

as we transcend...

May 11th, 2024

7:30pm

Ann Barzel Theater
Visceral Dance Center



THE LAUNCH
CHICAGO

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

Photo credit: Lance's Studio Photography

**Rehearsal space for The LAUNCH Chicago is provided by Duet Dance
Academy.**

The LAUNCH Chicago presents:

as we transcend...

Through

Choreographer: Amanda Hickey

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

Music: "This Place Was a Shelter" - Olafur Arnolds, "Brim" - Olafur Arnolds

"Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems." - Gever Tulley

ENOUGH

Choreographer: Katie Zale

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

Music: "the end of all our exploring" - Max Richter, "Sh'Diah" - Bon Iver

ENOUGH finds us at our most vulnerable. Feeling like the weight of our expectations is too much to bear, at times there seems like there's no way out. But as we continue on giving ourselves grace, we come to find that we are, indeed, *ENOUGH*. "How often ya gonna see now? Truly what ya' cease to be. Will you adjust your scenery? Keep it rational"

Wonderful Town

Choreographer: Esther Farley

Dancers: Alyssa Decker, Katie Zale

Music: Composed by Aidan Donnelly

This piece is inspired by the 1953 musical, *Wonderful Town*. The story tells of two sisters who move to New York City's Greenwich Village to find success, one as an actress and one as a writer. Through captivating melodies, this piece invites the audience to join the sisters on a rollercoaster ride of ambition, setbacks, and sisterly fun.

One Step Forward (The LAUNCH Chicago: Youth Ensemble)

Choreographer: Alyssa Decker

Dancers: Isabella Brandonisio, Aubrey Dieckmann, Elise Frick, Tiffany Leith, Reghan Mingo, Juliana Neri, Aubrey Nystrom, Olivia Quidayan, Lily Stevenson, Lauren Walter, Jaiden Koeneman, Ashlyn Neumann, Madelyn Schlueter, Samantha Schlueter

Music: "Varoeldur" - Sigur Ros

One Step Forward is about the process of striving for a goal and the journey you endure along the way. Through the highs and the lows of our experience, we are reminded that we always have our hopes and dreams to continue driving us forward.

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.

Kids

Choreographer: Braeden Barnes

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

Music: "We Belong Together" - Ritchie Valens, "Efia" - Rosaceae and Shackleton, "The More We Play Together" -Barney



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 Gillen, 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, along with freelance projects. 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 second 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 Inaside 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 7th year of coaching at Barrington High School, currently coaching at the Varsity level. Katie is moving into her 12th 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 is thrilled to be a part of The LAUNCH Chicago and she can't wait to see what the future holds!

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 graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Dance Performance and Choreography from Dean College 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. She spent two seasons dancing with Inaside Chicago

Dance, has been a guest artist with Rasa Dance Chicago, and taken part in other freelance projects. Besides performing, Hannah is a member of the Regional Touring staff for Dancewerks under the direction of Ellen Werksman, an adjudicator for Beyond the Stars and Breakout Dance Competitions, and an instructor for Algonquin Academy of Dance. She is so excited to be dancing with The LAUNCH Chicago!



Abby Palmiter (Company Dancer):

Abby Palmiter is from Owensboro, KY where she discovered her passion for dancing at Johnson's Dance Studio. Abby is a 2021 honors graduate of Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, KY with a B.A. in Dance and a minor in Arts Administration. While at Western, Abby had many opportunities to perform as a company member and have her own choreography featured. Abby has performed in 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 published "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.

Upon graduation, Abby moved to Chicago to pursue her professional dance career after receiving a contract with Inaside Chicago Dance. She is now thrilled to be joining The LAUNCH Chicago for their second 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 Inaside Dance Chicago as well as freelance projects in the

Chicagoland area. Alicia is honored to be an artist for The LAUNCH Chicago's second season and looks forward to sharing its mission.



THE LAUNCH
CHICAGO

THE INTENSIVE

JUNE 25-27

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
www.thelaunchchicago.com

The Choreographers



Esther Farley: A storyteller at heart, Esther Pauline Farley is a multimedia artist, choreographer, and dancer who weaves personal narratives through the mesmerizing language of movement. Born in Downers Grove, Illinois, Esther discovered her passion for dance early on and has since nurtured it with an unwavering commitment to her craft. In 2021, she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Contemporary Dance Performance from the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, with emphases on Choreography and Jazz Dance. Over the years, she has had the opportunity to perform work by renowned choreographers such as Katlin Bourgeois, Shannon Alvis, Monique Haley, Bradley Shelver, and Gabrielle Lamb.

As a choreographer, Esther's work has received multiple accolades and recognition. Her work has been presented by Detroit Dance Exchange, Might Dance Collective, and was selected to be performed at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston in 2019. Esther is so excited to be presenting a work with the LAUNCH!



Amanda Hickey: Amanda discovered a passion for dance at the age of ten. She began her serious training at Faubourg School of Ballet under Watmora Casey, Tatyana Mazur, and Ernesto

Quenedit. She graduated from Butler University in 2014, where she studied on both academic and talent scholarships earning her BFA with honors in Dance Performance. While at Butler, she had the opportunity to spend a month studying abroad in Europe where she trained and performed in Warsaw and Krakow, Poland, and St. Petersburg, Russia. As a senior, she was asked to choreograph for the study abroad program, exposing her choreography to venues across Eastern Europe. Throughout the years, Amanda has had the pleasure of performing as a guest artist for Élan Artists, The Schaumburg Dance Ensemble, and more. Upon returning to Chicago after graduation, Amanda joined Nomi Dance Company, where she danced for four years. Her professional choreography credits include works on Nomi Dance Company, The Ballet Theatre of Indiana, The Ballet INitiative, and Giordano II. In 2018, she joined Giordano II, and is currently dancing in Giordano Dance Chicago's main company. Besides performing and choreographing, Amanda is passionate about teaching and is certified in all five levels of the Nan Giordano Certification Pro-



Braeden Barnes: Braeden Barnes is a Chicago based director, choreographer and teacher. He found his love of choreography from a young age and has created work for over 15 years. Braeden danced professionally with companies including Balletmet, Joffrey Ballet Chicago, Billy Elliot the Musical, Nevada Ballet Theatre and Visceral Dance Chicago. He has worked with choreographers such as James Canfield, Paul Vasterling, Danielle Agami, Kevin O'Day, Mónica Cervantes, Marguerite Donlon, Matthew Neenan, and Lucas

Crandall.

As a choreographer, his work has been featured across the United States and abroad. Among these places, his work has won the first-place audience choice award at REVERBDance festival in New York, as well as first place for best choreography at YAGP in 2021. He has choreographed on companies such as Nevada Ballet Theatre, Cirque Du Soleil, Visceral Dance Chicago, Peoria Ballet, Waterstreet Dance Milwaukee, A&A Ballet, Common Conservatory, Indiana University Contemporary Department and for New Dances: a collaboration between Danceworks and Thodos Dance Chicago.

In 2020, he started his own nonprofit danced-based company, Symbiosis Arts, which is based in Chicago. Symbiosis has produced full evening performances in Chicago and Denver and has commissioned choreographers such as Anna Long, Francisco Avina, Shannan Alvis, Jason Parsons, and Noelle Kayser. Symbiosis Arts is taking an expanded approach to incorporate multiple mediums of art, in hopes of questioning norms, building unorthodox collaborations, and being open-minded about how art can be seen and consumed.

In addition to Symbiosis Arts, Braeden has recently taken on the role of Codirector of Visceral Encore, a company for dancers over 35



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 National-ly 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.



THE COMPANY EXPERIENCE

JUNE 24-27

JUNE 25-27
THE LAUNCH
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FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
www.thelaunchchicago.com

The Youth ENSEMBLE

Isabella Brandonisio (11): I have enjoyed learning and dancing with a new group of dancers. This contemporary dance has been so fun to learn and I have really loved learning to move in a different way.. It has also given me another opportunity to grow as a dancer.

Aubrey Dieckmann (15): I love the LAUNCH because everyone is so amazing and supportive. I have made some of my best friends and I absolutely love to dance with them.

Elise Frick (13): I have enjoyed learning the Youth Ensemble and being a part of a professional company.

Jaiden Koeneman (13): Has enjoyed being a part of The Youth Ensemble.

Tiffany Leith (14): I love how welcoming and refreshing the LAUNCH Youth Ensemble has been for me. In just a short time, I feel like I have already grown in new ways as a dancer, artist and performer. Coming into that space every week, I feel free to move with purpose and we work through the choreography and movements together. The choreography is beautiful, different, and full of meaning. I love the repetition of the movements within the piece and how there are times we have different movements, but we still dance as one. I have also loved getting to dance with new people and make new friends through the program. Everyone at the LAUNCH is so creative and kind and it has been a dream come true to learn from Alyssa again and be a part of the Youth Ensemble. I am so thankful

Reghan Mingo (13): I have enjoyed learning from someone I don't usually take classes from. It's given me the opportunity to learn movement quality in a new style I haven't done before. I've had the opportunity to meet new friends that are really supportive and kind. Lastly, The LAUNCH has always been really important to me and I have loved supporting them on this journey. It's so special that now I actually get to be a part of the show and dance along side them. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be a part of the Youth Ensemble.

Juliana Neri (12): The LAUNCH Ensemble has taught me how to express myself even more through dance. I also enjoy spending time with such a great group of dance friends and amazing instructors.

Ashlyn Neumann (13): I enjoyed the youth ensemble so so so much!!!! I taught me a new way to use my body and dance in new ways. Also all the girls were so sweet and I loved working with them and practices always went so smoothly

Olivia Quidayan (10): Through the Youth Ensemble process I have learned that not everything has to be a trick to make it an entertaining dance. Movements can be slow and graceful and still make a great dance. I liked being challenged to learn a dance in just four practices. She has enjoyed the extra time to just dance and have fun!

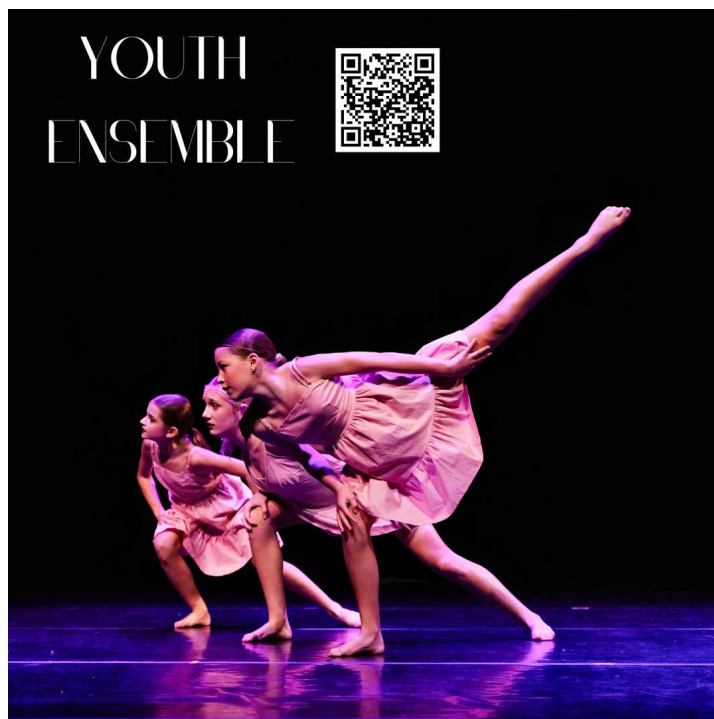
Madelyn Schlueter (13): Has enjoyed being a part of The Youth Ensemble.

Samantha Schlueter (15): Has enjoyed being a part of The Youth Ensemble.

Lily Stevenson (15): I love The LAUNCH Youth Ensemble program because of the preparation it provides. I've already learned so many valuable things and met so many new people. Also, getting to dance alongside The LAUNCH Chicago has been the coolest opportunity.

Lauren Walter (12): I really enjoyed being a part of The LAUNCH Youth Ensemble because I got a chance to meet other dancers with the same passion as me. I also loved learning the new dance that we are performing. Something I learned from this opportunity is to never take things for granted because this is a very cool and exciting thing for me to do and be a part of.

Youth Ensemble dancers not performing in "as we TRANSCEND...": Larkin Cohrs, Olive Mason, Aubrey Nystrom, Lily Wells.





MISSION

The mission of The LAUNCH Chicago is to have a positive space where artists feel valued & empowered to embrace their full potential through contemporary jazz movement.

VALUES

The LAUNCH Chicago aspires to push the limits of the current dance culture; encouraging artists to use their individuality to grow their technical and artistic abilities. We aim to lay the groundwork to shape and inspire local studios, professional dance companies, and the future arts community.

The LAUNCH believes in valuing our artists, both physically & emotionally, in an encouraging and supportive environment. We believe this is the key to creating quality work and an environment for dancers to thrive.

In addition, we believe in making professional dance accessible to everyone, especially to dance studios within our Chicagoland community. We believe in local studios' power and influence and desire to walk alongside them. The LAUNCH aspires to assist in cultivating passion & growth and inspiring future dancers through workshops, performances, & scholarships.

Donors

The LAUNCH Chicago is a 501(c)3 non-profit organizations that thrives off of donations. Performances and educational experiences cover less than half of the income needed to operate, which make our donor community invaluable. This season would not have been possible without the generous donations provided by:





THE SHOWCASE

NOVEMBER 17, 2024

Prairie Lakes Theater

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