

Press Kit

www.complexionsdance.org



COMPLEXIONS CONTEMPORARY BALLET

Photo by Rachel Neville

ABOUT COMPLEXIONS

Complexions Contemporary Ballet (CCB) was founded in 1994 by choreographer Dwight Rhoden and the legendary dancer Desmond Richardson. Their singular approach to dance created a groundbreaking mix of methods, styles and cultures.

Today, Complexions represents one of the most recognized and respected dance companies in the world. Complexions has performed in 20 countries on five continents, for over 20 million television viewers and over 300,000 people in theaters.

To build upon this impressive legacy, Complexions intends to continue its mission: to bring unity to the world one ballet at a time.

www.complexionsdance.org



Photo by Steven Vandervelden



Photo by Rachel Neville

DESMOND RICHARDSON

Artistic Director

Desmond Richardson has served in his current position as artistic director for Complexions Contemporary Ballet, which he founded with Dwight Rhoden, since 1994.

Prior to this position, Richardson was a dancer with the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater from 1987-94. During his tenure as co-artistic director, Richardson also danced with the Frankfurt Ballet from 1994-96; and with American Ballet Theater from 1997-1998, where he became the first African-American to be named Principal Dancer.

www.complexionsdance.org

DWIGHT RHODEN

Artistic Director | Choreographer

Dwight Rhoden founded Complexions Contemporary Ballet with Desmond Richardson in 1994, where he serves in his current positions as artistic director and choreographer. Prior to this position, Rhoden was a dancer with the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater from 1987-94; the Ballets Jazz de Montréal from 1985-87; and with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company from 1982-1985.

Rhoden has choreographed over 80 ballets for Complexions Contemporary Ballet and his repertoire includes commissioned works for Romare Bearden, Diana Vishneva and the Marinsky Theater.

www.complexionsdance.org



Photo by Rachel Neville

A Season Like No Other

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, dance companies were forced to cancel performances and had to find new ways to stay financially viable.

In the dance world, this led to new creative collaborations, and gave birth to a hybrid of two art forms: dance and film.

www.complexionsdance.org



Photos by Jae Man Joo



Black is Beautiful

a dance film by

COMPLEXIONS CONTEMPORARY BALLET

directed and choreographed by

DWIGHT RHODEN & DESMOND RICHARDSON

Black is Beautiful, choreographed and directed by Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson, is a hybrid of dance and spoken word set against a black and white backdrop of urban landscapes.





Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, this film epitomizes Complexions' commitment to social justice, innovation and diversity.

"This film is an example of the dance community's power of advocacy and extraordinary resourcefulness in the face of adversity."

– *New York Times*

www.complexionsdance.org



BLACK IS BEAUTIFUL

Press Release

2021

**Complexions Contemporary Ballet presents “Black is Beautiful”
2021 season goes digital with new dance film**

Key Words:

Complexions Contemporary Ballet, Dance, Film, Black Lives Matter, Dwight Rhoden, Desmond Richardson, Misty Copeland, Terrell Lewis, Aicha Therese, Mr. Reed, Poetess Jess, Jacob Hiss, Black is beautiful, Snatched back from the edges, #saytheirnames

(New Rochelle, N.Y.)—Complexions Contemporary Ballet announces the release of a new dance film choreographed by Co-Artistic Directors Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson. The film, entitled “Black is Beautiful,” will premiere on Feb. 3 on the company’s Youtube channel, with subsequent films to be released throughout the 2021 season.

-MORE-

In the words of Artistic Director Dwight Rhoden, "*Black is Beautiful*, inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, is an intense, abstract depiction of the depth of systemic racism and oppression. Its heartfelt message of positivity celebrates black people's power, majesty, and resilience throughout history despite these challenges."

With the use of spoken word, and in its thematic of social justice, the dance film "Black is Beautiful" is a natural continuation of the work *Complexions* began on the same themes, in the ballet "Woke" in 2019.

Co-Artistic Director Desmond Richardson describes the origins of the project and its process: "The pandemic forced us to reimagine our season this year. We turned to the medium of film and discovered that we could innovate our style and reinvigorate movement in ways we'd never thought of before. The use of close-ups and urban settings allowed our dancers to be expressive in a real-life setting, and that is really powerful and exciting."

-MORE-

Black is Beautiful is danced by Jared Brunson, April Watson, Maxfield Haynes, Khayr Fajri Muhammad, Larissa Gerszke and Brandon Gray.

The premiere of *Black is Beautiful* is introduced by former Complexions company dancer Christina Johnson, and features remarks by Dwight Rhoden, Desmond Richardson, Terrell Lewis, and special guest Misty Copeland. The choreography is set to the spoken words of U.K. artists Terrell Lewis, Aicha Therese, Mr. Reed and Poetess Jess. The cinematography is by Jacob Hiss.

About Complexions Contemporary Ballet

Complexions was founded in 1994 by Choreographer Dwight Rhoden and the legendary dancer Desmond Richardson. Their singular approach to dance created a groundbreaking mix of methods, styles and cultures. Today, Complexions represents one of the most recognized and respected dance companies in the world. Complexions has performed in 20 countries on five continents, for over 20 million television viewers and over 300,000 people in theaters. To build upon this impressive legacy, Complexions intends to continue its mission: to bring unity to the world one ballet at a time. Learn more at: www.complexionsdance.org, or visit us on Instagram and on Facebook.

###

The Company



CHRISTIAN BURSE (Dancer) was born in Austin, Texas where she began her dance journey at the age of two years old. She completed her early dance training at RISE Dance Company where she received a diverse dance education. She continued her dance training at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas, Texas, and Dance Industry Performing Arts Center. She attended multiple summer intensives with COMPLEXIONS Contemporary Ballet and The Juilliard School. She has received awards from The National YoungArts Foundation and was named a 2020/2021 Texas Young Master. This is Christian's second season with COMPLEXIONS.

Photo by Rachel Neville

JACOPO CALVO (Dancer) was born in Asti, Italy. He began his dance training at the age of 11 at his hometown school, Ritmo Danza. At 18, he moved to NYC where he attended The Ailey School on scholarship. He has worked with choreographers such as Marcus Jarrell Willis, Brice Mousset, Ray Mercer, Earl Mosley, Francesca Harper, and artist Nick Cave in *The Let Go* at the Park Avenue Armory. He has attended summer intensives with American Ballet Theater and Complexions Contemporary Ballet, and RESET 2021 with Studio Wayne McGregor. Jacopo has performed with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater for their 60th Anniversary Season in Memoria at New York City Center and for the Ailey Spirit Gala. This is his 2nd season with Complexions.



Photo by Rachel Neville



KOBE ATWOOD COURTNEY (Dancer) was introduced to dance through Richmond Ballet's Outreach program Minds in Motion. They trained with Richmond Ballet, under the encouragement of Jasmine Grace. They finished their training at San Francisco Ballet School. There, they were fortunate to perform pieces such as Balanchine's "Stars and Stripes" and an excerpt from Jiri Kylian's "Sarabande". They then spent two years working with Orlando Ballet. They were able to learn from many different works such as "Lyric Pieces" by Jessica Lang and "Lambarena" by Val Caniparoli. They continued their career with Festival Ballet Providence, where they were able to dance leading roles in pieces choreographed by artists like Yury Yanowsky, Ja' Malik, and Lia Cirio. They also recently started their choreographic career, setting work for Rhode Island Women's Choreography Project. They look forward to the next chapter of their career, joining Complexions Contemporary Ballet for this season.

Photo by Rachel Neville

JASMINE HEART CRUZ (Dancer) was born and raised in San Francisco, California. She received her dance training at Westlake School for the Performing Arts where she focused in ballet, contemporary, jazz, and modern. She also attended programs such as Hubbard Street Dance Intensive, NYCDA Winter Dance Intensive, and English National Ballet School's fall and summer courses. After graduating high school, she spent one year at the University of Southern California's Gloria Kaufman School of Dance. In 2020, Jasmine was a Dance Spirit Magazine Cover Model Search Winner. She has received awards from competitions such as ADCIBC, YAGP, NYCDA, and most recently received the bronze medal at Tanzolymp International Dance Festival in Berlin. This is her first season with Complexions.



Photo by Rachel Neville



JILLIAN DAVIS (Dancer) from Kutztown, PA and began her ballet training at the age of 3. She studied with Risa Kaplowitz and Susan Jaffe at Princeton Dance and Theater Studio in Princeton, NJ. Jillian attended San Francisco Ballet, School of American Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet and LINES Ballet programs. Jillian has been a company member with Complexions since 2014. She has been part of Dwight Rhoden world premieres including Headspace, Strum, Gutter Glitter, Star Dust, Bach 25, Woke, Love Rocks, and a world-premiere solo, Elegy. She has also performed installation works by Desmond Richardson and an excerpt of Approximate Sonata by William Forsthye. Along with being a dancer with Complexions, Jillian is part of the core faculty for Complexions Dance Academy.

Photo by Rachel Neville

JOE GONZALEZ (Dancer) is from Boston Massachusetts, where he trained at Roxbury Center Performing Arts and the Boston Arts Academy. Joe has participated in Boston Conservatory's summer intensive, American Dance Festival, Bates Dance Festival and twice at Springboard Danse Montreal. He received his BFA from Boston Conservatory and premiered works in their choreography showcases and commissioned works for Bryn Mawr College, Rowan University and Boston Conservatory at Berklee WinterWorks. Joe toured nationally and internationally as performing artist with Philadanco, Anna Myer & Dancers, Prometheus Dance, #DBdanceProject and was Director of Philadanco's 3rd Company (D/3), the 2020/21 DanceVisions Artist in Resident at Performance Garage. This is Joe's first season with Complexions.



Photo by Rachel Neville



Photoby Rachel Neville

TATIANA MELENDEZ (Dancer) grew up in Tampa, FL. She studied at All American Dance Factory & Classical Ballet under Julio Montano and Terri Howell. At 15, she joined Houston Ballet Academy's Professional Division on scholarship. Tatiana performed with Houston Ballet in Stanton Welch's Cinderella and The Nutcracker, and with Texas Ballet Theater as Clara in Ben Stevenson's The Nutcracker and Matinü Pieces. She was a part of the world premiere of Dwight Rhoden's WOKE, Love Rocks & SBFTE. Tatiana has guested around the world including dancing the Snow and Sugar Plum pas for Roma City Ballet Company. Tatiana appeared on the cover of Pointe's magazine 2020 Fall edition and danced for the 2021 Kennedy Center Honors. This is Tatiana's 4th season with Complexions.

CANDY TONG (Dancer) was born in San Francisco, California. She trained at San Francisco Ballet School under full scholarship and is a BFA graduate in Dance Performance from University of California, Irvine -- completing the program in just 2.5 years. Candy received a diploma in Dance from the English National Ballet School, where she performed and toured with the company. Alongside her dance career, Candy is a signed model with Stetts Model Management and has been in several global campaigns such as Reebok. Her work has been showcased at the Galleries Lafayette in Paris, the Huffington Post, and on Nikon Europe's ad campaigns. As an entrepreneur, Candy is a fashion designer specifically for dancewear. Candy joined Complexions in 2018.



Photo by Rachel Neville



Photo by Rachel Neville

CONTACT

COMPLEXIONS CONTEMPORARY BALLET

22 Wilson Drive New Rochelle, NY 10801

contact@complexionsdance.org

Tel: 212-777-7771

www.complexionsdance.org