



Jon Lehrer Dance Company (JLDC) began in 2007 in Buffalo, NY and has received critical acclaim nationally and internationally. Jon moved the company to his hometown of NYC in 2019, where they have become a vibrant addition to the city's dance community. Under Jon Lehrer's artistic direction, the company showcases his unique choreography and definitive style. His extensive background in both the modern and jazz dance idioms fosters choreography that is organic, athletic, artistic, entertaining, and often humorous, reflecting human experiences.

JLDC's expressive style is based on three main elements of movement - Circularity, 3-Dimensionality, and Momentum - which combine to create a form that is best described as "Organically Athletic". With creativity, athleticism, and the ability to make new and innovative modern and jazz dance accessible to all audiences, the company has made quite a name for themselves in the dance world. Striking the elusive balance between art and entertainment, JLDC showcases a dynamic, fun, and distinctive style which fuses jazz and modern dance, creating a true spectacle onstage which can be enjoyed by dance experts and novices alike.

JLDC tours extensively, receiving critical acclaim worldwide. Dance Magazine praised, "the company took the house not so much by storm as by quantum physics," and Galerie Ortenau in Offenburg, Germany declared, "Dynamic, Powerful, Elegant – brings an absolute passion for the dance." From 2012-2016, JLDC had the honor of touring to Russia, sponsored by the US State Department in order to, as they said, "bring the best in American modern dance to the people of Russia." These cultural diplomacy tours brought the company to Vladivostok, Anadyr, Perm, Yekaterinburg, Chukotka, and Berezniki. JLDC has been touring to Europe since 2014. For their 2022 tour they premiered "Bernstein Celebration" - a full evening set to the music of Leonard Bernstein. JLDC was honored and privileged to be one of only a handful of dance companies worldwide given the rights to use Bernstein's music. At home in NYC, JLDC is a three time recipient of the prestigious CUNY Dance Initiative Award (2022, 2023, and 2025).

Jon Lehrer Dance Company's mission is to share and spread the joy of dance through performance, education, community engagement, and artistic collaboration. With choreographic works by Jon Lehrer, the company brings edge-of-your-seat excitement to audiences worldwide through a signature style of movement that is organic, athletic, artistic and accessible.

# Bios

## Jon Lehrer

### Founder/Artistic Director



Jon Lehrer, who was raised in Queens, New York, took his very first dance class at age 19 at the University at Buffalo. While dating a dancer, Jon teased her about how easy it must be to get an A in a dance class. The girl dared Jon to try a beginning level modern dance class and his life was changed. Jon ultimately received his BFA in Dance from the University at Buffalo.

As a professional, Jon has danced with the Erick Hawkins Dance Company, Paul Sanasardo, John Passafiume Dancers, in Merv Griffin's "Funderful" in Atlantic City, NJ, and the Radio City Rockettes Christmas Spectacular. In 1997, Jon was hired by Giordano Dance Chicago, the world's preeminent jazz dance company. After only three years he was promoted to Rehearsal Director and then became the Associate Director two years later. During his ten years with Giordano, Jon also became the resident choreographer, creating seven original works on the company that received rave reviews all around the world.

Jon has choreographed for several professional dance companies and universities all over the country. He teaches master classes throughout the U.S. and around the world, having been on faculty at Dance Masters of America, Jazz Dance World Congress, Dance Teacher Summer Conference, Chicago National Association of Dance Masters (CNADM), Chautauqua Institution, Florida Dance Educators Organization, and Florida Dance Masters to name a few. Jon has received many awards and honors, including the University at Buffalo Zodiaque Dance Company Distinguished Alumni Award, CNADM's Artistic

Achievement Award, University at Buffalo College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Alumni Award, and the “Rising Star” SPARK Award for being an integral part of Buffalo’s thriving arts and cultural community.

Jon Lehrer started his highly anticipated company in 2007 in Buffalo, NY, relocating the company to his home of NYC in 2019. Jon Lehrer Dance Company has already received much critical acclaim and notoriety nationally and internationally. Under his artistic direction, JLDC showcases Jon's unique choreography and embodies his definitive style. His extensive background in both the modern and jazz dance idioms fosters choreography that is organic, artistic, accessible and often humorous, reflecting life experience and the human condition.

## Cristiana Cavallo

### Associate Director



**Cristiana Cavallo (Associate Director)** is from Utica, NY and began dancing at the age of 3. She received her training at the Dancenter and at Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute School of Dance. Cristiana graduated in 2014 from the University at Buffalo with a BFA in Dance and a BA in Sociology. As a UB student, she was a member of the Zodiaque Dance Company, performed in several musicals, choreographed for many student productions and acted as Director of Dancer's Workshop. She attended numerous summer programs, including NYSSSA, Thodos Dance Chicago Intensive, and Steps Summer Study. During her senior year, Cristiana was chosen for the Jon Lehrer Dance Observership, allowing her to train with the company and gain valuable insight into the professional world of dance. In 2019, Cristiana was invited to choreograph as part of the Barn Dance Project at the Theater at Woodshill, curated by Caitlyn Schrader. She is also the interim Executive Director of JUNTOS Collective. Cristiana has been with JLDC for 10 years, becoming an integral part of the company's success both on and off the stage.

## The Dancers



*Ricardo G. Barrett* is originally from Jamaica and attended the American Musical and Dramatic Arts Academy. He was also a three year member of The Jamaica Junior Theatre Company and The Company Dance Theatre. He continued his training there until he left for the Martha Graham School as a member of Graham 2. He was a member of the second Company for three years, and an Apprentice with the Martha Graham Company for 2 years. He is also a member of Alison Chase Performance, Buglisi Dance Theatre, and Dzul Dance. Ricardo is a trained actor, dance teacher, singer and still explores different forms and styles of artistic expression. This is Ricardo's fourth season with JLDC.

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*Mahalia Brookes* is originally from the US Virgin Islands where she started her training at Caribbean Dance School. After moving to Florida, she continued her training at All American Dance Factory and All American Classical Ballet School. She has competed in the NAACP ACT-SO national convention where she worked closely with choreographer Anthony Burrell. She went on to receive her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at Marymount Manhattan College. She has performed works by Earl Mosely, Jessica Lang, Anthony Morigerato, John Heginbotham, Sidra Bell, and Pascal Riout. This is Mahalia's third season with JLDC.

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year, Cristiana was chosen for the Jon Lehrer Dance Observership, allowing her to train with the company and gain valuable insight into the professional world of dance. In 2019, Cristiana was invited to choreograph as part of the Barn Dance Project at the Theater at Woodshill, curated by Caitlyn Schrader. She is also the interim Executive Director of JUNTOS Collective. Cristiana has been with JLDC for 11 years, becoming an integral part of the company's success both on and off the stage.

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***Kristen Hedberg*** was born and raised in Richmond, VA. She earned her BFA in Contemporary Dance from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, where she was dual-enrolled with The Martha Graham School during her senior year. Kristen was a member of the RIOULT Repertory Dancers, under the direction of Pascal Rioult, Joyce Herring and Charis Haines. Other professional credits include: Curet Performance Project, Faustine Lavie Dance Project, and Susie McHugh + Dancers, among others. This is Kristen's fourth season with JLDC.

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**Michael Miller** grew up on Long Island, New York. He started dancing at the age of eight and focused on ballet and modern dance primarily at Peconic Ballet Theatre. Michael then received his Bachelor of Arts degree in Dance from James Madison University. He studied under Rubèn Graciani, Matt Pardo, Fran Kirmser, and Ryan Corrison. Miller was involved in student and faculty pieces throughout his four years at JMU. While at JMU, he performed in the pre-professional Virginia Repertory Dance Company, under the direction of Matt Pardo, and was awarded the Excellence in Performance

Award his senior year. Miller had the pleasure to work in multiple residencies with choreographers such as Abraham in Motion (A.I.M) directed by Kyle Abraham, Rubèn Graciani, and Ryan Corrison. Miller also performed in original works choreographed by Omàr Roman De Jesùs, Xiang Xu, and Ricky Ruiz. This is Michael's third season with JLDC.

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**Riccardo Passera** is from Milan, Italy and draws on his heritage that spans across the Atlantic Ocean, from Italy to the Caribbean. He started dancing Caribbean dances at the age of 10 at Ratz Mataz school and later continued his ballet, modern and contemporary training with The Ballet School, AreaDance Nuova and New Style Dance. During this time Riccardo performed works by Lino Villa, which toured Italy with New Style Project Dance Company. He also performed choreography by Mattia Cuda while he was an apprentice with MAADE Ensemble. At the age of 18, Riccardo moved to New York City to

train at The Ailey School, where he was a member of the Ailey Student Performance Group from 2022 to 2024, performing Alvin Ailey's works across the tri-state area under the direction of Freddie Moore. During his time at Ailey, he performed Bird Lives by Alvin Ailey, an excerpt of Festa Barocca by Mauro Bigonzetti and Mr. Ailey's Memoria for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater's 2021, 2022 and 2023 seasons at New York City Center. Between Italy and New York, Riccardo has had the pleasure of working with choreographers such as Clifton Brown, Amy Hall Garner, Ronald K. Brown, Darrell Moultrie, Brice Mousset, Norbert De La Cruz, Johan King Silverhult, Attila Joey Csiki and Rita Pivano. This is Riccardo's first season with JLDC.

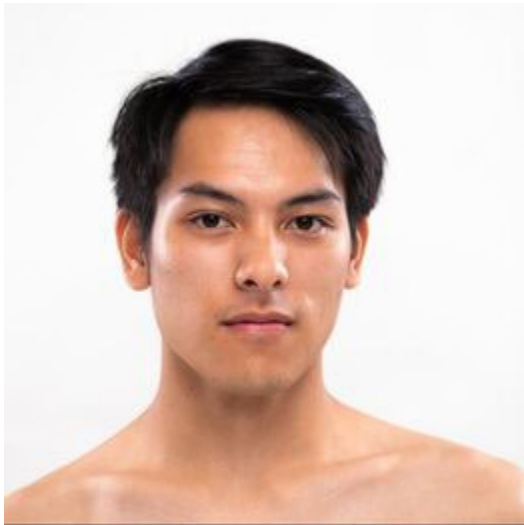
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*Leah Suskind* was born and raised in Randolph, NJ. In May 2022, she graduated summa cum laude from New York University Tisch School of the Arts with a BFA in dance. While at NYU, Leah had the opportunity to perform works by Yin Yue, Stephen Petronio, Jaclyn Walsh, and Molissa Fenley. In the fall of 2022, Leah participated in the inaugural GibneyPro Training Program where she got to work with artists such as Rena Butler, Maleek Washington, Laja Field, and Elia Mrak. Throughout her summers, Leah has attended programs at Jacob's Pillow, Orsolina 28, the Juilliard School, and with companies such as

Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, GALLIM, Parsons Dance, the Rockettes, and the Martha Graham Company. Leah's most recent choreographic work, "VII", was recently selected to perform at the Spring 2023 JCE Jazz Dance Project as well as the 2023 Hartford Dance Festival. She was also the fellowship recipient of the 2021 DM.Connect Choreographer Competition. Leah was an apprentice with JLDC for two years and she is excited to be in her second season as a full JLDC member.

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**Mitchell Takeda** was born in Taiwan and raised in Sacramento, CA. He graduated from Ball State University in May 2024 with a BFA in Musical Theatre and was part of the Honors College. Mitchell was introduced to JLDC during the Fall Semester of 2022 when the company visited Ball State for a three-day masterclass series. Since then, he has always dreamed to dance with the company and perform with them one day. He participated in the JLDC Winter Intensive in January 2024, and joined the company as an apprentice in June 2024. Mitchell is excited to now be a full company member with JLDC.