

Study Guide



PITTSBURGH
DANCE
COUNCIL
2023-2024

RONALD K. BROWN/ EVIDENCE



PITTSBURGH CULTURAL TRUST ARTS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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Show Description

Mission Statement

The mission of EVIDENCE is to promote understanding of the human experience in the African Diaspora through dance and storytelling and to provide sensory connections to history and tradition through music, movement, and spoken word, leading deeper into issues of spirituality, community responsibility and liberation.

Company History

Founded by Ronald K. Brown in 1985 and based in Brooklyn, New York, EVIDENCE, A Dance Company focuses on the seamless integration of traditional African dance with contemporary choreography and spoken word. Through work, EVIDENCE provides a unique view of human struggles, tragedies, and triumphs. Brown uses movement as a way to reinforce the importance of community in African American culture and to acquaint audiences with the beauty of traditional African forms and rhythms. He is an advocate for the growth of the African American dance community and is instrumental in encouraging young dancers to choreograph and to develop careers in dance.

Brown's choreography is in high demand. He has set works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, Cleo Parker Robinson Ensemble, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Jennifer Muller/The Works, Jeune Ballet d'Afrique Noire, Ko-Thi Dance Company, Philadanco and others. He choreographed Regina Taylor's award-winning play, Crowns and won an AUDELCO Award for his work on that production. "I hope that when people see the work, their spirits are lifted. I am interested in sharing perspectives through modern dance, theater and kinetic storytelling. I want my work to be evidence of these perspectives," says Brown.

EVIDENCE now tours to some 25 communities in the United States and abroad. The company has traveled to Cuba, Brazil, England, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Mexico, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa and Canada to perform, teach master classes and conduct lectures/demonstrations for individuals of all ages. EVIDENCE brings arts education and cultural connections to local communities that have historically lacked these experiences. Annually the company reaches an audience of more than 25,000 .

Repertory

OPEN DOOR provides a journey into Afro Cuban social and traditional dance forms embodying the music of Arturo O’Farrill’s Afro Latin Jazz Ensemble. The opening is set to La Puerta, and introduces two dancers who serve as hosts and guides.

Open Door is a metaphor; the hosts are opening the door to the world of Afro-Cuban music and dance. The dancers are lead in a path full of celebration, culture and joy. The piece is an ode to Afro-Cuban dances of the Orisha and salsa, fueled and propelled by the musical compositions, each section invigorating the dancers leading to the final section of liberation and the arrival of contentment and peace.

Open Door was originally choreographed for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in 2015, and became part of the EVIDENCE repertory in 2023.

THE EQUALITY OF NIGHT AND DAY “Our destination in the midst of unrest is truth, peace, and solidarity. Focus on what is right, continue to do the work, and keep love and truth at the front.” –Ronald K. Brown, 6/2020 The Equality of Night and Day (TEND) is the newest work by Brown examining the concepts of balance, equity, and fairness in light of the conflicting present-day issues that young people, women, and people of color now face in a world where exploitation, gentrification, racism, and xenophobia are on the rise. The current shift in public discourse has anchored the new piece. Created in part during creative development residencies at LUMBERYARD and Center of Creative Arts (COCA) made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the work was also supported by additional creative development residencies in the Pillow Lab and at the Maggie Allesee National Center for Choreography at Florida State University.

TEND is realizing that there is a need for mercy in a bigger way than you thought. Brown is seeking to break open truth, not from anger but with a gentle focus—a sensitivity and steadfastness that draws on history. The work is accompanied by Jazz pianist and composer Jason Moran who has created an original score with additional speeches from Racial justice advocate Angela Davis. Deborah Willis, the foremost expert on African American photography in the country if not the world, has curated a display of photography projected on stage. Costumes are designed by Omotayo Wunmi Olaiya, a collaborator of Ron’s since 1995; and EVIDENCE’s Technical Director Tsubasa Kamei has provided the scenic, projection, and lighting design.

As described by Ron, “I found it interesting to work on TEND, during the global pandemic when people around the world were prioritizing the health and safety of each other and there was also a wave of killing with very little consideration of a person’s life or humanity. The current increase in racial violence inspired one of the images in TEND. “We walk an elephant circle of compassion, protection and grief for the involuntary martyrs. We walk until their bones become ash and the wind blows the dust on our skin. We are them and they are us. The Equality of Night and Day.” The work in the end is an offering and a prayer for peaceful rest and ascension.”

Show Bios and Roles



RONALD K. BROWN

RONALD K. BROWN, raised in Brooklyn, NY, founded EVIDENCE, A Dance Company in 1985. He has worked with Mary Anthony Dance Theater, Jennifer Muller/The Works, as well as other choreographers and artists. Brown has set works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Jennifer Muller/The Works, Jeune Ballet d’Afrique Noire, Ko-Thi Dance Company, Philadanco, Muntu Dance Theater of Chicago, Ballet Hispánico, TU Dance, and Malpaso Dance Company.

He has collaborated with such artists as composer/designer Omotayo Wunmi Olaiya, the late writer Craig G. Harris, director Ernie McClintock’s Jazz Actors Theater, choreographers Patricia Hoffbauer and Rokiya Kone, and composers Jason Moran, Arturo O’Farrill, Meshell Ndegeocello, Robert Een, Oliver Lake, Bernadette Speech, David Simons,, and Don Meissner

Brown is the recipient of the 2020 Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award. His other awards and recognitions include theAUDELCO Award for his choreography in Regina Taylor’s award-winning play Crowns, received two Black Theater Alliance Awards, and a Fred & Adele Astaire Award for Outstanding Choreography in the Tony Award winning Broadway and national touring production of The Gershwin’s Porgy and Bess, adapted by Suzan Lori Parks, arrangement by Diedre Murray and directed by Diane Paulus.

Brown was named Def Dance Jam Workshop 2000 Mentor of the Year and has received; the Doris Duke Artist Award, NYC City Center Fellowship, Scripps/ADF Award, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts Choreographers Fellowship, New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, United States Artists Fellowship, a New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” Award, Dance Magazine Award, and The Ailey Apex Award.

Brown is Co-Artistic Director of RestorationART Youth Arts Academy Pre-Professional Training Program / Restoration Dance Youth Ensemble, and a member of Stage Directors & Choreographers Society.



Show Bios and Roles

ARCELL CABUAG Associate Artistic Director/Dancer

ARCELL CABUAG is a first-generation Filipino-American from San Jose, CA. He moved to New York City to attend the Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, where he was introduced to Ronald K. Brown. Soon after, he joined EVIDENCE, A Dance Company as its first apprentice, became a company member one year later, and has served as its Associate Artistic Director since 2004. He currently teaches EVIDENCE repertory at Princeton University and is thrilled to be the newly appointed Youth Arts Academy Director of Education.

Performance credits include: dancing with Camille A. Brown, Mekeda Thomas, Rock the House for Paramount Pictures; The Shoji Tabuchi Show (Branson, MO); the Richard Rodgers Centennial Production of The King and I; and dance festivals worldwide. Arcell taught classes and performed with EVIDENCE throughout Africa as a US Ambassador with Dance Motion USA. TV Credits include: Law & Order: SVU's "Choreographed" and Codorniu Cava commercial with PILOBOLUS shot in Barcelona and aired on Spanish television. He has assisted Mr. Brown in creating repertory on Philadanco Dance Company; MUNTU Drum and Dance Company; TU Dance; Ballet Hispánico; Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater; Cuba's Malpaso Dance Company and served as associate choreographer for the Tony Award winning Broadway and national touring productions of The Gershwins' Porgy and Bess.

Mr. Cabuag is proud to serve the dance community as a long standing educator and advocate nationally and abroad. Education, advocacy, and teaching EVIDENCE repertory work include: Professor of Dance at Long Island University (Brooklyn Campus); Co-Artistic Director of the Restoration Dance Youth Ensemble; Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York University; University of Massachusetts; Boston Arts Academy, Peridance Certificate Program, The Ailey Fordham BFA and Certificate Programs; Florida State University; University of the Arts, Kent State, DeSales University, Coker College, Marymount Manhattan College, and Boston Conservatory. Arcell is a 2004 New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award winner for his performance and work with EVIDENCE.

DEMETRIUS BURNS Dancer

Demetrius was born in Anniston, AL, and grew up in Boston, MA. He received his MFA in dancer from Hollins University and his BFA with an emphasis in Choreography from Boston Conservatory where he performed repertoire by Karole Armitage, Mark Morris, Darrel Moultrie, and many more as well as choreographed Urinetown on the musical theatre department. He spent several summers at the Earl Mosley Institute of the Arts as a student, intern, and instructor. He attended the Bates Dance Festival, and Sidra Bell Modules. Demetrius also attended Jacob's Pillow Social dance program with the American Dance Guild Scholarship under the direction of Camille A. Brown and Moncell Durden and returned the following summer for the Improvisation Traditions and Innovation program under the direction of Jawole Willa Jo Zollar. Demetrius is a recipient of the EVIDENCE Dance Workshop Series Beth Young Scholarship and became a company member of EVIDENCE in 2016.

SHAYLA CALDWELL Rehearsal Director/Dancer

Shayla Caldwell is a native of New Haven, CT. She began dancing at a very young age with mother, dance teacher, and mentor, Shari Caldwell. After being introduced to Guinean culture by Aly Tatchol Camara she became heavily influenced by traditional West African dance. Shayla was further introduced to various styles of dance, choreographers, as well as composition while attending the Educational Center for the Arts and Earl Mosley's Institute of the Arts. She studied briefly in the BFA program at Virginia Commonwealth University before joining Ronald K. Brown/ EVIDENCE in 2011. After 6 years with the company, she was promoted to assistant rehearsal director. She has found the balance between concert and commercial work through touring and teaching hip hop styles. She is currently EVIDENCE Rehearsal Director and Guest Artist as well as an adjunct professor at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts.

Show Bios and Roles

JOYCE EDWARDS Assistant Rehearsal Director/Dancer

Joyce Edwards from Rochester, NY, is a lifelong student who uses her artistry to spread love unconditionally and ferociously. She is a graduate of The College at Brockport, SUNY with a BFA in dance. Joyce is known for her performance in works by Bessie Award winning choreographer Beth Gill and Netta Yerushalmy (Brand New Sidewalk, Pitkin Grove, Paramodernities). She is mentioned in the 2019 Dance Magazine issue of “25 to Watch” in 2020. EVIDENCE welcomed Joyce as an apprentice in May of 2018, and later as a company member following her premiere in Ronald K. Brown’s *Mercy* at Bard SummerScape Dance Festival. She is the Assistant Rehearsal Director, and has had the opportunity to assist setting repertory on students at the Center of Creative Arts in St. Louis and the New Orleans Ballet Association (2021). Joyce became a company member of EVIDENCE in 2019.

STEPHANIE CHRONOPOULOS Dancer

Stephanie Chronopoulos is a first-generation Greek American, born and raised in New York City. She graduated Cum Laude with a B.S. in Dance from LIU Brooklyn where she had the privilege of performing works by choreographers Khaleah London, Frederick Earl Mosley, Erika Pujic, Doug Varone, and Ronald K. Brown. In 2015, she became a company member of Forces of Nature Dance Theater under the Direction of Abdel Salaam. During her time with the company, she performed in the Bessie Award winning *Healing Sevens* at BAM’s DanceAfrica, and in the revival of *Terrestrial Wombs* at the Apollo Theater. Stephanie has also apprenticed with Jennifer Muller/ *The Works* and is the recipient of the EVIDENCE Dance Workshop Series Beth Young Scholarship. Stephanie became a company member of EVIDENCE in 2019.



AUSTIN WARREN COATS Dancer

Austin Warren Coats is an interdisciplinary artist with a Magna Cum Laude bachelor’s degree in Dance Studies from Kent State University and a Master of Fine Arts degree from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. Originally from Reynoldsburg, OH, he has had the honor to work with artists such as Silvana Cardell, Angela Luem, Catherine Meredith, Jess Pretty, and Jamal White. He has attended summer intensives at The Joffrey Ballet School, Ruth Page Center of the Performing Arts, and Ronald K. Brown / EVIDENCE on scholarship. Austin has many interests in the arts including fine art, dance, and fashion design. He is a published illustrator in college publications and illustrates for various dancers’ projects. His life goal is to become a choreographer and artistic director. Austin became a company member of EVIDENCE in 2021.

GREGORY HAMILTON Dancer

Gregory Hamilton, a native of High Point, NC, embarked on his dance journey at Penn-Griffin School for the Arts during high school. His dedication led him to the University of North Carolina School of the Arts (UNCSA), where he honed his skills in various dance forms and composition. Holding a BFA degree, Gregory has showcased his talent with companies like Gaspard and Dancers and the Jose Limon dance company. He’s also collaborated with choreographers such as Francesca Harper, Helen Simoneu, and Joanna Kotze. Fuelled by a profound connection to humanity and a genuine love for his craft, Gregory is grateful to be able contribute his passion to the endeavors of EVIDENCE.

Show Bios and Roles

ISAIAH K. HARVEY Dancer

Isaiah K. Harvey began his dance training at Innervations Theater Arts Center in his hometown Queens, NY and earned his BFA in Dance from Montclair State University. He also trained at the Earl Mosley Institute of the Arts, Dance Theatre of Harlem, and The Ailey School, where he received the Bob Fosse Gwen Verdon Scholarship. He has performed works by Ulysses Dove, Camille A. Brown, Rennie Harris, and Alvin Ailey's Memoria with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and danced with Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Black Iris Project: Vibrant Voices, and as a backup dancer for RuPaul's Drag Race Season 13 Contestant Olivia Lux, among others. Isaiah teaches throughout New York City and as a certified Lester Horton Technique Instructor. Isaiah became a company member of EVIDENCE in 2022.

BREANA MOORE Dancer

Breana Moore is a Memphis, TN, native. She graduated from the Certificate Training Program at the Ailey School and holds a B.S. in Human & Organizational Development and Sociology from Vanderbilt University. Breana has had the privilege of performing works by Alvin Ailey, Kirven Douthit-Boyd, Ronald K. Brown, Norbert De La Cruz, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Yusha Marie-Sorzano, and Judine Somerville. Breana also performed with The Ailey School in Merce Cunningham's 100th Anniversary tribute show at the Baryshnikov Arts Center. In August of 2019, Breana joined EVIDENCE as an apprentice and performed for the Joyce Theater season in February of 2020. Breana is a recipient of the EVIDENCE Dance Workshop Series Beth Young Scholarship. Breana became a company member of EVIDENCE in 2021.

CHRISTOPHER SALANGO Dancer

Christopher Salango from Stockton, CA received his Bachelor of Arts in dance from California State University, Sacramento where he discovered his love for Dunham Technique, under the tutelage of Dr. Linda Goodrich, Dr. Halifu Osumare, and Bernard Brown. Christopher continued his training with Urban Bush Women's Summer Arts program, Elisa Monte Dance Summer Series, and is a two-time recipient of the EVIDENCE Dance Workshop Series Beth Young Scholarship. He is a second-year candidate for the Institute of Dunham Certification and is excited to continue his journey while performing with his EVIDENCE family. Christopher became a company member of EVIDENCE in 2021.

SHAYLIN WATSON Dancer

Shaylin Watson was born in Lanham, MD, and trained at Duke Ellington School of the Arts under the instruction of Charles Augins and Katherine Smith. She obtained a BFA in Dance with a concentration in Choreography and Performance from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. While in North Carolina, her choreography was featured in the National Black Theater Festival (Winston Salem, NC, 2019). Shaylin is a recipient of the EVIDENCE dance workshop series Beth Young Scholarship and has also received scholarships to intensives such as American Dance Festival and UNC School of the Arts. She has performed works by choreographers such as Clarice Young, T Lang, Christopher Huggins, Marcus White, and Shen Wei. She had the opportunity to assist setting repertory for EVIDENCE on students at the New Orleans Ballet Association (2021). Shaylin became a company member of EVIDENCE in 2019.

Show Bios and Roles

GUEST ARTISTS

ANNIQUE S. ROBERTS

SHAYLA ALAYRE CALDWELL

CORAL DOLPHIN

KIRVEN DOUTHIT-BOYD

DANIEL S. HARDER

HANNAH ALISSA RICHARDSON

RANDALL RILEY

MATTHEW RUSHING

LINDA CELESTE-SIMS

GLENN ALLEN SIMS

KEON THOULOUIS

FANA TEFAGIORGIS



Additional Context

Ronald K. Brown has worked with some of the most celebrated dance companies in the world, including The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Jacob's Pillow. Let's learn more about these illustrious organizations.

Alvin Ailey and The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre

Alvin Ailey was born in Rogers, Texas, on January 5, 1931. He grew up during a time of racial segregation and discrimination in the United States. At a young age, Ailey discovered his love for dance and moved to Los Angeles to pursue his passion. He immersed himself in studying different types of dance, like ballet, modern dance, and jazz.

In 1953, Ailey joined the Lester Horton Dance Theater, where he honed his skills as both a dancer and choreographer. His unique and expressive choreography caught the attention of the dance community. In 1958, he founded the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater in New York City with the goal of showcasing African American culture and the American experience through dance.

The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater gained worldwide recognition for its performances, featuring Ailey's choreography alongside works by other esteemed choreographers. Ailey's style blended elements of modern dance with influences from African and African American cultures. His compositions often explored spiritual, humanistic, and social justice themes.

Additional Context

The Pillow Project

Jacob's Pillow is a renowned dance center and performance space in Becket, Massachusetts. It is recognized as one of the country's oldest and most esteemed dance festivals. It was founded by Ted Shawn in 1933 and named for a noticeable rock on the property.

However, Jacob's Pillow has evolved beyond being just a festival. It has transformed into a sizable institution encompassing a dance

school, a professional dance company (the Ted Shawn Theatre, home to the resident company, the Pillow Contemporary Dance Company), and a presenting organization that hosts performances by a wide range of dance companies from around the world.

Every year, Jacob's Pillow hosts the highly-anticipated Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. This exhilarating event showcases an array of dance genres, including modern dance, contemporary dance, ballet, and jazz, over the course of several months. This festival presents an opportunity for dancers and choreographers worldwide seeking recognition in the dance community to shine.

Jacob's Pillow is known for its commitment to supporting and promoting dance as an art form. Their impressive archive of dance materials is accessible to both researchers and fans. Additionally, they offer various spaces to experience live performances or participate in dance classes. They have been a huge influence on dance in the United States and garnered international recognition within the global dance community.



Supplemental Activities

Creating Choreography

Choreography is the art and practice of designing sequences of movements of physical bodies. We see choreography most often in the dance world, but dance training is not a requirement to create emotionally driven movements. Ronald K. Brown himself states that he created his first piece of choreography in the second grade. Anybody can choreograph, and anybody can dance anywhere. Let's learn more about choreography and create our own movement piece.

1. *Start with your inspiration.* It could be your favorite song or a spoken word piece. It could be a feeling or a moment you want to recreate (in this case, look for a piece of music or spoken word related to your inspiration).
2. *Find a space where you can create.* Sometimes, we choreograph in a large dance studio, but it's not a requirement. You can build your movements to fit your space. The most important thing is finding a space where you feel free and comfortable to create.
3. *Listen to the audio you've chosen—a lot.* You can pick a smaller section to start with—a section with lyrics you really like or a beat that makes you want to move.
4. *Discover your movement style.* You may be a trained dancer, or you may be a beginner. But you can find inspiration in other dancers, how animals or machines move, how other people hold their bodies, truly anything! Try bringing these inspirations to your body, moving freely and creatively without committing to a sequence or a particular move. Improvise your movements and see what feels good.
5. *In dance, choreographers often use an "8-count" to translate their ideas into formed choreography.* Listen to your piece and find the beat, counting to 8 and then beginning again with a fresh 8-count. If your piece has spoken or sung words, having the words written out might be helpful so you can mark where each 8-count starts and ends.
6. *Begin to craft your movements into these 8-count sections.* Remember, you are telling a story with your body, so the most important thing is to focus on portraying the feelings you are trying to express.



Supplemental Activities

Creating Choreography cont.

Body

- Think of WHAT is moving.
- You can use your entire body or focus on smaller, more specific areas. For example, just your arms, just your neck and head, or just your hips.
- You can consist of a variety of actions and still poses.
- Use the body to create different shapes. These can be geometric shapes like a circle or a square, shapes based on real things like animals, or more conceptual shapes like pride and fear.

Energy

- Think of HOW the mover is moving
- You can do the same movement but with different intentions, like bigger or smaller, happier or angrier.
- HOW you move might be inspired by the music, the feeling of the piece, or the space around you.
- We also call this dynamics.

Space

- Think of WHERE the movement is taking place.
- You may be inspired by the space you're moving in, like using furniture or different levels like a step.
- Levels can be achieved with just your body as well! Try the same move, but place it lower, in the middle, and higher, and see how it changes.
- Changing directions in the space can help express the piece's meaning. Moving backward in the space might indicate fear, and moving forward might indicate excitement.

Time

- Think of WHEN the movement takes place
- Use the rhythm of the song or spoken word piece to transform movements into dance.
- You may change the tempo of your movements, add accents, or alter the duration of the movements.

Vocabulary

Choreography - is the art or practice of designing sequences of movements of physical bodies

Rhythm - the steady beat of the music to which we dance

Tempo - the rate or speed of motion or activity; pace.

Dynamics - the dance element that relates to how a movement is done; movement quality.

Accents - a movement or shape performed in such a way as to give emphasis.

Improvisation - movement that is created spontaneously, without planning

Shape - the form created by the body's position in space. Aspects of shape are open/closed, symmetrical/asymmetrical, angular/curved.

The Elements of Dance - Body, Energy, Space, and Time



Pre and Post Show Discussion Questions

1. Ronald K. Brown's choreography is influenced heavily by the African Diaspora. How do you see this reflected in the performances?
2. Have you seen any other dance performances that draw inspiration from specific cultures?
3. What stories did you see come forward in the movement of the dancers? What specific movements illustrated the story?
4. What elements of dance were you able to observe in the piece?
5. Brown examines the "concepts of balance, equity, and fairness" through his choreography. What issues would you explore if you were creating your own art?

School Day Matinees

Ronald K. Brown/Evidence - The Equality of Night and Day and Open Door

Friday, March 1, 2024 — Grades 6-12

Sacred Earth

Thursday, March 21, 2024 — Grades 5-12

Dog Man the Musical

Monday, April 15, 2024 — Grades 1-6

2024-2025 SCHOOL DAY MATINEES COMING SOON!

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Professional Development Workshops

The Art of Up-Cycling

Saturday, March 9, 2024—for K-12 Educators
ACT 48 Credit Available

Dancing and Social Emotional Learning

Saturday, April 13, 2024—for PreK-2 Educators
ACT 48 and PQAS Credit Available

What is an Ally?

Saturday, May 11, 2024—for K-12 Educators
ACT 48 Credit Available

*All workshops held in the
Trust Arts Education Center
805/807 Liberty Ave.
Light breakfast provided*

Scan for more information

