



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ODC THEATER ANNOUNCES ITS 14TH ANNUAL SUMMER DANCE FESTIVAL

STATE OF PLAY

BABATUNJI | KHALA BRANNIGAN | LESLIE CUYJET
GIZEH MUÑIZ | DRAGONS DANCE / ERIN YEN | LAILA J. FRANKLIN
MALINDA LAVELLE & EMMALY WIEDERHOLT | GIZEH MUÑIZ
JOHNNY HUY NGUYỄN | SEYMOUR::DANCECOLLECTIVE

August 27 – August 30, 2026



odc.dance/stateofplay

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, July 16, 2026 – From August 27 to 30, ODC Theater's annual summer dance festival, **STATE OF PLAY**, returns with performances across ODC's campus. Curated by ODC Theater Creative Director **Chloë L. Zimberg** and ODC Theater Resident Curator **Zaquia Mahler Salinas**, the festival invites audiences to join the creative process through an artistic

exchange, presenting premieres alongside works-in-progress by dance artists from around the Bay Area and across the U.S.

This year's program features four evening-length works and five short-form works at various stages of development. Participating artists include **Babatunji, Khala Brannigan, Leslie Cuyjet, Dragons Dance / Erin Yen, Laila J. Franklin, Malinda LaVelle** and **Emmaly Wiederholt, gizeh muñiz, Johnny Huy Nguyễn**, and **seymour::dancecollective** under the direction of **Chafin Seymour**.

Tickets and festival passes are now on sale at odc.dance/stateofplay.

This year's festival is co-produced by the **Djerassi Resident Artists Program** based on 583 acres in the Santa Cruz Mountains. "Last month, the Djerassi Resident Artists' Program hosted a number of the artists from this year's festival cohort," said Zimberg. "It was a beautiful and generous week, a partnership co-created alongside Djerassi's Creative Director **Mushi Wooseong James** and Executive Director **Craig Adams**. It was an honor to work, create and live with our artists and the impeccable caretakers of the land."

"We talked about analog processes. We talked about relating. We talked about what happens when two human planes meet – when two whole realities come up against one another, physically and figuratively, dancing along a seam of relation. We talked about the value of space and time to make. We talked about slowing down."

"Djerassi has long been a home for artists to take risks, and ODC's choreographers made extraordinary use of our studios during their residency," said Adams. "We're proud to have supported their process and even prouder of what it means for our two organizations going forward. This residency reaffirms a collaboration we intend to keep building for years to come."

A kick-off party for State of Play will take place on Thursday, August 27 at festival partner 836M, a nonprofit arts organization with a gallery space in San Francisco. The evening will feature performances by ODC Home Company **Kinetech Arts** and 2022-2024 Resident Curator **Maurya Kerr**, with remarks by Creative Director Zimberg and ODC Founding Artistic Director **Brenda Way**.

The festival's opening night follows on Friday, August 28, with performances by **Dragons Dance / Erin Yen, Johnny Huy Nguyễn** and **Laila J. Franklin**. Tickets to opening night include access to an after-party with Franklin DJing the dance floor.

From Friday through Sunday, the festival will offer morning workshops for all levels led by State of Play artists gizeh muñiz; **Sarah Pacheco** and **Sasha Peterson**, members of Laila J. Franklin's ensemble; and Malinda LaVelle and Emmaly Wiederholt.

A description of each of the scheduled performances follows below. All the events in the Risk-Takers and Curious Creators series will take place on the main stage at ODC Theater. And

each of the works in the Experimenters series will take place in the studios at ODC Dance Commons. For more information about these and other events taking place during the festival visit odc.dance/stateofplay.

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RISK-TAKERS

Evening-Length Performances

LAILA J. FRANKLIN | *BABYBABYBABY* (West Coast premiere)

Friday, August 28 at 7 p.m.

Saturday, August 29 at 3:30 p.m. (ASL interpretation provided)

Laila J. Franklin is a multidisciplinary dance artist based in Boston, MA by way of Washington, DC. Named one *Dance Magazine's* "25 to Watch" (2024), Franklin makes work about the human experience marked by complexity, nuance, curiosity and humor. Her independent work has been commissioned by Brown University, Salem State University and Boston Conservatory at Berklee, and her performance credits include projects with Miguel Gutierrez, Stephanie Miracle and Melinda Jean Myers.

BABYBABYBABY is a dance about dances about love. Featuring an ensemble of eight performers, including Franklin, *BABYBABYBABY* "taps into feelings of budding romance, when falling in love is silly and fast and sexy and devastating and you are brilliant and stupid and spellbound," writes Franklin. The piece premiered last year at the Philadelphia Fringe Festival at Performance Garage.

LESLIE CUYJET | *Blur* (West Coast premiere)

Saturday, August 29 at 8:30 p.m.

Sunday, August 30 at 2:30 p.m. (ASL interpretation provided)

"A potent choreographic voice." – *The New York Times*

Leslie Cuyjet is a performer and choreographer based in Brooklyn, New York. Since 2004, she has received recognition for her collaborations with artists as diverse as Cynthia Oliver, Jane Comfort, David Gordon, Niall Jones and Will Rawls. Likewise, her independent performances and installations have earned many honors, including two Bessie awards, and ODC Theater is proud to present one of her award-winning works, *Blur*, which received the Bessie for Outstanding Choreographer/Creator in 2022.

Blur is a solo performance that experiments with visibility and invisibility, and the relationship between performer, audience and object. Viewers are invited to navigate a choreographic and phonetic landscape through the lens of race and objectification. **Brandon Wolcott's** sound design manipulates Cuyjet's original text based on her personal history and experiences in dance. A body suit composed of close-up images of Cuyjet's own skin, designed by **Miodrag**

Guberinic, serves to ask if the artist can control her own erasure and rewrite an existence she's never experienced.

MALINDA LAVELLE & EMMALY WIEDERHOLT | *What the Hell Happened in San Francisco?*

(Bay Area Premiere)

Saturday, August 29 at 6:30 p.m. (ASL interpretation provided)

Sunday, August 30 at 7:30 p.m.

What the Hell Happened in San Francisco? is an evening-length work of dance-theater wrestling with idealism, dreams and disillusionment. Malinda LaVelle and Emmaly Wiederholt met in 2008 in San Francisco while trying to “make it” as contemporary dance artists. They burned that dream bright and fast, living and dancing together for several years before moving on to other schemes.

Fast forward to 2021 and Malinda and Emmaly found themselves living in the same city once again, this time Albuquerque, New Mexico. On a hot summer night in Wiederholt's backyard, while reminiscing about the experience of living in the Bay Area as young dance artists, LaVelle sighed and said, “What the hell happened in San Francisco? We should make a piece about it.” *What the Hell Happened in San Francisco?* premiered in Albuquerque, followed by a 2025 Southwest tour to the Railyard Performance Center in Santa Fe, New Mexico and The Light Box in Durango, Colorado.

From 2009-2017, LaVelle directed Project Thrust, a dance-theater company she founded in San Francisco. Throughout that time she also performed with other artists including Alex Ketley with whom she was awarded an Izzie. She currently works as a dance/movement therapist and clinical supervisor in New Mexico.

During her time in the Bay Area, Wiederholt performed with companies including LaVelle's Project Thrust, Little Seismic Dance Company and AXIS Dance Company, among others. She also worked as an arts journalist, later founding Stance on Dance, an online and print publication distributed throughout the United States. Her first book, *Beauty is Experience: Dancing 50 and Beyond*, was published in 2017, and her second book, *Breadth of Bodies: Discussing Disability in Dance*, was published in 2022.

GIZEH MUÑIZ | *Molino for Levitation* (world premiere)

Saturday, August 29 at 5 p.m.

Sunday, August 30 at 6 p.m. (ASL interpretation provided)

After the critically acclaimed *FISHBLOD*, which premiered at State of Play last year, *Molino for Levitation* is the second in a three-part series that challenges the idea that solo performance is inherently an individual endeavor. Muñiz describes it as “a self-contained poem of motion; a temporary archive; an embodied catalog of decisions, presences, and small rebellions; a fissure carved into the architecture of conventional reality to sustain a state of poetic crisis.”

“The work embraces abstraction as a political and poetic act,” adds muñiz. “To dance with the unfamiliar is to refuse the mandate of instant comprehension.”

Muñiz’s choreographic and teaching work has been presented in the United States, Mexico and Europe at festivals including P.O.R.C.H in Germany, Improspeckje in Croatia, GUSH in San Francisco and 4x4 in Tijuana. Muñiz has been an artist in residence at Atland Residency, CounterPulse, PUSH, BANDALOO, Bridge Live Arts, and RAWdance. She is the curator and producer of Gatherings, a free movement workshop series in the Bay Area.

CURIOUS CREATORS

Short-Form Performances

JOHNNY HUY NGUYỄN | *BURN* (work-in-progress)
Sunday, August 30 at 4:30 p.m. (ASL interpretation provided)

Johnny Huy Nguyễn is a multidisciplinary dance artist and son of Vietnamese refugees. He weaves together movement, theater, multimedia, spoken word, ritual and installation to create body-based works characterized by sweeping physicality and dramaturgical depth. His works deal with themes of masculinity, spirituality, lineage, loss and inheritance while interrogating the social, political and cultural forces that shape us. The Izzie award-winning artist has been featured at festivals around the Bay Area.

With a background in street dance, breaking, vogue and house, Nguyễn is currently at work on a new piece titled *BURN*. Inspired by the fire dancing rituals of the ten ethnic minorities of Vietnam, Nguyễn is using performance to investigate the range of ways that burning shows up in our lives – whether as an act of protest, environmental control or spiritual practice. Reclaiming fire as a regenerative force for rebirth, *BURN* envisions dance as a transformative act of self-immolation.

This performance is part of a double bill with Dragons Dance / Erin Yen.

DRAGONS DANCE / ERIN YEN | *Nervous* (world premiere)
Sunday, August 30 at 4:30 p.m. (ASL interpretation provided)

Nervous is a new work by Dragons Dance, under the direction of Erin Yen, exploring how the nervous system plays a role in dissociation from the modern world. Created in collaboration with neurologist **Anne Taylor**, MD, sound designer **Aaron M. Gold** and the dancers of Dragon Dance, *Nervous* asks what happens when we turn up sensation and embody the world of our brains.

Founded in 2020, Dragons Dance is a contemporary dance company that places community at the center of the creative process. Their appearance at State of Play is part of a double bill with Johnny Huy Nguyễn.

EXPERIMENTERS

Studio Presentations

BABATUNJI | Untitled (work-in-progress)

Saturday, August 29 at 3 p.m. (ASL interpretation provided)

Babatunji is a dance artist and choreographer based in Oakland, CA. For more than a decade, he has performed with Alonzo King LINES Ballet. As a freelance dancer, Babatunji has worked with Post:ballet, SFDanceworks, tinypistol and Ballare Carmel, and has performed works by choreographers including Adjani Cissoko, Yue Yin, Danielle Rowe, Brett Conway, Rich and Tone Talauaga, David Harvey and Mike Tyus. His work in film includes features in Rafael Casal and Daveed Diggs' *Blindspotting*. Most recently he co-starred alongside Misty Copeland in her film short *Flower*, which premiered at Tribeca Film Festival in 2023.

This year will mark Babatunji's second appearance at State of Play, but his first as a lead artist. Next spring, he will return in a world premiere of his choreography.

KHALA BRANNIGAN | *Maura* (work-in-progress)

Saturday, August 29 at 7:30 p.m. (ASL interpretation provided)

Currently based in Los Angeles, Khala Brannigan has enjoyed a career in dance that has taken her from Santa Fe, New Mexico to San Francisco to New York. With original works for stage and screen among her credits, she has studied and collaborated with LINES Ballet, Robert Moses' Kin, Sidra Bell Dance New York and CalArts. Last year she received an award from The Rauschenberg Foundation.

Brannigan is currently developing *Maura*, an evening-length dance and short film, an excerpt of which will be shown at State of Play. Drawing on her Native American background, Brannigan weaves together elements of psychological thriller and horror in telling the story of her deceased sister whose ghostly presence still haunts her.

SEYMOUR::DANCECOLLECTIVE | *vernacular* (work-in-progress)

Sunday, August 30 at 3:30pm (ASL interpretation provided)

Seymour::dancecollective is the performance vehicle of **Chafin Seymour**, originally from Brooklyn, New York. His work has been presented nationally at Gibney Dance, New York Live Arts, Movement Research at Judson Church, The Wild Project, La MaMa, The Ohio Dance Festival and The American Dance Festival, among others. He was a Choreographic Fellow at Jacob's Pillow in 2018, and has received artist-in-residence awards from Berkeley Ballet Theater and Zaccho Studios. Additionally, he has received commissions from the Limon Dance Company, Modern American Dance Company and LINES Ballet Training Program. He currently lives in the Bay Area where he serves as assistant professor of Contemporary Dance at San Jose State University.

Vernacular is a new work that explores the theory of “linguistic relativity,” the idea that words and grammar influence the way we think. *Vernacular* investigates this question through written, verbal as well as physical experiments in search of a shared dialogue among the performers, the audience and the world beyond.

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ABOUT THE DJERASSI RESIDENT ARTISTS PROGRAM

Founded in 1979, the Djerassi Resident Artists Program provides artists with uninterrupted time and space to create within a landscape of extraordinary natural beauty. Since its founding, the program has hosted more than 2,700 artists from around the world and remains committed to supporting creative inquiry, experimentation, and interdisciplinary exchange. For more information visit djerassi.org.

ABOUT ODC THEATER

ODC Theater participates in the creation of new works through commissioning, presenting, mentorship and space access; it develops informed, engaged and committed audiences; and it advocates for the performing arts as an essential component to the region’s economic and cultural development. The Theater is the site of over 120 performances a year involving nearly 1,000 local, regional, national and international artists.

Since 1976, ODC Theater has been the mobilizing force behind countless San Francisco artists and the foothold for national and international touring artists seeking debut in the Bay Area. The Theater, founded by Brenda Way and currently under the creative direction of Chloë L. Zimberg, has earned its place as a cultural incubator by dedicating itself to creative change-makers, those leaders who give the Bay Area its unmistakable definition and flare. Nationally known artists Spaulding Gray, Diamanda Galas, Bill T. Jones, Eiko & Koma, Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE, Karole Armitage, Sarah Michelson, Brian Brooks and John Heginbotham are among those whose first San Francisco appearance occurred at ODC Theater. For more information about ODC Theater and all its programs visit odc.dance/theater.

ODC Theater is generously supported by the Phyllis Wattis Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Fleishhacker Foundation, San Francisco Grants for the Arts, Andrew Mellon Foundation and our many individual donors.

FACT SHEET

WHAT:

ODC Theater presents its 14th annual summer dance festival, **STATE OF PLAY**, featuring premieres alongside works-in-progress by dance artists from around the Bay Area and across the U.S.

Risk-Takers | Evening-Length Works:

- I. *Blur* (West Coast premiere) by **Leslie Cuyjet**
- II. *BABYBABYBABY* (West Coast premiere) by **Laila J. Franklin**
- III. *What the Hell Happened in San Francisco?* (Bay Area premiere) by **Malinda LaVelle & Emmaly Wiederholt**
- IV. *Molino for Levitation* (world premiere) by **gizeh muñiz**

Curious Creators | Short-Form Works:

- I. *BURN* (work-in-progress) by **Johnny Huy Nguyễn**
- II. *Nervous* (world premiere) by **Dragons Dance / Erin Yen**

Experimenters | Works-in-Progress:

- I. Untitled (work-in-progress) by **Babatunji**
- II. *Maura* (work-in-progress) by **Khala Brannigan**
- III. *vernacular* (world premiere) by **seymour::dancecollective**

WHEN:

AUGUST 27 - 30, 2026

Thursday, August 27

7 p.m.: 836M hosts the State of Play **Kick-Off Party** featuring performances by ODC Home Company **Kinetech Arts** and 2022-2024 Resident Curator **Maurya Kerr**, with remarks by Creative Director **Chloë L. Zimberg** and ODC Founding Artistic Director **Brenda Way**.

Friday, August 28

10 a.m.: Workshop: “Floorwerk for the Dance-Curious” with **gizeh muñiz**

7 p.m.: Opening Night: Performances by **Dragons Dance/Erin Yen**, **Johnny Huy Nguyễn** and **Laila J. Franklin**. After-Party to follow with **Franklin** deejaying the dance floor.

Saturday, August 29

10 a.m.: Workshop: “Experiments in Dancing About Love” with **Sarah Pacheco & Sasha Peterson**

3 p.m.: **Babatunji** (ASL interpretation provided)

3:30 p.m.: **Laila J. Franklin** (ASL interpretation provided)

5 p.m.: **gizeh muñiz**

6:30 p.m.: **Malinda LaVelle & Emmaly Wiederholt** (ASL interpretation provided)

7:30 p.m.: Khala Brannigan (ASL interpretation provided)

8:30 p.m.: Leslie Cuyjet

Sunday, August 30

10 a.m.: Workshop: “From Risk to Reflection – Giving Form to Your Dance Story” with Malinda LaVelle & Emmaly Wiederholt

2:30 p.m.: Leslie Cuyjet (ASL interpretation provided)

3:30 p.m.: seymour::dancecollective (ASL interpretation provided)

4:30 p.m.: Dragons Dance/Erin Yen & Johnny Huy Nguyễn (ASL interpretation provided)

6 p.m.: gizeh muñiz (ASL interpretation provided)

7:30 p.m.: Malinda LaVelle & Emmaly Wiederholt

WHERE:

ODC Theater

3153 17th Street

San Francisco, CA 94110

ODC Dance Commons

351 Shotwell Street

San Francisco, CA 94110

836M

836 Montgomery Street

San Francisco, CA 94133

TICKETS & FESTIVAL PASSES:

Single Tickets

General Admission: **\$20 - \$80**

Arts Access: **\$0 - \$20**

Passes

Mini Pass (3 Shows): **\$80**

Mega Pass (5 Shows): **\$120**

Mega Pass (9 Shows): **\$200**

For reservations call **415-863-9834**, or online visit [**odc.dance/stateofplay**](http://odc.dance/stateofplay).

*For information about accessibility, including ASL translation and wheelchair seating, visit [**odc.dance/stateofplay**](http://odc.dance/stateofplay).*

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

odc.dance/theater

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