



Logan Center for the Arts  
The University of Chicago  
915 East 60th Street, Chicago, IL 60637  
[chicagoblackdancelegacy.org](http://chicagoblackdancelegacy.org)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 22, 2023**



**CMDC Hiptlet Ballerinas, Photo by Matt Karas**

## **Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project Announces New Cohort and Upcoming Performance**

**Five Prominent Foundations Come Together to Make This Work Possible**

(Chicago, IL) Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project (CBDLP), housed at The University of Chicago's Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts, announces the selection of 10 companies to participate in the second round of its program, which was created to celebrate and strengthen Black dance in Chicago and beyond.

The companies selected for the new cohort include six returning companies: Chicago Multi-Cultural Dance Center & Hiptlet Ballerinas, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, Forward Momentum Chicago, Joel Hall Dancers & Center, Najwa Dance Corps, and Muntu Dance Theatre; as well as four new additions: M.A.D.D. Rhythms, Move Me Soul, Praise Productions, and The Era Footwork Collective.



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This group will take the stage in a dance concert entitled *Sans Pareil*—French for “unparalleled,” a nod to the Haitian lineage of Chicago’s founder, Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable. This engagement, which marks the new cohort’s first public performance and celebrates the past and present of Black dance in Chicago, will be held at the **Logan Center on Saturday, March 25 at 7pm & Sunday, March 26 at 6pm**. There will be a **youth performance on Sunday, March 26 at 2pm**. Tickets can be purchased at [tickets.uchicago.edu](http://tickets.uchicago.edu).

Launched in 2019, CBDLP brings together a cohort of dance companies to learn from each other and leverages the resources of the Logan Center and other University of Chicago entities to bolster Black dance companies’ operational capacity to ensure the long-term survival of their legacies. Following the success of the first phase of the program, the CBDLP will begin a new two-year cycle with 10 outstanding groups representing a variety of traditions and perspectives. “I am energized and inspired to continue the work of cementing and celebrating the important legacy of Black dance in Chicago through CBDLP,” said Princess Mhoon, who stepped into the role of Strategic Program Manager in March 2021 and was recently promoted to the role of CBDLP Director.

“Since opening 10 years ago, the Logan Center has been fortunate to partner with a number of these phenomenal companies, often connecting their work to the work of our students, faculty and staff while learning and benefiting from each company’s artistry and legacy. We look forward to welcoming audiences to experience these remarkable companies onstage,” said Bill Michel, Associate Provost and Executive Director of the Logan Center. “We are grateful for our partners on and off campus including the Office of Civic Engagement Community Programs Accelerator and the Black Metropolis Research Consortium, DCASE, and the Newberry Library who have joined this impressive cohort of dance companies to celebrate the profound impact that Chicago has and will continue to have on dance in America and beyond.”

The first round of the program brought eight companies together for capacity building and collaborative programming, including high-visibility performances at Logan Center, Navy Pier, and Millennium Park. The companies that participated saw an increase in their operating budgets, and an increase in funds raised. The new cohort will receive similar support, thanks to lead funding from the Joyce Foundation and the Mellon Foundation and additional support from Walder Foundation, University of Chicago Women’s Board, and the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

“We are thrilled to increase our support for the Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project this year under the leadership of CBDLP Director, Princess Mhoon. This year’s cohort demonstrates incredible artistry, talent, and vision. And by coming together for the first time, these groups are doing groundbreaking work to build and strengthen the legacy and future of Black dance in our city,” says Joyce Foundation Program Director Mia Khimm.



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“We are honored to join our colleagues at the Logan Center and the Joyce Foundation, as well as the other funders, in supporting the exciting multiplicity and aesthetic complexity that exists within the Black dance ecology in Chicago,” says Emil Kang, program director of Arts and Culture at the Mellon Foundation. “We are excited about CBDLP’s model of care and camaraderie to imagine a thriving future for Black dance.”

Initial support for this project was provided by the Joyce Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Trust, and the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs (DCASE), as well as Pam Crutchfield, Ginger Farley, Maggy Fouche, and other individual donors.

“We deeply appreciate our funders. Their support and its far-reaching implications on equity in the arts can’t be overstated. It is a true testament to the legacy of Chicago’s Black dance community. This is a stellar group of companies who have already made an impact on this city, and we look forward to amplifying their work so that it continues to resound,” says Mhoon.

CBDLP relies on public and private funding from foundations, individuals, and government agencies, and is continuing to raise funds to support this important legacy. More information and support opportunities can be found [here](#).

### **Important Details for the March Concert:**

***Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project: Sans Pareil***

**Saturday, March 25, 7pm**

**Sunday, March 26, 2pm (Youth Performance) & 6pm**

Performance Hall, Logan Center for the Arts

915 E 60th St, Chicago, IL 60637

Tickets: [tickets.uchicago.edu](http://tickets.uchicago.edu)

\$25 General | \$10 Students and Seniors (62+)

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For more information about the Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project, visit [chicagoblackdancelegacy.org](http://chicagoblackdancelegacy.org)



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### **About the Logan Center for the Arts**

Designed as a home for the creative life of the University of Chicago campus and the city of Chicago, the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts is a partner, resource, and catalyst for developing deeper cultural networks and richer creative projects citywide and beyond. Celebrating its tenth anniversary in 2022 and 2023, the Logan Center is a place where boundaries dissolve and artistic work is amplified through a web of collaborative partners. More than just a building, it is an innovative hub for arts education for UChicago students and Chicagoland students and families, a platform to showcase today's most innovative creators across all media, and a locus for impactful and collaborative artistic innovations with partners in nearby South Side communities and across Chicago.

### **About the Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project**

Chicago has long been a significant hub of African American arts and culture. Chicago's Black community has played a defining role in dance history, from imbuing traditional forms with new vibrancy to establishing entirely new forms of urban dance. While Chicago's Black dance companies are as diverse as the city itself—from dancers to dance styles—they are all united by the African American heritage on which their work is centered. The Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project, developed through a partnership between Logan Center Community Arts, the Office of Civic Engagement's Community Programs Accelerator, and leaders from each dance company, is a multi-year project that celebrates the historic impact of Chicago-based Black choreographers in the national dance community, and aims to strengthen the impact and reach of Black dance for generations to come. Selected specifically for the history and impact of their work, Chicago Black Dance Legacy Project partners include legacy, next-generation, and arts education dance companies. The 2023 cohort includes: [The Chicago Multicultural Dance Company](#), [Deeply Rooted Dance](#), [Forward Momentum Chicago](#), [Joel Hall Dancers & Center](#), [M.A.D.D. Rhythms](#), [Move Me Soul](#), [Muntu Dance Theatre](#), [NAJWA Dance Corps](#), [Praise Productions](#), [The Era Footwork Collective](#). The 2022 cohort included: [Ayodele Drum & Dance](#), [The Chicago Multicultural Dance Company](#), [Deeply Rooted Dance](#), [Forward Momentum Chicago](#), [Joel Hall Dancers & Center](#), [Muntu Dance Theatre](#), [NAJWA Dance Corps](#), and [Red Clay Dance Company](#).

### **About the Companies**

**The Chicago Multi-Cultural Dance Center's Hiplet Ballerinas'** mission is to offer the highest quality dance instruction in an environment that celebrates the diversity of its students and the community. CMDC strives to keep the cost of training affordable and often provides classes at little or no charge. In addition to offering classes in many different styles of dance, CMDC is also the home of the pre-professional training program, School of Bryant Ballet. In 2008 Founder and Artistic Director Homer Hans Bryant merged ballet and street dance to create Hiplet, a new technique featuring hip hop dance in pointe shoes.



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**Deeply Rooted Dance Theater** is rooted in the traditions of American and African American dance, storytelling, and universal themes that spark a visceral experience and ignite an emotional response in diverse audiences worldwide. DRDT collaborates with nationally renowned choreographers, across the spectrum of modern, ballet, and African dance, to reflect contemporary voices.

**Forward Momentum Chicago (FMC)** is a not-for-profit organization working to inspire possibilities through dance education programs that strengthen schools and communities with limited arts access. FMC serves thousands of children each year through three major streams of programming: a dance-based arts education curriculum, including in-school and after-school programming and a partnership with After School Matters, a community-based studio program, and a summer dance camp focused on arts enrichment and performance opportunities. Students are immersed in dance genres from around the world while improving social-emotional learning skills to develop the whole child.

**The Joel Hall Dancers & Center (JHDC)** uses the arts to enrich the lives of its community members through dance performance and education. JHDC reaches out to the community, targeting those who would not otherwise be exposed to the arts. With three dance companies, over 50 weekly classes, and multiple outreach programs throughout Chicago, JHDC educates, enlightens, and inspires in an all-inclusive, multicultural, open, and creative environment.

**M.A.D.D. Rhythms** preserves, promotes and contributes to tap by teaching its history, representing its culture, and advocating for its future. M.A.D.D. Rhythms makes a difference in under-served communities by connecting and caring for youth through tap and believes that having access and options gives a child a greater chance at a positive life. M.A.D.D. Rhythms spread the joy, love, discipline, and expression of tap to as many children as possible and work diligently to ensure that all students have the opportunity to dance, regardless of their financial situation. Its youth apprenticeship program Studio to Stage is an alternative to the school-to-prison pipeline.

**Move Me Soul** is a pre-professional youth & professional adult dance company founded by Ayesha Jaco in 2008. The company is committed to providing an innovative platform for inner-city youth & young adults to train and evolve as the next generation of dancers, choreographers, and teachers. Performers are engaged in dancemaking, storytelling, and character development that allows them to curate their own aesthetics of the past, present, and future.

**Muntu Dance Theatre** performs authentic and progressive interpretations of contemporary and ancient African and African-American dance, music, and folklore. Highly regarded for its innovative repertory preserving traditional African dance while creating new works that build on African, Caribbean and African-



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American cultural traditions, they carefully research the cultural and historical significance of the dances and the societies from which they originate. Muntu's core programs include professional performances both at home and abroad, comprehensive community arts programs, classes for the public and professional training for emerging new young artists. ACE (Arts for Community Empowerment) is a residency program that educates children at CPS and charter schools about the technique of African dance and drumming.

**NAJWA Dance Corps (NDC)** is a company of professional dancers and musicians dedicated to the preservation of dance styles and techniques of different eras which reflect the African-American dance heritage and experience. NDC has grown over the years by presenting traditional and contemporary dances of Africa and the Caribbean, traditional and contemporary jazz, tap, nostalgic dances, and the developing hip hop styles of the 21st century.

**Praize Productions** is a not-for-profit, 501(c)3, organization housed on the South Side of Chicago. PPI is composed of three platforms: PPI's Performing Arts Academy; RIZE Pro-Elite professional dance company and RIZE Youth Company; and our outreach programs. Known for its award-winning and thought-provoking theatrical productions, PPI curates professional, arts-based programming and events that amplify the voices and narratives of Black artists and communities via professional platforms, while purposefully maintaining the richness of community connectedness.

**The Era Footwork Collective** is a multidisciplinary artist collaborative representing the dance, music, film, graphic, and fashion design, and culture known as Chicago Footwork. It uses the wisdom and practices passed down from its ancestors to create experiences of rhythm and soul that act as spiritual forces towards creative self-definition and individual and community transformation. Through education, workshops, public performances, community raves, and battles with fellow dancers throughout the city of Chicago and beyond, The Era Footwork Collective serves as culture bearers of footwork and features some of the primary artists continuing to evolve and grow the dance, music, and street culture of Chicago Footwork. The Collective is led by Brandon "Chief Manny" Calhoun, and Jamal "Litebulb" Oliver, and features a range of artists, creatives, and administrative colleagues. Under the leadership of Bulb and Manny, it aims to create sustainable economic pathways for themselves as artists and leaders, and contribute to the establishment of a creative footwork economy in Chicago and beyond.

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