

Welcome to



Grand Rapids, MI 2026

Welcome to our third annual West Michigan Dance Festival hosted in Grand Rapids! We are thrilled that you have joined us in capacity as artists, teachers, dancers, choreographers and audience members. Please use this program as a guide for the weekend. Here you will find our master schedule as well as details for each of the three dance performances happening this weekend.

We have been busy this year—we obtained our 501c3 nonprofit status, created a talented and dedicated board of directors, hosted our first Film Festival and Fundraiser, and welcomed applications from over 40 teachers and choreographers for this year's festival.

We are grateful to be hosted by Ambrosia Theater, CARE Ballet Conservatory and the historic Grand Rapids Civic Theater. We are excited to be in Grand Rapids this year, and we hope that you enjoy the city as much as we do.

A special thanks to everyone who has made this festival possible: Kendra DeFazio, our Director of Communications, Lachan Niedbala, our Director of Operations; our board of directors including Michaela Nield, Emily Mejicano-Gormley and Jill Reitzel.

We hope you enjoy every moment of the weekend, and that you get to experience the vibrant, thriving, and supportive dance community of West Michigan!

Enjoy!

Jacquie Pittman

Executive Director of WMDF



CHOREOGRAPHY SHOWCASE

Friday August 7th 6:30 PM, Ambrosia Theater

i am//am i

Choreography: Julian McKenzie

Dancer: Julian McKenzie

Music: "M A R I A S I M O I N T Y T Ä R (Maria Simointytär, 1683)" – AGF, "Cognitive Modules Party II" – AGF, "After" – AAESPO

Open to Interpretation

Choreography: Macy Holmberg, Abby Shambaugh

Dancers: Macy Holmberg, Abby Shambaugh

Music: "Coral Spectrum" by Elin Piel, "SUB" by slowdanger; Music edited by Andy Hasenpflug

Bound

Choreography: McKenna Mahacek

Dancers: McKenna Mahacek

Music: iâ / toddi, carlam, the sky is you, Gwenno Morgan

PRIMARY/secondary

Choreography: Camille Ernst

Company: Avant Theatre Ballet

Dancers: Autumn Knapp, Amber Casillas, Bella

Dolehanty, Seamus Hyman, Rachel Baas, Karissa Austin

Music: Rhapsody in Blue by George Gershwin

10 Minute Intermission

know doubt

Choreography: Brandon Wolfington

Dancer: Brandon Wolfington

Music: No Doubt by Braxton Cook

The Beast

Choreography: Kayla Wiese

Dancers: Kayla Wiese

Alacrity

Choreography: Mackenzie Kalinowski

Dancers: Mackenzie Kalinowski

Music: Live Music by Julian Stockton

In C, a vigorous study of time

Choreography: Lucy Vurusic Riner

Company: RE|dance group

Dancers: Zachary Bird, Cheryl Cornacchione, Lucy Vurusic Riner, Kt Williams

Music: Terry Riley

Choreographer Talk Back

led by Kendra DeFazio

Special thank you to our lighting designer Bucky Panavong and the team at Ambrosia Theater!



Classes and Events

Saturday August 8th

Grand Rapids Civic Theater Dance Studio

Nontraditional Partnering

9:15–10:45 AM

Amy Cadwallader, *Dance Uprising*

Ballet

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM

Tess Sinke, *Deos Ballet*

FREE Lunch & Learn

The Whole Dancer. Shaping Spaces for Safe and Expressive Training

12:15–1:00 PM

Lauren Sawson, *Dance Playhouse*

Modern & Contemporary Dance

1:00–2:15 PM

Amy Wilson, *Dance in the Annex*

HipHop

2:15–3:30 PM

Lena Godumanne, Kate Hyman, *Essence Movement Co.*





Dancing Conversations **In Studio Showcase**

Saturday August 8th 3:45 PM

Grand Rapids Civic Theater Dance Studio

Post-performance conversation with the audience led by M. Linda Graham. The discussion will provide feedback for the choreographers and performers by utilizing concepts of Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process[T].

Ends of the Earth

Choreography: Lindsay Abbott

Company: Midwest Movement Collective

Infinite Love

Choreography: Joy Morris-Burton and Aerick Burton

Company: Breakin' Ballet

I'm Fine

Choreography: Bre Burrows

Company: Threshold Dance Project

*Note: *If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis; call or text 988 immediately in the US or Canada to reach the Suicide and Crisis Hotline.*

What Comes From Within

Choreography: Macy Perry

Main Stage Concert

Saturday August 8th 7:00 PM Grand Rapids Civic Theater

In Praise of Shadows

Choreography: Carolyn Pampalone Rabbers

Company: CPR Dance: Inhale Movement

Dancers: Ellen Burks, Abby Marchessault, Hannah McGrew, Ally Miller, Grace Minard

Visual Designer: John Boran

Cultural Sensitivity Advisor: Dr. Yuki Waugh

Music: 'Remorse of a Murder' & 'The Unfolding' by Anna Dager & Hanna Ekström, 'Cleyera' by VELDA & 'Lighthouse Drawings' by Broad Sky

Note: This work was created as a response to the text 'In Praise of Shadows' by Jun'ichirō Tanizaki.

Turnkey

Choreography: Amy Wilson

Company: Dance in the Annex

Dancers: Bucky Panavong, Hannah Sullivan

Music: Narration by Julian Wilson, Siona Wilson, Amy Wilson, Additional audio by LoFi Rain Sounds

From Feather and Ash Anew

Choreography: Ashley Ray Garcia

Dancers: Angelina Garcia, Call Beverly, Cuauhtli Raca, Libby Steckmesser

Reflections of Her

Choreography: Tracy Halloran

Company: ConteXture Dance Detroit

Dancers: Kylie Moore, Megan Stuart, Meghan Cloutier, Katelyn Mahaffey, Jocce Snyder, Savanna McFadden

Music: #88 by Lo-Fang

Between the Calm Lake Waters

Choreography: Adrian Martinez

Dancers: Alaina D'Orazio, Olivia Erlandson, Maci Goodrich, McKenna Larsen, Natalie Parker, Halle Sisson, Katelyn Yeskie

Music: Message from Home by Hans Zimmer, She Remembers by Max Richter, Imbre by Jordan Cruz

15 Minute Intermission



Making the Bed, Starting the Fire

Choreography: Lauren Sawson

Company: Dance Playhouse

Dancers: Gina Johnson, Alexandra Swanger, Caitlin Miller, Ellie Myers, Erin Siebert, Kasey Eckhardt

Music: Found Sound from 70s radio broadcasts, Anyone Who Knows What Love Is (Will Understand) by Irma Thomas, Watching the Snowflakes Fall (Janek Spratcha)

disparate + inseperable

Choreography: Seyong Kim & Wonsuk Cho

Company: CWS Dance Movement

Dancers: Charlotte Anderson, Olivia Erlandson, Lauren Matz, Brandon Wolfington

Play

Choreography: Maggie Hartman

Company: Currents Dance Theatre

Dancers: Hannah Bernhardt, Seanna DeWitt, Kasey Eckhardt, Emma Johnson, Emily Prymula

Music: Xaxoeira by Xique-Xique

His Battles Are Hidden

Choreography: Lachan Niedbala

Company: Movement Reservoir Dance Company

Dancers: Andrew Niedbala, Brandon Wolfington

Music: La grande cascade by René Aubry and Fil de verre by René Aubry

harvest

Choreography: Chloe Ilene Milner

Company: New Industry Dance Company

Dancers: Lisa Hayes, Elyse Maldonado, Michael McMillion, Lauren Mulhern, Halie Warmoth, Joanna Whitmyer

Music: Original Composition created by Patrick Misner & Patrick Quigley

Special thank you to our Stage Manager Emily Mejicano-Gormley, Lighting Designer Catherine Marley-Dreher, and Sound Operator Sam Johnson-Begay.





Classes and Events

Sunday August 9th

CARE Ballet

FREE Coffee & Chat

Networking and Community Event

9:00–10:15 AM

West Michigan Dance Festival Team

Somatic Recovery

10:15–11:30 AM

Jacquie Pittman, *West Michigan Dance Festival*

Horton Technique

11:30 AM – 12:45 PM

Lachan Niedbala, *Movement Reservoir Dance Compnay*

FREE Lunch & Learn

Making Your Dance Class Accessible

1:00–1:45 PM

Nicole Heikkila–Popkin

Contemporary Jazz

1:45–3:00 PM

Kendra DeFazio, *Currents Dance Theatre*

Founder–Led Improvisation

3:00–4:15 PM

Jacquie Pittman, Kendra DeFazio, Lachan Niedbala

Vibrant Thriving Supportive Dance



West Michigan Dance Festival is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that gathers together our local dance community through a weekend of master classes, networking events, discussions, educational panels, and performance opportunities.

Your support is vital to building our dance community. Get involved or make a tax-deductible donation at westmichigandancefestival.org



Jacquie Pittman
Executive Director



Kendra DeFazio
Comms Director



Lachan Niedbala
Ops Director

Board of Directors

Emily Mejicano-Gormley, Michaela Neild, Jill Reitzel

Thank you to our 2026 volunteers!

Brenna Brookelyn, Camille Ernst, Wolfgang Goluska,
Samantha Tort Goluska