Laguna Dance Festival announces September season: contemporary cool from coast to coast with L.A., Philadelphia, New York companies

*September 21–25 Festival includes a robust schedule of performances, master classes, free performances*

LAGUNA BEACH, Calif. April 19, 2016 – The September 21-25 Laguna Dance Festival will bring to the intimate stage three world-renowned dance companies, New York-based Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion, Philadelphia’s BalletX and Los Angeles’ BODYTRAFFIC, free public performances to be announced, and three master classes.

Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion will perform on Thursday and Friday, Sept. 22 and 23 at 7:30 p.m. at The Laguna Playhouse. Both performances will be followed by a post-performance conversation with Kyle Abraham, 2013 MacArthur “genius” grant winner. One of A.I.M.’s dancers will teach a 6 p.m. master class on Wednesday, Sept. 21 onstage at the Playhouse.

Abraham’s thought-provoking “Pavement” called “a work of great subtlety and beauty” by The New Yorker, is a meditation on the 1991 film *Boyz N The Hood* as well as W.E.B. DuBois’ 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk*. With his full-length, 55-minute piece, Abraham examines the history that led to the conflict represented in the movie, and finds relevance in the Du Bois essays, which were influential in African-Americans’ struggle for equality in the twentieth century. The dance is set on a basketball court in the historically black Pittsburgh neighborhoods where Abraham grew up, and the eclectic soundtrack includes 23 names, from Baroque selections by Bach and Vivaldi to Sam
Cooke vocals and rap. *Washington Post* reviewer Sarah Kaufman wrote, “Beautiful and severely honest..(but) despite its name and subject matter, ‘Pavement’ is not all hard edges. It delivers a sharp sense of reality with extraordinary softness, in dancing that is lush and seductive.”

With the company’s performances described as “solid from beginning to end” (*New York Amsterdam News*) and “effortless-seeming smoothness and grace” (*Los Angeles Times*), A.I.M.’s première performance in Orange County is certain to garner attention and initiate conversation.

**BalletX** will return to the Laguna Beach stage to present its entertaining, diverse choreographic style in a shared bill with BODYTRAFFIC on Saturday, Sept. 24 and a full-length show on Sunday, Sept. 25 at 3 p.m. with a pre-show talk at 2 p.m.

Committed to producing new works that cultivate in audiences a collective appetite for bold, new dance, BalletX was founded in 2005 by Christine Cox and Matthew Neenan. Now under the direction of Cox as artistic and executive director, BalletX challenges the boundaries of classical ballet by encouraging formal experimentation while preserving rigorous technique.

BalletX’s dances “have suspense, vitality, comedy, freedom,” according to the *New York Times*. The company “…creates a coherent, poetic realm of the imagination.” Its performances are “a feast of music and dance,” noted the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and “remarkably moving.”

**BODYTRAFFIC**, a Laguna Dance Festival audience favorite, will head down the freeway from Los Angeles for a Saturday, Sept. 24 performance at 7:30 p.m. in a combined program with BalletX. In addition, BODYTRAFFIC dancers will present a master class at Laguna Beach High School at 10 a.m. the same day.

Founded in 2007 by Lillian Barbeito and Tina Finkelman Berkett, the company has surged to the forefront of the concert dance world and is helping to establish Los Angeles as a major center for contemporary dance.

“BODYTRAFFIC suggests invention, attitude, and urban edge,” wrote Karen Campbell in the *Boston Globe*. In the *Los Angeles Times*, Laura Bleiberg called it “one of the most talked-about young companies, not just in L.A. but nationwide.”

Festival founder and artistic director Jodie Gates commented, “The companies selected for this fall’s festival hail from three uniquely American cities – Kyle Abraham from New York by way of his hometown of Pittsburgh, BalletX out of Philadelphia, and BODYTRAFFIC from Los Angeles. Presented over four days, these companies offer audiences a dazzling representation of the current freshness, depth, and breadth of contemporary American dance.”

The four onstage performances by these three extraordinary companies will be presented at the 420-seat Laguna Playhouse, 606 Laguna Canyon Road in Laguna Beach. Ticket
prices are: general admission $60, students with ID $35. The three master classes will be held at two locations – check listings for details. Master class costs are $25 per student; $15 observer; student package of a master class and performance: $50. Tickets go on sale in July; check the Festival website for updates.

Laguna Dance Festival, now in its twelfth year, is regarded as one of Orange County’s major annual cultural events and continues to garner awards for artistic excellence. An important showcase for new and established dance companies and artists, its year-round mission is to present world-class dance performance, increase public appreciation for the art, and provide quality dance education. www.lagunadancefestival.org

Laguna Dance Festival 2016 Schedule
Updated June 15, 2016

Thursday, September 1
Sculpted Motion – Free performances during First Thursday Art Walk
6:30 and 7 p.m. at Laguna Art Museum, 307 Cliff Drive, Laguna Beach
Live dance performance amid works by maverick modernist Peter Krasnow

Wednesday Sept. 21
Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion
Master Class taught by Kyle Abraham, 2013 MacArthur fellow
6:00 p.m. onstage at The Laguna Playhouse
606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach

Thursday Sept. 22
Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion
7:30 p.m. Pavement performance
Post-performance conversation with Kyle Abraham, 2013 MacArthur Fellow
The Laguna Playhouse
606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach

Friday Sept. 23
Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion
7:30 p.m. Pavement performance at The Laguna Playhouse
Post-performance conversation with Kyle Abraham, 2013 MacArthur Fellow
The Laguna Playhouse
606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach

Saturday, Sept. 24
BODYTRAFFIC
Master Class
10 a.m. to noon
Laguna Beach High School dance studio
625 Park Avenue, Laguna Beach
8 p.m. Coast to Coast Contemporary Cool – performances by two companies: BalletX and BODYTRAFFIC
The Laguna Playhouse
606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach

Sunday, Sept. 25
BalletX
Master Class
10 a.m. to noon
Laguna Beach High School dance studio
625 Park Avenue, Laguna Beach

Pre-show talk with BalletX directors
2 to 2:30 p.m.
BalletX (only) performance
3 p.m.
The Laguna Playhouse
606 Laguna Canyon Road, Laguna Beach

Press images can be downloaded from Dropbox. Photo credits appear in each filename.

Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion

BalletX

BODYTRAFFIC

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