wellness and safety expands beyond the physical considerations to include conversations surrounding emotional safety, acknowledgement of past trauma, motivation, and vulnerability. These topics are often deeply connected to the complex and sometimes difficult conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion. I believe in creating and maintaining a trusting, brave educational space by asking questions, encouraging dialogue, and facilitating shared experiences so that we may do challenging, essential work.

I believe in cultivating awareness and supporting actions that promote broad diversity of thought and experience within our learning and creative spaces. I take seriously my responsibility to actively contribute to the evolution of current inclusion strategies at the institutional level, which includes sharing my successes and challenges with others. This is a life-

long process. The ground we stand on is ever shifting and evolving, and conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion must be a dynamic, forward-thinking, and ever-present part of our lives. I am dedicated to my own growth as a leader, educator, and mentor by developing habits of thought and action which allow me to best respond to the needs of those I serve.