

THE LAUNCH  
CHICAGO

LAUNCH  
ONE

OCTOBER 23  
3PM & 6PM

THE BRIX ON THE FOX  
CARPENTERSVILLE, IL

# THE LAUNCH CHICAGO

**Artistic/Executive Directors:**

Alyssa Decker

Katie Zale

**Company Dancers:**

Hannah Eicherl

Abby Palmiter

Alicia Sanfillippo

**Board Members:**

Chris Mingo

Cheryl Olson

Sarah Owens



## **Mission:**

The Mission of The LAUNCH Chicago is to have a positive space where artists feel valued and empowered to embrace their full potential through Contemporary Jazz movement.

# ONE

## **Frame of Reference**

Choreographer: Kenna Johnson

Dancers: Alyssa Decker, Hannah Eicherl, Abby Palmiter, Alicia Sanfillippo, Katie Zale

Music: "Stories" - Travis Lake, "Home" - Whitney Houston

"Frame of Reference" is a piece about perspective. We have both big and small moments in our life that can change our viewpoint. This piece is dedicated to my son Logan, for changing how I see the world.

## ***Board Member Announcement***

## **Eyes For You**

Choreographer: Taylor Mitchell

Dancers: Alyssa Decker, Hannah Eicherl, Abby Palmiter, Alicia Sanfillippo, Katie Zale

Music: "Besame Mucho" - Josephine Baker, "I Only Have Eyes For You" - The Flamingos

"Eyes For You" is an exploration of the beginning, middle, and future of any meaningful relationship. This piece is a love letter to the ride of it all.

## ***Board Member Announcement***

## **King**

Choreographed and Danced by: Abigail Stachnik (Guest Artist)

Music: "King– Poem Version" - Florence + The Machine

This piece questions identity: What aspects of ourselves define who we are most? The movement showcases the wrongdoings and mistreatments that have defined the artist in the past, while exploring the complexity of wanting more connection to people while also feeling full and self-assured within the artistic lifestyle.

## **Grit and Bear It**

Choreographer: Abigail Stachnik

Dancers: Alyssa Decker, Hannah Eicherl, Katie Zale

Music: "A Soft Throbbing of Time" - Frank Bretschneider

Abigail's piece "Grit and Bear It" explores the pace of a freelance dancer's busy lifestyle. The dancers continue to build momentum and speed as the piece progresses, moving together like an engine that powers our will to keep moving. Each dancer navigates their individual trajectory, while dancing in unison builds a collective energy. Abigail aims to emphasize the physicality, determination, and grit of these talented artists with this work. "Bodies in motion remain in motion..."

## ***Board Member Announcement***

### **Through Water**

Choreographer: Sarah Ford-Hardy

Dancers: Alyssa Decker, Hannah Eicherl, Abby Palmiter, Alicia Sanfillippo, Katie Zale

Music: "Em Ocean " - Modeselektor, "Through Water" - Lapsley

This piece was inspired by the ever changing climate and seasons of life. It can be used metaphorically or literally. With all of the tensions surrounding climate change, politics, the economy, racial and gender equality, and so on, some may be in calm waters while others have water crashing over them like waves. Regardless of where life finds us at this very moment, we are all navigating through the waters of life and need each other to help navigate the storm.

# THE LAUNCH CHICAGO

## *The Company*



**Alyssa Decker (Co- Artistic/Executive Director):**

Alyssa is originally from East Dundee, IL, and trained with the Visceral Studio Company under the direction of Nick Pupillo and Laura Wade. She graduated from the University of Michigan with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance with a minor in Movement Science on a merit scholarship in December 2018. At Michigan, she performed works by Ohad Naharin, Shannon Gilen, the University of Michigan dance faculty, among others. During her summers, Alyssa studied with River North Dance Chicago, Backhausdance, Dance Works Chicago, and abroad in Paris.

After graduating, Alyssa moved back to Chicago to pursue a career in dance and teaching. In 2019, she received a contract with Inaside Chicago Dance and performed with them for 2 years. In addition to performing, Alyssa currently teaches at Dreams Dance Academy and loves sharing her passion with her students. She is so excited for the first season of The LAUNCH Chicago and can't wait to see this journey take off!



**Katie Zale (Co– Artistic/Executive Director):**

Katie Zale, originally from South Elgin, IL, trained at Duet Dance Academy until the age of 18. She graduated from the University of Illinois with a BFA in Dance. During her time at Illinois she performed in works by Tere O'Connor, Rebecca Netti-Fiol, Jessica Pretty and more. She also received the Magnolia Award upon graduation. While at Illinois she was a member and captain of the Illinettes Dance Team.

Upon graduation Katie moved back to the Chicagoland area to pursue a career in dance. She spent four seasons dancing with Inside Chicago Dance, and one season as a part of their Youth Training Program. Katie is extremely passionate about teaching and inspiring her students.

She's currently an instructor at Duet Dance Academy where she works heavily with the competitive dance team. She is in her 6th year of coaching at Barrington High School, currently coaching at the Varsity level. Katie is entering her 11th summer with Universal Dance Association, which allows her to travel across the country instructing dance teams. She is also a national judge and choreographer for the company. Katie could not be more excited for the premiere of The LAUNCH Chicago! She cannot wait to share this new endeavor!



**Abby Palmiter (Company Dancer):**

Abby Palmiter is from Owensboro, KY where she discovered her passion for dancing at Johnson's Dance Studio. Abby is an honors graduate of Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, KY with a B.A. in Dance and Arts Administration. While at Western, Abby had many opportunities to perform as a company member and have her own choreography featured. Abby has performed adjudicated works at festivals such as the Tennessee Association of Dance and the American College Dance Association South Conference. She has been involved in collaborations with WKU Symphony, Hudost music group's "Beat the Drum Harder" music video, and Amanda Clark and Sara Pecina's "Dance Appreciation" book. Abby was a member of the National

Dance Education Organization where she spent two years as an elected officer striving to spread awareness for the arts in her community. Abby has since moved to Chicago to pursue her dream career in dance. She is thrilled to be joining The LAUNCH Chicago for her first season!



**Hannah Eicherl (Company Dancer):** Hannah Eicherl began her dance training at a young age at the Algonquin Academy of Dance, located in Lake in the Hills, IL. She went on to receive a Bachelor of Arts in Dance Performance and Choreography with a minor in Business from Dean College, located in Franklin, MA in 2019. While attending Dean, Hannah trained extensively in ballet, jazz, tap, contemporary, modern, hip hop, and basic ballroom technique. Upon graduating, Hannah returned to the Chicagoland area and trained on scholarship at Joel Hall Dancers and Center where she trained with Joel Hall, William Gill, and Van Collins. In summer of 2020, she joined Inside Chicago Dance and spent two years performing with the company. On top of performing, Hannah is a member of the Regional Touring staff for Dancewerks under the direction of Ellen Werksman and an instructor for Algonquin Academy of Dance. Hannah is so excited to be dancing with The LAUNCH Chicago for their very first season!!



**Alicia Sanfillippo (Company Dancer):** Alicia Sanfillippo, of Hanover Park, began dancing at the age of three, studying ballet, pointe, jazz, modern, character, and tap. She attended Western Michigan University to pursue a BA in Dance as well as a BS in Secondary Education Math and Physics. Alicia graduated with honors and was named the Presidential Scholar in Dance. Her professional dance career includes one season with Inside Dance Chicago as well as freelance projects in the Chicagoland area. Alicia is

honored to be an artist for The Launch Chicago's inaugural season and looks forward to sharing its mission.

# The Choreographers



**Kenna Johnson:** Kenna Johnson is Co-Founder of Sona Fitness, a boutique fitness studio in Evanston. She is a Nike Trainer, personal trainer, and yoga instructor. She danced professionally for 7 years with Inaside Chicago Dance, and served as their Rehearsal Director for her last year. She was also a director and choreographer for Inaside's Youth Training Program for 6 years. Kenna loves choreo-

graphing for studios and professional companies on the side





**Taylor Mitchell:** Taylor Mitchell is a Chicago-based choreographer, performance artist, and dance educator. He earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts from The University of Arizona (2014) where he received the Creative Achievement Award for numerous works of choreography presented by the UA Dance Ensemble and also worked with the Department of Theater.

Taylor has performed with Thodos Dance Chicago, Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, Cocodaco Dance Project, C5 Create with No Limits, and other national and international projects. His professional choreography credits include DanceWorks Chicago, The Big Muddy Dance Company, Thodos Dance Chicago, Houston METdance, Aerial Dance Chicago, Chicago Repertory Ballet, Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, Co-

codaco Dance Project, New Dances (Chicago), Symbiosis Arts, Dance in the Parks, Level Dance, Houston Contemporary 2, and The Baton Rouge Ballet Theatre.

He has presented work at the Kieler Woche Festival (2017) - one of the largest summer festivals in Northern Germany. He has also served as an Artist in Residence with Washington and Lee University (2019), Southeast Missouri State University (2018, 2021), The University of Louisiana Lafayette (2019), and Keshet Center for the Arts (2018).

He currently serves as Artistic Director/Choreographer/Collaborator of the MitchellMovement Collective, his own project, while fusing his unique voice of contemporary dance with aspects of physical theatre/clowning technique. Currently, Taylor is a Trainee with the New England Feldenkrais® (ATM®) Program and is looking forward to bringing the method further into his educational and creative services. Now in his 6th season with Extensions, Taylor thoroughly enjoys his position as jazz faculty and a rehearsal director with the company.



**Abigail Stachnik:**

Abigail Stachnik is a dance artist, choreographer, and educator based in Chicago where she performs with Moonwater Dance Project, Symbiosis Arts, and Still Inspired. Her dance training began at the Young Dance Academy under the direction of Sandra Young, and she earned her BFA in Dance with Honors from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia. After graduation Abigail relocated to Chicago where she trained in the Lou Conte Scholarship Program under the direction of Claire Bataille.

From there, she danced with Chicago Repertory Ballet, Marlene Skog Dance, and Cocodaco Dance Project. As a freelance dancer Abigail has performed at Harvest Contemporary Dance Festival with Mitchell Movement Collective and Jessica Miller Tomlinson Choreography, she has danced several Nutcracker roles, and she has performed various works of choreography by her peers at festivals.

Abigail's choreographic endeavors have included commissions by Simantikos Dance Chicago and Trifecta Dance Collective. Her choreography has been presented at the College of DuPage's Choreography Showcase, Emergence, the "Take Up Space" dance festival, and Simantikos' "Choreo Kick-Off". In 2022, she will be creating new work for Moonwater Dance Project's "Phases" and for the LAUNCH Chicago's inaugural season!

In 2021, Abigail assisted in establishing Moonwater Youth Company and became the Director of this pre-professional performance opportunity for teen dancers. She choreographs for the youth company and teaches class for Moonwater Dance Project's Summer Intensive. In 2022, Abigail began teaching master classes for Moving Artist Initiative and she is guest faculty of Metamorphosis: Fearless Evolution. She has been a faculty member of Duet Dance Academy since 2017, sharing her passion for dance with her students.



**Sarah Ford-Hardy:** Sarah Ford Hardy is originally from Louisville, Kentucky and is a graduate of the Youth Performing Arts

School. Sarah has trained at the Joel Hall Dance Center and Columbia College in Chicago, IL, the Edge Performing Arts Center in Hollywood, CA and Millennium Dance Complex in Los Angeles. She has performed with numerous dance companies such as Inaside Chicago Dance, Midwest Dance Collective, DanceWerks Dance Productions, The Joel Hall Dancers, and The JADD Co. Sarah was a member of the Joseph Allen Decker Dance Company where she assisted Mr. Decker for two seasons. She spent eight years choreographing and performing with Inaside Chicago Dance. Her time with Inaside also included 6 years as the company's Youth Training Program Director and 9 years as the Summer Intensive Director. Sarah has had the pleasure of sharing the stage with artists such as Weird Al Yankovic, Soulja Boy, Hannah and Joshua Welton of Counter Culture, 3rd Eye Girl, and Prince. Sarah was a featured dancer in the movie Dreams in 2013. In 2006, she choreographed the Nationally Televised MLS All-Star Game Half-Time Show Featuring Recording artist Lupe Fiasco. She also choreographed for Nick Cannon's Wild 'N Out Tour 2017 in Chicago. Sarah is currently residing in Illinois where she is teaching and choreographing all over the Chicagoland area. She is the Regional Director of 360 Dance Festival and has been on faculty at the Gus Giordano Dance School in Chicago for the last 7 years. She is a Co-Director at Xtreme Dance Force and for the last decade, Sarah has choreographed for numerous State Award winning high school and collegiate dance teams. She enjoys teaching dancers of all ages, styles and levels, and has recently been on faculty of Dance Olympus, Dance Masters of WI, One Family Festival and 360 Dance Festival. In 2019, Sarah and her husband Marcus founded Sarcus Entertainment to provide dancers with high end performance opportunities on a commercial and corporate level. She is also NASM Certified Personal Trainer and is working towards a specialization in Pre- and Postnatal Coaching.

### **Sponsors:**

The LAUNCH Chicago is a nonprofit organization that relies heavily on donations for support and business operations. This concert would not have been possible without the generous donations provided by:

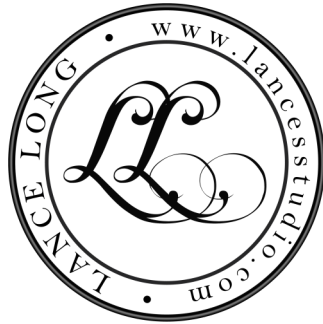
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NOVEMBER 20TH  
THE BRIX ON THE FOX

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