

MoBBallet.org

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Curating the Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet

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Conference Centers Blackness in Ballet and Drafts a New Blueprint for the Art Form

Registration for August Event Now Open

March 15, 2022 – “MoBBallet is drafting a new blueprint for ballet by addressing its existing issues 360°,” said Theresa Ruth Howard, former ballerina, diversity strategist, and founder of the digital legacy project Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet (MoBBallet.org) (<https://mobballet.org>). This mission will come to life at the MoBBallet Symposium/MIA – Motivation. Innovation. Activation. (<https://mobballet.org/index.php/symposium/>) scheduled for August 7 – 13, 2022 at Sanctuary of the Arts (<https://www.sanctuaryofthearts.org/>) in Miami-Dade County, Florida. The Symposium is focused on supporting and advocating for Black ballet dancers and choreographers, examining dance education practices, and creating meaningful conversations with dance academics, along with engaging ballet leadership to address the racial and cultural issues in ballet.

“We are using Africanist principles by building a village of support, education and solidarity,” explained Howard. “We focus on providing elite training because the art is important, but we also engage entrepreneurs–Black dance studios are wellsprings of talent, but they are businesses that must thrive if the pre-professional pipeline wishes to look differently. “We are also providing support to our up-and-coming choreographers and providing a platform for our scholars who will help to rewrite/restore the narrative. We are inviting arts leaders of our host city to get into the mix. Many hands make light work!”

The MoBBallet/MIA programming will provide elite training and professional development for advanced and intermediate dancers who are Black identifying, with one-on-one mentorship as well as coaching for advanced dancers from ballet professionals who look like them. But the goal at MoBBallet Symposium/MIA is not conventional success as defined by a contract with a leading company. Instead, Howard carefully pairs dancers and mentors to create meaningful relationships that last well beyond the week-long conference, with the intention of matching an aspiring artist with someone who helps them feel seen, nurtured, and supported in their artistic journey.

Dance faculty* to date includes: **Debra Austin** (Carolina Ballet), **Andrea Long Naidu** (Boston Ballet School), **Jason Ambrose** (San Francisco Ballet School), **Kareen Pauld Camargo** (Miami City Ballet), **Monica Stephenson** (Miami City Ballet), **Erica Edwards** (Former Joffrey Ballet dancer and educator, founder-Cultivating Better Tomorrows), **Meredith Rainey** (Kitchen Table Dance Collective), **Chandra Moss-Thorne** (Swarthmore College), **Christian Von Howard** (Montclair State University), **Ramon Flowers** (formerly with Pennsylvania Ballet, Rambert Ballet, Frankfurt), **William Isaac** (Kymera Dance Company).

Creating a pipeline for talent that redefines what a ballet dancer looks like and who ballet is for depends on local dance schools thriving as businesses, and creating inclusive spaces that welcome and support a diverse range of students from the earliest ages. The Symposium will provide ballet teachers and private studio owners with the tools and skills to help achieve these goals. The highly skilled professionals Howard has selected to work with educators, and reimagine the ballet curriculum include **Ayisha McMillan Cravotta** (Charlotte Ballet Academy Director), **Monica Stephenson** (Miami City Ballet), **Marion Tonner** (former Director of Oregon Ballet Theatre School), **Andrea Yannone** (former Director of Education and Training at San Francisco Ballet), **Margaret Tracey** (former Director of the Boston Ballet School).

The Symposium is an extension of Howard’s development of Cultural Competence and Equity Coalition (<https://mobballet.org/C2EC/>) (C2EC), a learning community of ballet organizations. C2EC members are invited to attend the Symposium to further explore how ballet companies and leadership can change the culture of ballet.

In addition, the MoBBallet Symposium is hosting a scholar track and has issued a call for papers on subjects that align with MoBBallet’s core values and mission. MoBBallet is currently accepting proposals for papers, workshops, and digital presentations from scholars on a variety of topics including anti-racist and inclusive pedagogy, decolonizing ballet/curriculum, Black dance archives and history, and aesthetics in ballet training. Because aspects of the conference will be hybrid in nature, a limited number of presentations will be virtual. The deadline for proposals is Monday, March 28, 2022. For a full list of topics and further details on submitting papers, visit the submission website (<https://mobballet.org/index.php/2022/02/15/call-for-symposium-presentation-proposals/>).

The MoBBallet Symposium/MIA is also deeply rooted in this year’s location, and committed to engaging with and celebrating the vibrant Afro-Caribbean, and specifically Bahamian and Hatian communities in Coral Gables and Miami-Dade County where Sanctuary of the Arts is located. Howard and Rafi Maldonado-Lopez, Principal Managing Director of Sanctuary of the Arts, are curating panels with arts leaders from Miami City Ballet, Design Miami and multiple museums to speak about how they can support and encourage the intersectionality of the city of Miami.

Understanding the importance of MoBBallet’s work in the field as well as within its community, Miami City Ballet (<https://www.miamicityballet.org/>) has pledged \$15,000 in support. Additionally, Arts, Equity, & Education Fund (<https://www.aeefund.org/>), a longtime supporter of MoBBallet, is underwriting the choreographers’ program which was designed to address the lack Black choreographers.

For more details on the symposium, please visit the MoBBallet landing page (<https://mobballet.org/index.php/2022/02/07/mobballet-symposium-mia-motivation-innovation-activation-landing-page/>), or follow #MoBBalletMIA.

About Theresa Ruth Howard and MoBBallet

Journalist, diversity strategist and former ballerina Theresa Ruth Howard is the founder of Memoirs of Blacks in Ballet (MoBBallet) (<https://mobballet.org>), a non-profit organization that preserves, presents and promotes the contributions of Blacks in ballet. The digital platform includes an archive of historical information, digital installations, and more. Howard is a leader in the advocacy for diversity in ballet and regularly consults with ballet leadership internationally.

She has collaborated with organizations such as Dance/USA, Dutch National Ballet, The Royal Ballet, and International Association of Blacks in Dance to create safe spaces where organizations and their leadership can engage in authentic dialogue, receive education, and strategize ways to create sustainable change.

About Sanctuary of the Arts

Sanctuary of the Arts is an innovative artist-led institution that incorporates best practices from artistic, educational, community, corporate and foundation engagement strategies. The goal is to produce not only high-quality performances and events, but also those that are appealing in concept and content to a wide audience base, leading to more personal engagement and assisting in the development of sustainable arts careers.

* all faculty subject to change

[MoBBallet.org](https://mobballet.org) (<https://mobballet.org>)

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[FromHereToDiversity.com](http://fromheretodiversity.com/) (<http://fromheretodiversity.com/>)

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New York Times profile: [She's Been a Force for Change in Ballet. The World Is Catching Up.](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/arts/dance/theresa-ruth-howard.html) (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/06/arts/dance/theresa-ruth-howard.html>)

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Catch Howard in conversation with Judith Jamison, Virginia Johnson, and Sheinelle Jones at the [National Museum of African American History and Culture's Women's E3 Virtual Summit](https://nmaahc.si.edu/womens-e3-virtual-summit) on March 24, 2022 (<https://nmaahc.si.edu/womens-e3-virtual-summit>)

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Arts, Equity, & Education Fund

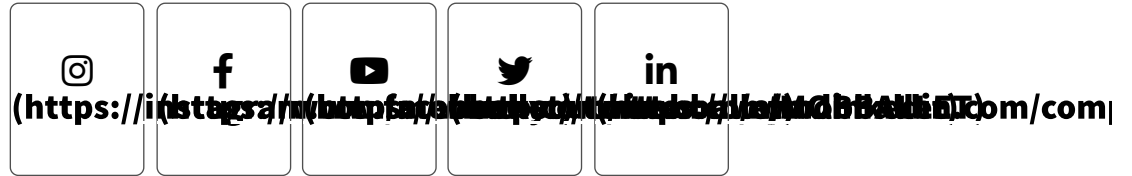
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