



# REJECTS COHORT 2026

**SATURDAY**

**Producing Team:** [Lily Conforti](#) & [Javan Mngrezzo](#)

**Lighting Designer:** Alice Endo

First off, thank you so much for being here!  
You are about to see a series of short works from MN dancers/choreographers. Each short work, born from rejection, is a testament to the resilience and innovation of the artists behind them, offering a fresh perspective on the intersection of art, access, and opportunity.

This show serves as a place to take a breath together, share art together, and be in community together. As a cohort we feel as though it is vital to continue to offer and create these spaces amidst the fear, grief, and fatigue we are facing.

We will not give in, We will keep making art, We will use art as resistance and as healing.  
Thank you for being here.

## **MUTUAL AID DONATIONS**

This link will take you to a list of local organizations that need donations to continue their work with activism programming, and emergency relief for those that need it at this time.

## **THANK YOUS**

We would like to thank The Mixed Blood Theater for their care, flexibility, and hospitality. Gregory Addison for videoing, Michael Coleman for photographing, Alice Endo for her amazing light design and tech help, our beautifully talented and kind 2026 cohort, and lastly, thank YOU for being here!

## **LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

We acknowledge that Mni Sota Makoce, the land of the Dakota people, is unjustly stolen Native land. We stand behind the statement that NO ONE IS ILLEGAL ON STOLEN LAND. We commit to learning, understanding, and supporting efforts toward justice, healing, and the restoration of rights for Indigenous communities. We fully support community resistance against authoritarian, fascist regimes that endanger not only our indigenous Minnesotan communities but all people of color in our state. May we walk together in a spirit of respect, reparation, and reconciliation.

Land acknowledgment is only one small part of supporting Indigenous communities and what is happening in Minnesota right now. We hope our land acknowledgment statement will inspire others to stand with us in solidarity with Native nations and all communities facing injustice.

Around the theater you will see many ways that you can be involved in community resistance. We have resource sheets in the lobby and a link for mutual aid funds to donate to. We are in this together.

## **Bharathnatyam / Indian Classical dance**

**Choreographed by:** Guru . Sivanuja Balaji

Founder & Artistic Director, Nritya Kalakshetra Academy.

**Piece description:** We will be performing Bharathnatyam depicting the cosmic dancer lord Siva and his attributes in powerful rhythmic music.

**Guru Sivanuja Balaji** is a revered Bharatanatyam performer, cultural leader, choreographer, Nattuvanar (nattuvangam artist), rhythm artist, artistic curator, and educator with over 30 years of experience in Indian classical dance. An alumna of the world-renowned Kalakshetra College of Fine Arts, Chennai, South India, she carries forward its distinguished legacy of artistic discipline and classical excellence. She received advanced training under the legendary Padma Shri Adyar K. Lakshman and Shrimathi Krishnaveni Lakshman, and specialized in the intricate Karanas under Padma Bhushan Dr. Padma Subramaniam. Her deep grounding in Carnatic music, nurtured by Vairamangalam Shri Lakshmi Narayanan, enriches her holistic and rhythmically nuanced approach to dance education and performance. In addition to Bharatanatyam, Guru Sivanuja Balaji is a trained Mohiniyattam and Kuchipudi dancer and choreographer, bringing a rare breadth of stylistic understanding while preserving classical integrity and expressive depth.

<https://nrityakalakshetra.org/>

## dis(place)ment

**Composed and Performed by:** Taryn Meyer, tap dance, and Leah Reinardy, vibraphone

**Piece Description:** dis(place)ment is a piece about the reckoning experienced when contemplating our places as individuals within systems and institutions. Both artists, one representing the institution and one the individual, improvise with gesture, groove, and shared musical motifs to explore the complexity of the artists' relationship to one another.

**Taryn Meyer & Leah Reinardy,** Taryn is a dancer, choreographer, and teacher who is passionate about the power of the performing arts to build community and create connections. Leah Reinardy is a multi-instrumentalist, improviser, and composer whose creative work is most informed by limitations. As a disabled artist, Leah views their limitations as parameters that spark the creative process rather than barriers to overcome. The two met during their undergraduate studies at Hope College where they collaborated on a project with the Hope Women and Nonbinary Jazz Collective. They continued to cross paths through their involvement in the Heather Cornell Legacy Project in 2024, composing in musician and percussive dancer duos to further Cornell's mission of reconnecting the two art forms. They are two of the co-founders of the Haut Haus Collective, an emerging non-hierarchical collective of tap dancers and instrumentalists. Taryn and Leah both enjoy hiking, talking about poetry over a cup of coffee, and traveling. In fact, these three activities sparked a creative process that produced tonight's performance on the REJECTS stage.

[@\\_taryn.meyer\\_](#)

[@lreinaryd](#)

## coyote

**Choreographed and Performed by:** Olivia Woebke

**Music Credits:** Coyote, My Little Brother - Mitski

**Piece description:** no one to listen and no one to sing

**Olivia Woebke** is an artist and educator from Bloomington, Minnesota. She holds a Bachelor's of Science in Dance Professions from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. While living in Detroit, she presented choreography on the Wayne State University stage and at Detroit Dance City Festival through Company SIX and Dance Workshop. Her artistic interests lie in the intersections of movement, social justice, anthropology, and environmentalism. She is endlessly curious about interdisciplinary art-making, and seeks to use movement, sound making, and visual arts to create holistic, multifaceted work. She is also a passionate educator and has been an NDEO member since 2024, presenting at both the 2024 and 2025 National Conferences.

[@olivia\\_woebke](#)

## Brief Kleptomania Groove

**Choreographed by:** Allison Durham

**Performed by:** Hunter Batterson, Malia Craft, Allison Durham, Arcelia Y. Rivera, MiKayla Scherping

**Music Credits:** "Kleptomania, Causes, Signs and Symptoms, Diagnosis and Treatment" (Medical Centric Podcast), "Thieves" (Sammy Rae & The Friends)

**Piece description:** The groove will only last so long... Stop the cycle while you can.

**Content Warning:** Sirens

\*PS: Groovers may attempt to avoid financial responsibilities for their ... "found" trinkets.

**Allison Durham** is a dancer, choreographer, director, and dance instructor from the border of Illinois and Wisconsin. After graduating with her B.A. in Theatre and Performance Studies (Dance Minor), she leaped to “The Land of 10,000 Lakes” to fulfill her dreams as a dance and theatre artist. Allison is a proud company dancer of Concerto Dance by Jolene Konkel and has also performed works by The Fox and Beggar Theater (Gabrielle Abram), Collide Theatrical Dance Company, Little Tanz Theater (Hannah MacKenzie Marguilles), and 8:20 Dance Company. As a creator,

Allison utilizes improvisation, musicality, poetry, and imagery to share works mirroring unique human experiences and relationships. Follow @amddanceprojects on Instagram for regular dance videos and career updates.

[@amddanceprojects](#)

## **reminiscent from the rain**

**Choreographed by:** Rachel Rettmann

**Performed by:** Allesandra Hinze-Francis and Eris Duhan

**Music Credits:** Olivia Belli

**Piece Description:** This piece follows an individual reminiscing about a playful and happy moment they shared with someone who is no longer in their lives. The feeling of bittersweet familiarity and melancholy resonates through the memory as rain sprinkles down from the midnight sky.

Shimmering droplets splatter across my face,  
as we wait by the bus stop in the midnight haze.  
Laughter swirled through the air mixing with music,  
as we waltzed like an old couple, 1 step 2 steps

An iridescent memory glazed with pinks and blues,  
permanently sparkling my memory of you.  
We haven't talked in a while, didn't get to say goodbye.

I don't like the rain anymore...

**Rachel Rettmann**, a dancer and emerging choreographer, aims to showcase works that demonstrate the light moments in a dark reality or situation. She is trained in both classical ballet and contemporary dance under Daniel and Julie Blake, and currently trains at Ballet Co. Laboratory as a Trainee. She strives to touch the audience's hearts with relatable themes and story driven dancing.

## **Descent into Yourself**

**Created and Danced by:** Jillian Kramschuster

**Music Credits:** Nils Frahm Fundamental Values

**Piece Description:** Returning to yourself is a beautifully courageous act of love.

**Jillian Kramschuster** is a dancer, teacher, and choreographer from Kansas City, MO. She began her dance training at Kansas City Friends of Alvin Ailey and then pursued her BFA from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. She then completed the Cultivate Trainee program at TU Dance under the direction of Toni Pierce-Sands and Laurel Keen, where she also had the opportunity to dance in TU Dance Company projects. She has performed works by Gary Abbott, Micheal Blake, Deanna Hiett, Gregory Dolbashian, Yusha Marie Sorzano, Chris Ralph, Nicole Clark-Springer, Ronald K. Brown, and Camille A. Brown. Her choreography has been showcased in local Twin Cities theatres and she is also a Bridge Fund for Dance Grant Recipient. She has been a teaching artist at TU Dance since September 2024.

[@jilliankramschuster](#)



## Doom Stroll

**Choreographed by:** Philip Hommes in collaboration with the dancers.

**Performed by:** Hunter Batterson, Malia Craft, Kaitlin Craven, Sophia Louwagie, Anne Petrich

**Music Credits:** Don't Fucking Tell Me What To Do, Music and Lyrics by Klas Ahlund and Robyn

**Piece Description:** The idea of a daily “mental health walk” becomes disrupted by the constant flow of stress-inducing information relating to the intersection of late-stage capitalism and the rise of authoritarianism. Its impact on the idea of oneself relating to society and community morphs into a taunting tunnel vision that distracts from the basic needs of shared humanity.

**Philip Hommes** (he/him) is a Minneapolis-based choreographer, dance instructor, and musician, originally from Two Harbors, Minnesota. Initially training as a competitive dancer in his youth, he went on to pursue his Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, graduating with high distinction in 2021. Here, he had the opportunity to work with and learn from multiple dance artists, both local and international, including Pramila Vasudevan, Eko Supriyanto, Annie Hanauer, and Alito Allesì, while also having his own choreography selected to be presented at the 2020 North Central American College Dance Association (ACDA). Philip is currently a full-time dance instructor and choreographer, teaching students in both competitive and pre-professional settings. Each year, he choreographs dozens of pieces in contemporary, jazz, and tap, consistently having his work recognized through choreography awards and overall high points at regional and national competitions—he is honored to help foster passions for dance, artistic intelligence, and community-focussed empathy in the next generation of movers and thinkers.

## The Parakeet Trainer

**Created by:** Sandra Carlo

**Movers:** Audrey Wilson, Sandra Carlo, and Zoë Que

**Music Credits:** The Complete Parakeet Trainer - PET Records (1981) Produced & Recorded by: Peter E. Tevis Album Voice by: Mariah Hawk | Budgie Sounds Happy Channel - Budgie Sounds Alen AxP (2024) | Bird Tutorial by: Sidney Gish (2017)

**Piece description:** The Parakeet Trainer is a kinetic dialogue between species, bodies, and language. Using parakeet speech training audio, three movers explore mimicry, control, and translation—bridging human and non-human ecologies. A satirical yet tender inquiry into language, belonging, and the strange rituals of being.

**Sandra Carlo** (she/they) Hello Budgie! Sandra is a Twin Cities-based performance artist passionate about Sinclair dinosaurs, butter sculptures, and Tiffany lamps. More to the point...their work blends humor, sexuality, poetry, and movement to create research-driven performance. They hold an MA in Dance Politics and Sociology from the University of Roehampton and have performed with Jennifer Glaws' Jagged Moves. They have also presented original work with Crude Tuesday at the Bryant Lake Bowl.

## Square One

**Choreographed and Performed by:** Lilly King

**Music Credits:** "Where the Mountain Meets the Ocean" Brad Oberhofer & Oberhofer

**Lilly King** is a dancer, performer, and choreographer from Northfield, Minnesota. She began dancing at the age of two and grew up competing in the Twin Cities. Lilly studied at Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists, gaining a well-rounded foundation in both the concert and commercial worlds of dance. Lilly went on to study at the University of Minnesota in dance and then traveled to the east coast where she worked full-time as a choreographer and as a company member with Shaleigh Dance Works. Recently, Lilly graduated from a year of studies at the CLI Conservatory, working with and under artists such as Teddy Forance, Brett Easterling, and Nina McNeely while participating in creative films and performances. Now Lilly is based in the Twin Cities, choreographing and performing with local artists and companies, as she continues to evolve her artistry and grow her knowledge of movement. Lilly is largely inspired by the rich dance community in Minnesota and hopes to continue making connections.

[@\\_king\\_lilly](#)

## The Dark in Your Heart?

**Choreographed and Performed by:** Javan Mngrezzo

**Music Credits:** "Little Blue - Mahogany Sessions" by Jacob Collier

**Piece Description:** How must Ophiuchus feel? Watching as the others revel?...forgotten? ...forgettable? ...irredeemable?

**Javan Mngrezzo** (he/him) is a dance artist, creator, and teacher. He relocated to Minneapolis in 2021 by way of Portland, OR. He graduated from Western Oregon University in three years, magna cum laude, with a Bachelor of Science in Dance and Sociology. Currently, Javan freelances while balancing administrative work and his Pilates Certification training. As a performer: past credits include AMEZ Dance, ARENA Dances, Rhythmically Speaking, and James Sewell Ballet – to name a few. In his view, Art is what will heal and sustain us.

## Inflation Point

**Choreographed by:** Kaitlin Craven in collaboration with Saturday evening Rejects dancers

**Performed by:** Hunter Batterson, Lily Conforti, Kaitlin Craven, Eris Duhan, Allison Durham, Allesandra Hinze-Francis, Philip Hommes, Sophia Louwagie, Taryn Meyer, Anne Petrich, Rachel Rettmann, Arcelia Y. Rivera, MiKayla Scherping, Olivia Woebke

**Music Credits:** Queen and David Bowie

**Piece Description:** "This is ourselves. *Under Pressure*."

**Kaitlin Craven** is a Twin Cities-based dancer, arts administrator, and yoga instructor. Since landing in Minneapolis in 2019, Kaitlin has performed with Strange Loop Projects, Willmeng Dances, eMartin Dance, Little Tanz Theater, Concerto Dance Company, Borealis Dance Theatre, Soiled Dance Series, Minnesota Fringe Festival, CollabArts, Art-a-Whirl Festival, CANDY BOX Dance Festival, Generating Room, and DanceBARN Festival. She supports the local arts ecosystem as the Finance and Grants Manager at Zorongo Flamenco Dance Theatre and through previous roles at Zenon Dance School and the Minnesota State Arts Board. She also weaves her dance background into weekly yoga classes at YogaSix Minnetonka and River Yoga Anoka. Within each of her administrative and creative practices, Kaitlin is interested in bringing communities together through the collective power of movement and imagination.

[@k\\_crayy](#)

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