

Noelani Pantastico & James Yoichi Moore  
ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

*Inside the Issue:*

- SDC ARTISTS IN THE NEWS
- A BRAVE NEW DANCE WORLD: AYA HAMILTON
- DIVING DEEPER: PENNY SAUNDERS

## SDC ARTISTS IN THE NEWS

### Count Me In



Artistic Directors **Noelani & James** chat with Carly Faye & Hannah Mae about the importance of access to the arts and how ballet is changing, along with the ups and downs of directing a company. Take a listen!

“The amount of talent that's out in the world is just remarkable and there's not enough opportunity for everyone to put out their art.”  
- James Yoichi Moore

### Dancers Did That?



In this dance history podcast, hosted by two Seattle based dancers/administrators, Liz Houlton & Maris Antolin sit down with **Elle Macy & Dylan Wald** to discuss their experiences being Soloists with Pacific Northwest Ballet during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Nia-Amina Minor finds artistic inspiration in the fight for racial justice

Ever since **Nia-Amina** began dancing as a child, her identity as a Black female has influenced her artistic decisions. **Read** how Nia finds artistic inspiration in the fight for racial justice in an interview with KUOW's Marcie Sillman.

“The singular thought of ‘I am not alone, nor have I ever been alone,’ has been really important for me”

-Nia-Amina Minor



# A BRAVE NEW DANCE WORLD

DEAR FRIENDS,

As we head into the fall and leave behind our sun-washed summer days of long walks and outdoor dining, it's only natural to be anxious about what lies ahead in the shorter days to come. After SDC's glorious premiere on Vashon during the summer of 2019, it was heart-wrenching not being able to gather with all of you for a 2020 summer redux. We missed seeing you in person, but felt your presence as we released our digital Continuum performances in July. I for one, very much needed them. They arrived at the perfect time; somewhere between accepting a summer void of live performances, and acknowledging a fall and winter watching dance on our screens at home.

To experience SDC dancers and choreographers create and perform under circumstances we might never have thought would befall us, left us with a wide variety of emotions as we observed multiple juxtapositions. In this collection of ballets I saw hope and sadness, dawn and dusk, solitude and belonging, intimacy and distance. I'm sure you felt other things as well. But no matter what I was feeling in the moment, my thoughts were consistently interrupted with a voice saying, *I can't believe we are actually doing this!* The creativity, perseverance, courage and brilliance of SDC continued to astound me with the release of each new work. Amidst a summer of virus, angst, anger and destruction, I found my place for a while. I hope you did as well.

As an organization we were adamant that we wanted to release these ballets and our workshops free of charge during the pandemic. It was absolutely the right thing to do. As you know, art often has a cost and we appreciate your support of our decision to do this for our friends and community during such a challenging time.

As we head into the fall, please know that our eyes are already on next season. Summer springs eternal in 2021 and we want nothing more than to be with all of you on Vashon next summer. As we await the turning point of the virus, please know that we continue to plan, create, and fundraise to bring you a phenomenal third season in whatever form necessary.

As we approach the fall holidays, we wish you a peaceful season filled with small moments of inspiration throughout your days. Please know that we remain immensely motivated by your enthusiasm, gratitude and generosity. We are thankful for you!

WARMEST REGARDS,

SUPPORT

Aya Hamilton,  
SDC Board Chair

# DIVING DEEPER: PENNY SAUNDERS

Written by Abby Jayne DeAngelo

**Penny Saunders** has not let the COVID-19 pandemic stall her artistry. In fact, she has continued to choreograph non-stop since the world shut down in March, discovering the efficiency of creating over Zoom - a method which Penny believes will allow her to expand her work range, while spending less time away from her son at home. "I like to say yes to everything," Penny shares. "Now I know you can make a whole thing just via Zoom. It's not ideal, you miss being in the studio, but it works."

Although she didn't know it at the time, Penny started choreographing at a very early age with friends for fun in her spare time. Growing up, she explored a variety of dance which helped lay the foundation for her interest in a diverse range of movement styles. "The trajectory of my career has taken a large curve on a roller coaster ride. Tap, jazz and acrobatics, to hard core ballet, and then to this land of contemporary dance...It helps that I can speak pointe shoe language and partnering, and also speak barefoot and run-over-there/stand-on-your-head language, and everything in between."

Penny's career as a dancer ended twice, but led to her definitive path as a choreographer. While dancing professionally she had a handful of commissions and had just started to dip her toe in the choreographic realm. "I retired after my son was born, and by then I had choreographed nothing I liked."



Penny Saunders in rehearsal with SDC in 2019



Pablo Piantino & Penny Saunders (courtesy Dance Magazine)

With her son and husband, dance educator and stager Pablo Piantino, Penny moved to Seattle as a stay-at-home mom, but soon realized she wasn't done dancing. After getting back in shape, she returned to Hubbard Street Dance Chicago to dance and choreograph for another year and a half until her second retirement from the stage. It was at that time that Penny fully embraced her identity as a choreographer.

"There was this pressure to be halfway decent at it, if you're going to throw your hat in the ring," Penny remarked. "I always loved it, but was too terrified to claim it." At some point along the way, she had enough choreographic gigs to say, "Oh, I guess I'm a **choreographer!**". The work for her has snowballed ever since.

Looking into the future, Penny dreams of putting all her favorite collaborators in one room to make something spectacular. "Dancers from all over - all different types of dance - plus actors, composers, lighting designers. It would be fun to build that way, with a bunch of eager minds. That would be the dream."



Penny says inspiration pops up all over the place. "I feel like there's a physical language that doesn't necessarily provide answers but at least provides another perspective and helps me kind of work through a lot of the anxiety, anger, frustration and delight that I find in the world."

The weirdest thing about creating during a global pandemic? "The not touching part," says Penny. "I've worked with roommates or lovers that can touch, so those moments within the piece become even more special and highlighted. I've tried to build that way; emphasizing the distance when it has to be there and emphasizing the intimacy when it can be. I think that's something you take for granted when you're making normally."

Whether it means making dances or not, Penny hopes to always remain creative. "I don't take this for granted. There are so many people that have so many talents out there." She says it doesn't make her sad to think about not choreographing forever, but instead inspires her to make as much as she can now. So where will Penny be in 20 years? She says, "Hopefully I will be hiking in nature, creating in studios, & inspiring people and myself in some way."



Some of Penny's major influencers are...  
CRYSTAL PITE  
OHAD NAHARIN  
JIRI KYLIAN  
NACHO DUATO &  
ALEJANDRO CERRUDO

Penny reunited with the SDC team this month to create a new solo work featuring Noelani Pantastico. *Alice* is a co-production with Pacific Northwest Ballet and set for digital release in early November.



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## SDC FILMS ON TOUR!



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
**Seattle Queer Film Festival**  
2020

“A HEADLAMP OR TWO”  
Official Selection



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
**Fuselage Dance Film Festival**  
2020

“THE ONLY THING YOU SEE NOW”  
Official Selection



OFFICIAL SELECTION  
**Play Film Festival**  
2020

“HOME”  
Finalist, Best Dance Film  
“THE SPACE BETWEEN US”  
Semi-Finalist, Best Documentary

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