

The Fantasyland Project

21st Anniversary Season

DANIEL GWIRTZMAN DANCE COMPANY

Friday, October 30 - Monday, November 2, 2020

Premiered July 31, 2020, 7pm as a live Zoom event featuring a talkback with the artists.

DIRECTION/CHOREOGRAPHY/EDITING

DANIEL GWIRTZMAN

COMPANY DANCERS

MARIAH ANTON - DWAYNE BROWN - JACOB BUTTER - DEREK CRESCENTI
DANIEL GWIRTZMAN - SARAH HILLMON - MADELINE HOAK - VANESSA MARTÍNEZ DE BAÑOS

APPRENTICES

NEFTALI BENITEZ - MADISON HERTEL - USMAN ALI ISHAQ - KAITLYN JACKSON
LYDIA KELLY - COLIN MCKECHNIE - JOEL OLIVER - JULIA ZORATTO

INTERNS

THOMAS BERTRON - CAELI CARROLL - BRIAN HANSHAW - IVY HARBOUR
LILLY MCGRATH - BELLA MORRIS - DAISY RUDIN

COMPOSER

JEFF STORY



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

The Fantasyland Project, a collaboration between choreographer Daniel Gwirtzman and a cast of sixteen dancers, investigates the notion of fantasy through a range of lenses. Through a very socially-distant process, each dancer—eight Company members and eight summer apprentices—was charged with responding to a series of written prompts to spark the conceptual kernel that interested them most. Working with Daniel to distill the intellectual ideas and ground them in a concrete scenario, the process of creating a unique fantasy necessitated finding a location, and collaborating with the choreographer, costumer, and composer. The project reflects this moment in time as a springboard from which to explore the mundane, comedic, dramatic, and the horrific.

“I don’t want to see any more dances of dancers in their living rooms,” Daniel voiced early on in the quarantine. “We’ve seen enough of these,” he wrote to the Company late June, explaining a vision to transform a cancelled spring/summer performing season into a film project. The remote nature, being within three months of the onset of the pandemic, also necessitated that each dancer be responsible for the filming. Professional crews were not hired. Rather, each dancer worked with the filmmaker to frame and capture the dance as envisioned using their phones of differing qualities and makeshift tripods. Some of the dancers had friends or partners that could help film.

The project’s inception traces back to Daniel’s trip to Greece in July 2019 where he dreamt up the concept and title for the presciently named *Fantasyland*, which was to have been presented at Long Island City’s Green Space and Manhattan’s Bryant Park. As he had written then:

Fantasyland is an imaginative view of the world where perfected beauty, euphoria, and magical charm reign supreme. An antidote to the division which cleaves this Dis-United States, and channeling the gay spirit of Pride, Fantasyland views humanity through pink-colored lenses, presenting utopian portraits of harmonious relationships and optimistically-fantastic scenarios.

As the world turned into a scenario most closely linked to science fiction, the harmonious relationships Daniel described could not seem more foreign: for at the heart of *Fantasyland* was to be the linking and coming together of bodies. The original choreography envisioned the motif of holding hands to gird the work with a constant intertwining of limbs. In March, when it became prudent to pause the further progression of *Fantasyland*, the Company reimagined the project, making lemonade from lemons, in an effort to keep its artists engaged and employed. Whether diving in with a loving heart or embracing the heart of darkness, these artists have developed solos that together make up the newly named *The Fantasyland Project*. Said Daniel at the time of the premiere, late July:

I think this moment in time is one in which we all are fantasizing: about life before, and after, the pandemic: of returning to school as “normal,” about being in the company of others without concerns, distance, or masks; about systemic changes and reforms that will bring racial and economic justice. Fantasy to me does not suggest only happy emotions - in light especially of this moment, I think of the fantasies of the full dismantling of racism, the understanding and action of anti-racist policies and practices, the acknowledgment by all in the U.S. of the indigenous lands we live on, the eradication of disparities in wealth, education, access, the fantasy of harmony and true equity, the fantasy of healthcare for all, etc... There are fantasies of rage, revenge, grief, protest, darker and uglier themes. To the extent that this project can reflect the urgent events shaping all of our lives - how this theme of utopia and harmony fits against the current climate - is something the Company is interested in investigating. The dancers have explored fantasies that resonate with them. As the director I have coaxed and conversed with the dancers to aid in the process of discovering effective ways to communicate their stories.”

ABOUT FANTASY

"I like nonsense, it wakes up the brain cells. Fantasy is a necessary ingredient in living, it's a way of looking at life through the wrong end of a telescope. Which is what I do, And that enables you to laugh at life's realities."

Dr. Seuss, Theodor Seuss "Ted" Geisel

The word "fantasy" is derived from the Greek root *phantazein*, which means 'apparition' or 'to make visible.' This evolved to the word *phantasia* and then to the Old French *fantasie*, and the Old English *phantasy*. These words existed when the concept of fantasy materialized in oral stories or traditions. The Old French *fantasie* is associated with the fantastical, both idealistic and cynical. The Old English *phantasy*, however, is associated with the unrealistic or improbable. This definition relates more to fantasy in a psychological sense. In psychology, fantasy refers to the conscious and unconscious parts of the mind. Fantasy expresses the aims or desires of an individual not present in reality.

DANCER PROFILES

Read the interviews with our summer apprentices at gwirtzmandance.org/apprentices/

DANCE WITH US: A NEW EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

Rushing waterfalls and gentle breezes have not been the only movement in upstate NY these past few months. *Dance With Us*, the Company's overarching educational project, brought Company dancers from New York City to the idyllic area around Ithaca for a two-week residency this past August. The project, which [received leadership support from The Rockefeller Brothers Fund last September](#), is the creation of a library of digital resources, centered around the production of a series of new films. Geared toward a general viewership, this multi-faceted project seeks to demystify concert dance by explaining ways to view dance and discussing how dances are made. Through performance and studio footage, the resource aims to teach people how to think and speak about dance with comfort, increasing dance literacy and empowering personal opinions. The Company believes everyone can join the dance.

ABOUT DANIEL

Celebrating his 25th anniversary as a NYC company director and choreographer, Daniel Gwirtzman co-founded Artichoke Dance Company after touring as a member of both Garth Fagan Dance and Mark Morris Dance Group. Reviewing this debut concert in 1995, Elizabeth Zimmer wrote in *The Village Voice*, "It's hard to believe Mark Morris has already spawned imitators, but Gwirtzman seems headed in Morris' direction, moving dancers to music with acute sensitivity" under a headline *The Next Generation: Young Companies With Strange Names*. Since then his work has been presented without pause. Unlike other choreographers who have ventured into dance film for the first time since COVID struck, Daniel has been creating films consistently over the past decade. [No Trespassing](#) screened at the American Dance Festival, his joyful Brazil series - [Pier](#), [Rock The Boat](#), and [Into The Streets](#) - were all filmed in Bahia, and have screened in numerous dance film festivals. [Sisyphus](#), not a dance film, is particularly resonant now for its metaphoric weight. [Stranded](#) and [Street](#), both filmed in Key West, show off his quirky, humorous side. His most celebrated film, [Terrain](#), filmed in southern Spain, was featured in the IV International Meeting on Videodance in Valencia, Spain (2017) among several other dance film festivals. Recent films include *The Chronicles of Camo-Man*, [The Performer](#), and [The Dandelion Project](#).

ABOUT THE COMPANY

The acclaimed New York-based Daniel Gwartzman Dance Company, a teaching and performing organization, celebrating its 21st Anniversary, is known for its playful virtuosity, musicality, accessibility and charisma. “A troupe I’d follow anywhere” (*The Village Voice*), a “troupe of fabulous dancers” (*Backstage*) that “can’t help but smile” (*The New Yorker*). Performance highlights include Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Edinburgh International Fringe Festival, Fire Island Dance Festival, Jazz at Lincoln Center, The Kennedy Center, and Bryant Park. The Company’s dance films have screened in national, and international festivals, including the American Dance Festival. DGDC has been awarded residencies by the Joyce Theater, The Yard, Raumaras (Finland), Sacatar (Brazil), Djerassi (California), CUNY Dance Initiative, Inception to Exhibition, La MaMa, Queens Museum of Art, Skafiotes (Greece), Maison Dora Maar, (France), Aktuelle Architektur der Kultur (Spain), Gdański Festiwal Tanca (Poland), and The Studios of Key West. The Company premiered *The Oracle* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s BAM Fisher for its fifteenth anniversary. *Arts/ATL* described its “mathematical elegance” and “joyful physicality...a vision that vibrated on a frequency of harmony and brilliance.” Since 1998 the nonprofit has demonstrated a commitment to education through multigenerational interactive programming. DGDC’s 20th Anniversary Season, *Intersections*, presented by The 92nd Street Y in 2019 garnered this praise from *On Stage Blog*: “Provocative, whimsical, and ethereal, the Daniel Gwartzman Dance Company defies expectations of postmodern dance and soars, unafraid to take risks and dazzle with unflinching honesty....At times, just the urgency and power conveyed in the dancers’ glances deserved applause...The company shoots energy through every limb and glance the entire evening, and Gwartzman’s choreography shines through in every piece as an ultimate force of nature.” Over two decades of programming without pause, the Company has stayed true to its mission of cultivating the creation of innovative art and presenting this to the public in interactive, accessible, and meaningful ways. This is achieved through classes, workshops, lecture-demonstrations, residencies, performances, dance films, our websites, and instructional videos. Programs encourage audiences to be active participants, as part of an effort to integrate communities into the dance-making and performing process. We strive to teach people how dance can play a meaningful part of their physical and overall well-being.

SUPPORT

The Company is hard at work producing the resource which launches in the winter of 2021: crafting the new *Dance With Us* platform, editing scores of new films, transcribing numerous interviews with the artists, developing and implementing our marketing campaign, and fundraising to expand the scope and reach of the library. *Dance With Us* seeks to bridge the divide separating dance from mainstream culture, underscoring the primacy, purpose, and possibility of dance in contemporary life. The resource aims to increase the public’s knowledge of dance and their dance literacy, to share the love of dance, and to introduce ways to view, speak about, and participate in dance with comfort. We are currently raising funds to produce these resources. If you have an interest to support the project, please reach out to us.

VISIT US ONLINE!

WEBSITE gwartzmandance.org **INSTAGRAM** @gwartzmandance

FACEBOOK [gwartzmandance](https://www.facebook.com/gwartzmandance) **VIMEO** vimeo.com/dgdc

YOUTUBE [youtube.com/danielgwartzman](https://www.youtube.com/danielgwartzman)

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THE COMPANY THANKS

Our Colleagues, Supporters, Families, And You, Our Audiences!