



Dancing Through Cultures Conference

June 26 – 28, 2009

National Arts Centre, Ottawa

The Canada Dance Festival invites you to participate in a dance event in Ottawa designed to promote discussions of culture, identity and belonging. Presented by the Canada Dance Festival, **Dancing In, Through and Between Cultures To a Space of Mutuality** is a complex title -- but this conference will examine a very complicated topic. Canada prides itself on being a culturally diverse nation, a nation that welcomes people from all over the world and prides itself on its recognition of its Indigenous Peoples. But is there really respect and admiration for all people who contribute to our collective Canadian culture? Do we live in a space of mutual understanding and admiration? Are all Canadians treated fairly? What are the realities facing people from the non-dominant cultures who want to participate in Canadian culture?

This conference brings together dance professionals, dance presenters, academics, cultural policy makers and all people interested in the Canadian dance community who believe that our concept of diversity is to be celebrated as the single most important element that distinguishes Canada the world over. Dance is a primal activity that all human beings embrace – some say it is universal. It is the ideal medium to explore the Canadian reality in 2009.

For three days, we will gather to talk and to devise a strategic plan that will instill a path that secures a “space of mutuality” in the Canadian dance community. To begin this process, three topics will be explored: racism, authenticity, and aspirations and recognition. To stimulate discussion, the CDF has commissioned three papers by distinguished artists:

- **Natasha Bakht:** *Mere "Song & Dance": Complicating the Multicultural Imperative in the Arts*
- **Michael Greyeyes:** *Notions of Indian-ness*
- **Kevin Ormsby:** *Between Generations: Towards understanding the differences in realities and aspirations between first and second generations of culturally diverse artists*

These articles (and a blog to receive public feedback) have been posted on the Canada Dance Festival’s web site (www.canadadance.ca). The creation and dissemination of dance is at the heart of all our activities. Complementing our conference are two fantastic performances not to be missed!

Aboriginal Platform
June 26, 2009, NAC Studio

Canadian Multiculturalism Day Gala
June 27, 2009, NAC Theatre

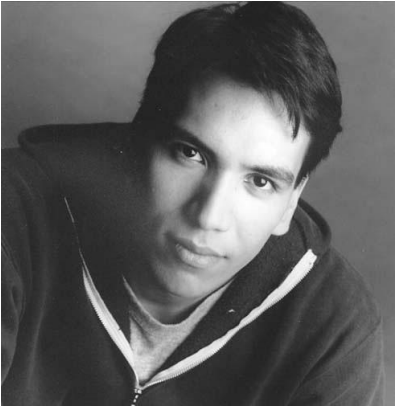
For more information, please contact arowe@nac-cna.ca or see our web site at www.canadadance.ca.



DANCING THROUGH CULTURES
BIOGRAPHIES OF PRESENTERS



Natasha Bakht trained in bharatanatyam under Menaka Thakkar of Toronto for over 20 years. With the Menaka Thakkar Dance Company she toured primarily classical repertoire through North America, Europe and Asia. Since 1990, she has worked with Canadian contemporary choreographers Joan Phillips, Robert Desrosiers, Roger Sinha, and Yvonne Coutts in a variety of festivals including the Canada Dance Festival, Dancing on the Edge, and several Kalanidhi Festivals. Natasha danced with the Shobana Jeyasingh Dance Company in London, England for three seasons. In England, she also worked with British choreographers Laurie Booth and Wayne McGregor's Random Dance Company. Her own choreography includes four solos created for herself including *Obiter Dictum* which was nominated for a 2003 Dora Mavor Moore Award for Outstanding New Choreography. As well as an active dance professional, Natasha is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Law of the University of Ottawa. She clerked with Madam Justice Louise Arbour at the Supreme Court of Canada and holds an LL.M. from New York University School of Law where she attended as a Global Hauser scholar. Academia allows her to pursue policy work and volunteer with a range of organizations, including the National Judicial Institute and the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF). She has published in the area of women's equality rights and religion.



Michael Greyeyes is an actor, dancer, director, and choreographer, and a member of the Muskeg Lake First Nation in Saskatchewan. He began his professional career as a classical ballet dancer with The National Ballet of Canada and with Eliot Feld in New York City. Michael received his M.F.A in Acting from Kent State University, where he taught as an instructor and first began his on-going research into post-colonialism and the staging of ethnicity in both film and dance. In 1993, Michael began to choreograph and direct his own theatre work, which has appeared in festivals in Canada and Europe. As an actor, Professor Greyeyes has worked at The Grand Theatre, Theatre Aquarius and Porthouse Theatre, and extensively in film and television for more than 12 years. He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Theatre, York University.



Kevin A. Ormsby has been dancing in Jamaica, Canada, and the United States for over 20 years and his artistry has garnered many awards. He is the recipient of scholarships to The Edna Manley School of the Performing Arts (Dance and Drama), American Dance Festival and the Bates Dance Festival. He also holds a degree in Mass Communications and Political Science from York University. He has worked with Canboulay Dance Theatre, Ballet Creole and the Caribbean Dance Theatre, among others. For six years, Kevin danced with the internationally renowned Garth Fagan Dance, NY, touring extensively through the United States, Canada and Europe. Kevin returned to Toronto and Ballet Creole in the summer of 2006 where he dances, teaches and serves the company as Marketing/Outreach Coordinator. He has served as a juror for the Ontario Arts Council and is the dance writer for *Exposé* Entertainment Magazine. In 2008, Kevin formed Kashedance and also self-published a dance photography book, *Dance Through Life*.



*Dancing Through Cultures
Performances*

**June 26 – 27, 2009
National Arts Centre, Ottawa**

Dancing Through Cultures, a celebration of the profound contribution that culturally diverse and Aboriginal dance artists make to our collective Canadian culture, offers Ottawa audiences the chance to experience amazing contemporary dance by choreographers from vastly different cultural backgrounds. These two evenings of dance are hosted by the Canada Dance Festival (CDF) and curated by its Artistic Producer Brian Webb. The event will provide individual windows into themes that are of relevance to the Canada of the 21st century – themes on identity, on participation, and on the vibrant interaction between the traditional and the new.

Aboriginal Contemporary Dance Platform featuring:
Byron Chief Moon, Gaétan Gingras, Red Power Squad

Friday, June 26, 2009 – 8:00 PM

National Arts Centre Studio

Tickets: \$30 Adult / \$15 Students available at the NAC Box Office

Byron Chief-Moon

Title: *Blood Alley* (Choreographer and performer: Byron Chief-Moon)



Byron Chief Moon is an amazing artist – dancer, actor, story teller, and teacher. *Blood Alley* is a visually stunning solo about human disconnection, drawn from ancient stories of our sacred earth. To be unaware of the ancient culture of relationship creates a loss of intimacy and balance within the natural environment; thus, between body and soul: "Sleep-walking; but, to a time of awakening; embracing our true spiritual selves." From Alberta's Blood Nation and now based in Vancouver, Byron creates work that is unapologetic and generous; magical and profound.

When I witness one of Byron's works, I admire how he uses every part of his being to say what he has to say. Byron's gentle nature infuses his work with such a love of life." – Brian Webb

Gaétan Gingras

Title: *Mémoire de sang*

Choreographer and performer: Gaétan Gingras



Gaétan Gingras has created a body of work that is interdisciplinary, aware of current arts practice and at the same time highly personal. *Mémoire de sang* (Blood Memory) is a contemporary ritual dance in honour of Gaétan Gingras’s ancestors. For 15 years, he studied how to create a piece that would combine the personal with the spiritual, yet be universal and meaningful for spectators. With *Mémoire de sang* he achieved that union. “The blood that runs in my veins is the only souvenir left to me by my grandparents and great grandparents. This dance is my way of reconnecting with them and of thanking them for what I am today.”

Gaétan Gingras is an active player. He is aware. He is a contemporary dance artist who acknowledges tradition – his tradition and the traditions of his people.” – Brian Webb

Red Power Squad

Choreography and performers: Conway Kootenay, James Jones, Shayne Martell, Matthew Wood, Angela Gladue



Since its founding in 1998 by Conway Kootenay, Red Power Squad has continued to combine top notch traditional native dance with Emcee and b boy/b girl skills, leaving audiences with a high energy, high octane performance impossible to forget. The RPS, based in Edmonton, Alberta, has performed hundreds of times from South Korea to San Diego and returns to the CDF with new work that highlights their growth as an Aboriginal expression of urban culture.

This is a crew I love! They’re about change, they’re about involvement - they’re about dance that is created from the community for the community.” – Brian Webb

Tickets available via our web site at www.canadadance.ca



*Dancing Through Cultures
Performances*

Canadian Multiculturalism Day Gala

Saturday, June 27, 2009 – 7:30 PM – National Arts Centre Theatre

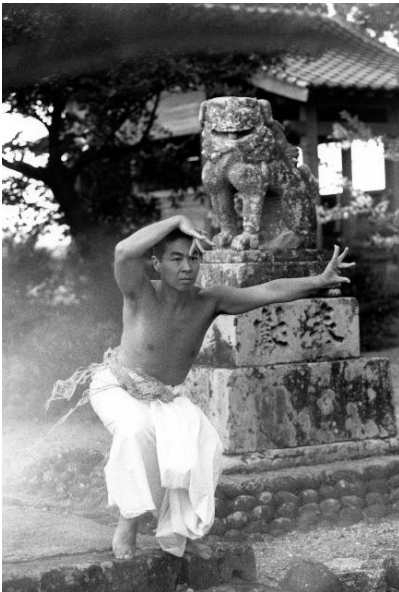
Tickets: \$40 Adult / \$20 Students available at the NAC Box Office

Tribal Crackling Wind

Transmission of the Invisible

Choreography: Peter Chin

Dancers: Sean Ling, Andrea Nann, Heidi Strauss, Yim Savann (Cambodia), Phon Sopheap (Cambodia)



Tribal Crackling Wind is the company of acclaimed choreographer Peter Chin. Peter, of South-East Asian heritage, has spent much time in Asia researching the complexity of its culture. *Transmission of the Invisible* reflects Peter's studies of Cambodian classical dance, working with those teachers that survived the Khmer Rouge. The ensuing work is a beautiful creation that profoundly explores the concepts of loss and remembering and eloquently reveals how culture, on the brink of annihilation, still survives through intimate interaction.

Peter is so articulate. His dances are gentle as well as profound. I admire how this artist defines his statements in art, taking control of every aspect the audience experiences. His work is truly transformative. – Brian Webb

Menaka Thakkar Dance Company

Agni Ratha

Choreography by Menaka Thakkar

Dancers: Monica Shah, Arun Sankar, Deb Kumar Paul, Eddie Kastrau, Kiruthika Ratnasingham, Neena Jayarajan, Nirjhum Proshanti, Sajilal Narayanan, Shanthini Kangesan



Menaka Thakkar is a master dancer in three classical Indian styles – Bharatanatyam, Odissi and Kuchipudi. Now in her 65th year, Ms. Thakkar settled in Canada in 1973 at the peak of her career as an international soloist. She, along with Kathak dancer Rina Singha are credited as the first artists to introduce Indian dance to Canadian audiences. Her company will perform the world premiere of a choreography by Menaka Thakkar (*Agni Ratha – the Fiery Chariot*).

I remember the first time I saw Menaka. Her love of dance was obvious to me. I marvel at her energy and how dance alive in the here and now is so obviously her passion. -- Brian Webb

Menaka Thakkar Dance Company

Riaz

Choreography by Natasha Bakht

Dancers: Monica Shah, Kiruthika Ratnasingham, Neena Jayarajan, Nirjhum Proshanti, Shanthini Kangesan



The second work danced by the company is *Riaz*, choreographed by Menaka's pupil Natasha Bakht, herself one of Canada's acclaimed dance artists: a professional dancer, choreographer – and law professor. "The different sides of my life complement each other in that they both address elements of public service," says Natasha, who teaches at the University of Ottawa and performs around the world. *Riaz* examines "the practice of practising an art form." The two works together will demonstrate the through-line of contemporary dance in Canada as it evolves from one generation to the next.

When I see Natasha performing, I'm amazed at the clarity, the passion, and the energy with which she reveals who she is. Natasha is an incredible Canadian who simply brings every aspect of herself forward to communicate to people. – Brian Webb

Ballet Creole

Breakin Out

Choreographed by Patrick Parson

Dancers: Kevin A. Ormsby, Sean Smith, Marc Hall, Delton Frank



Ballet Creole was founded by Patrick Parson who is of Caribbean heritage. Patrick understands deeply the meaning of diaspora. His dances are created from African roots infused with Caribbean sensibility, and defined by his presence in Canada.

Through dance he celebrates the energy of life, that vital force that says, "I am; I am here." His dance *Breakin Out* highlights the fantastic abilities of his company's superb male dancers.

His dance is right there, full of positive energy. Once when Patrick and I were talking he said, "I believe in one race -- the human race." That defines Patrick to me. And this beautiful thought will be celebrated in Dancing Through Cultures.
Brian Webb

***** Tickets available at the
NAC Box Office and [Ticketmaster](#): (613) 755-1111

Program - final

Dancing In, Through and Between Cultures Toward a Space of Mutuality

A forum designed to promote discussions of Culture, Identity and Belonging

Thursday, June 25

5:30 p.m. Canadian Dance Assembly's Meet and Greet Dinner at Haveli Indian Restaurant,
39 Clarence Street, Byward Market

7:30 p.m. BravoFact Screening of Dance Films at the Mercury Lounge, Byward Market

Friday, June 26 – National Arts Centre Fountain Room

1:00 – 1:30 Opening Ceremony – Dorothy Meness, Aboriginal Elder
Introductory Remarks – Brian Webb, Artistic Director, Canada Dance Festival

FACILITATOR: Charles C. Smith

1:30 – 1:45 Natasha Bakht: Presentation of paper on racism: *Mere "Song & Dance": Complicating the Multicultural Imperative in the Arts*

1:45 – 2:15 Prepared Responses

- Vivine Scarlett
- Mimi Beck
- Lynette Harper

2:15 – 3:00 Discussion

3:00 – 3:15 HEALTH BREAK

3:15 – 4:00 Discussion

4:00 – 5:15 Open Space (break-out sessions)

5:15 – 5:30 Reconvene for Wrap-up

8:00 p.m.	Performances - Aboriginal Contemporary Dance Platform – NAC Studio
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Gaétan Gingras – <i>Blood Memory (Mémoire de Sang)</i>▪ Byron Chief Moom – excerpt from <i>Blood Alley</i>▪ Red Power Squad – <i>The Balance Between Both Worlds</i> |
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Saturday, June 27, National Arts Centre Salon

9:30 – 10:15 Discussion focusing on performances of previous evening

FACILITATOR: Allan Ryan

10:15 – 10:30 Michael Greyeyes: Presentation of paper on issues of Aboriginal dance artists: *Notions of Indian-ness*

10:30 – 11:00 Prepared Responses

- Michelle Olson
- Steven Loft

11:00 – 11:10 HEALTH BREAK

11:10 – 12:30 Discussion

12:30 – 2:00 LUNCH

FACILITATOR: Joyce Rosario

2:00 – 2:15 Kevin Ormsby: Presentation of paper on intergenerational concerns: *Between Generations: Understanding the Differences in Realities and Aspirations of the First and Second Generations of Culturally Diverse Artists*

2:15 – 2:45 Prepared Responses

- Zab Maboungou
- Shannon Litzenberger
- Rasesh Thakkar

2:45 - 3:15 Discussion

3:15 - 3:25 HEALTH BREAK

3:25 - 4:30 Discussion

4:30 – 5:15 Open Space

5:15 – 5:30 Reconvene for Wrap-Up

7:30 p.m.	Performances - Canadian Multiculturalism Day Gala – NAC Theatre
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- Tribal Crackling Wind – *Transmission of the Invisible* (Peter Chin)
- Menaka Thakkar Dance Company – *Agni Ratha, The Fiery Chariot* (Thakkar)
- Menaka Thakkar Dance Company – *Riaz* (Natasha Bakht)
- Ballet Creole – *Breakin Out* (Patrick Parson)

Sunday, June 28, National Arts Centre Fountain Room

- 9:30 – 10:15 Discussion focusing on previous evening performances
- FACILITATOR: CHARLES C. SMITH
- 10:15 – 10:45 Advancement of the Canadian Dance Community: Part A
- 10:45 – 10:55 HEALTH BREAK
- 10:55 – 12:30 Discussion
- 12:30 – 2:00 LUNCH
- 2:00 – 3:15 Advancement of the Canadian Dance Community: Part B
- 3:15 – 3:25 HEALTH BREAK
- 3:25 – 4:00 Discussion
- 4:00 – 4:30 Close of Conference

The three papers (by Natasha Bakht, Michael Greyeyes and Kevin Ormsby) are posted on the CDF web site (www.canadadance.ca). As well, there is an on-line discussion forum/blog. These have to be in place of cross-country community meetings that were not funded.

The Advisory Committee has been fantastic helping to build this project – the CDF owes them a lot for their help and support. The members are:

Natasha Bakht – Dance Artist & Law Professor, University of Ottawa (Ottawa)

Barbara Clausen – Producer, New Works (Vancouver)

Denise Fujiwara – Artistic Director, Fujiwara Dance Inventions & Artistic Director, CanAsian Dance Festival (Toronto)

Michael Greyeyes – Dance Artist & Professor, York University (Toronto)

Sandra Laronde – Artistic Director, Red Sky Performance & Director of Indigenous Arts, The Banff Centre (Banff)

Cathy Levy – Dance Producer, National Arts Centre (Ottawa)

BaKari Eddison Lindsay – Artistic Director, Collective of Black Artists (COBA), Toronto

Zab Maboungou – Artistic Director, Compagnie Nyata Nyata (Montréal)

Lata Pada – Artistic Director, Sampradaya Dance Creations (Toronto)

Joyce Rosario – Executive Director, Made in BC (Vancouver)

