



**Media contact:**

Joel Solari  
jsolari@vvf.org  
d. 312.678.7568

**\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\***

**Vail Dance Festival to commission 10 world-premiere dance works and names Adji Cissoko as Artist-In-Residence for upcoming 2023 season**

*Martha Graham Dance Company, L.A. Dance Project, Music From The Sole, BalletX and DanceAspen to perform*

=====

If you go ...

What: Vail Dance Festival

When: July 28 - August 7, 2023

Where: Vail, Colorado

Cost: \$29 - \$160

More information: [vaildance.org](http://vaildance.org)

=====

Vail, Colo., Mar. 15, 2023 — The Vail Dance Festival, a project of the nonprofit Vail Valley Foundation, officially announced plans for its 35th season scheduled to take place from July 28 – Aug. 7, 2023, in the heart of the Colorado Rockies. Under the artistic direction of Damian Woetzel, the 2023 summer season will bring together world-renowned dancers, musicians, composers, and choreographers for 12 performances and multiple events throughout Vail and the surrounding communities. Major highlights of this year’s Festival season will include:

**Artist-In-Residence: Adji Cissoko**

**Adji Cissoko** of Alonzo King’s LINES Ballet has been named the season’s Artist-In-Residence. Described by *Dance Magazine* as a dancer who “matches classical grace with contemporary charisma,” Cissoko has won critical acclaim worldwide for her artistry and dynamic stage presence. She has performed at the Vail Dance Festival in previous seasons, first in 2018 during a headlining engagement with LINES and then later in 2019 in the world-premiere of Alonzo King’s *Personal Element*, a landmark collaboration with dancers from New York City Ballet and LINES set to a sweeping new piano score composed and performed by Jason Moran.

Born and raised in Germany, Cissoko trained at the Ballet Academy Munich and later attended the Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis School at American Ballet Theatre on full scholarship before joining the National Ballet of Canada in 2010. Cissoko joined Alonzo King’s LINES Ballet in 2014 and since then she has originated many central roles choreographed by King. A nascent choreographer in recent years, Cissoko created her first piece entitled *AZIZ* for Philadelphia’s BalletX in 2021. She is also a 2022 recipient of NYU’s Center for Ballet and the Arts Toulmin Fellowship. This year in Vail as Artist-In-Residence, Cissoko will take on role debuts, and will be featured in choreographer Kyle Abraham’s new work for the

Festival. She will also choreograph a new work for the Festival, teach master classes, and participate in various aspects of the Festival's community programming.

### **10 World-Premiere Dance Works and 4 New Music Compositions**

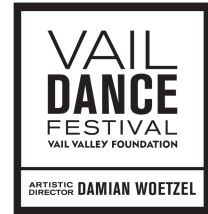
Each summer, the Vail Dance Festival fosters unique collaborations between artists of various dance genres to push the boundaries of the artform, further cementing Vail as a major incubator for new choreography and music in the United States. Having commissioned over 100 new works since Mr. Woetzel's first season as director in 2007, the Festival will continue to grow its expansive new works catalog this summer with 10 cutting-edge dancemakers creating new works, in addition to four new music compositions being unveiled during the season. Choreographers for 2023 will include:

- MacArthur fellow and Princess Grace Award winner **Kyle Abraham**, in his first piece for the Festival, will create a new work with a group of dancers representing ballet companies from coast-to-coast including Alonzo King's LINES Ballet, New York City Ballet, Boston Ballet, Philadelphia Ballet, and A.I.M. by Kyle Abraham.
- In her fourth choreographic work for the Festival, New York City Ballet principal **Tiler Peck** will create a pas de deux for American Ballet Theatre principal dancers **Cory Stearns** and **Devon Teuscher**
- **Matthew Neenan** will create a new work co-commissioned with and for **DanceAspen**
- New York City Ballet Resident choreographer **Justin Peck** will collaborate with the Festival's *Leonard Bernstein Composer-In-Residence* **Caroline Shaw** to create a new work.
- Artist-In-Residence **Adji Cissoko** will create a new work that she will also perform
- **Jamar Roberts** returns to Vail to create a new work co-commissioned with and for **BalletX**
- Memphis jookin superstar **Lil Buck** will collaborate on a new work with acclaimed bass-baritone **Davóne Tines**
- **Caili Quan** will return to make her second work for the Festival
- **Larry Keigwin** returns to Vail, making his fourth work for the Festival
- Modern dance force **Melissa Toogood** will make her first work for the Festival

**Brooklyn Rider** (violinists **Johnny Gandelsman** and **Colin Jacobsen**, violist **Nicholas Cords** and cellist **Michael Nicolas**) will return as Quartet-In-Residence, and Grammy and Pulitzer Prize winner Leonard Bernstein Composer-In-Residence **Caroline Shaw** will return to create new music compositions for the Festival. Also making new music this year will be 2017 MacArthur fellow **Tyshawn Sorey**, **Gabriel Kahane**, and **Shelbie Rassler** who also serves as Music Director. The Festival will also feature performances by bass-baritone opera star **Davóne Tines** and pianists **Cameron Grant** and **Joel Wenhardt**, among other dynamic musicians taking part in the Festival.

### **Performance Highlights of the 2023 Season Include:**

The legendary **Martha Graham Dance Company** will present three iconic works including the newly reimagined *Canticle for the Innocent Comedians* inspired by the 1938 poem by Ben Belitt celebrating the different elements of nature, *Errand into the Maze* which is loosely derived from the myth of Theseus, a creature who is half-moon and half-beast, and *CAVE*, a visceral new work created last year by Hofesh Shechter in collaboration with Daniil Simkin that blends the pulsating energy of a techno nightclub rave with galvanizing contemporary choreography that is both immersive and transcendent. (Saturday, July 29 at 7:30pm, Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater, Vail)



Acclaimed for its bold interdisciplinary collaborations in dance, music and visual art, **L.A. Dance Project** returns to Vail with a contemporary program that includes *Quartet for 5* by Bobbi Jene Smith and Or Schraiber, *Elastic Ballet* by Madeline Hollander, and *Everyone Keeps Me* by Pam Tanowitz, originally commissioned by the Royal Ballet in honor of the centennial of Merce Cunningham's birth. Festival Quartet-In-Residence Brooklyn Rider will perform alongside L.A. Dance Project on all three pieces. (Monday, July 31 at 7:30pm, Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater, Vail)

Hailed by *The New York Times* as one of the best dance performances of 2022, **Music From The Sole** will make their Festival debut. Led by award-winning Brazilian dancer/choreographer **Leonardo Sandoval** and bassist/composer **Gregory Richardson**, tap dance and live music come together in the acclaimed production *I Didn't Come to Stay* which joyously celebrates tap's Afro-diasporic roots and connections to Afro-Brazilian dance and music. (Wednesday, August 2 at 6pm, Vilar Performing Arts Center, Beaver Creek)

Philadelphia's cutting-edge contemporary dance powerhouse **BalletX** returns with an evening of recent new works. Programming for this headlining performance at the Vilar Performing Arts Center includes Caili Quan's *Love Letter*, an ode to her native Guam, and Justin Peck's adrenaline pumping *Become a Mountain* depicting the thrilling arc of a mountain climb, as well as the Vail debut of other new works by some of today's leading choreographers. (Sunday, August 6 at 6:00pm, Vilar Performing Arts Center, Beaver Creek)

Colorado's dynamic new contemporary ballet company **DanceAspen** returns to the Festival to premiere a new co-commissioned work by Matthew Neenan on the NOW: Premieres performance (Monday, August 7 at 7:30pm, Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater, Vail). In addition, the company will participate in the annual free performance *Dancing in the Park* taking place in Avon, CO on Thursday, August 3.

### **Festival Dancers**

Festival Artists for 2023 will include newly promoted principal dancers, from New York City Ballet **Mira Nadon** and **Roman Mejia**, and from American Ballet Theatre **Catherine Hurlin**. Returning after several years absence are **Jeffrey Cirio**, star of the Boston Ballet, as well as **Isabella Boylston** and **James Whiteside** of American Ballet Theatre. They will join a stellar cast including **Olivia Bell, India Bradley, Lil Buck, Chun Wai Chan, Patricia Delgado, Philip Duclos, Robbie Fairchild, Christopher Grant, Lauren Lovette, Sara Mearns, Miriam Miller, Dario Natarelli, Tiler Peck, Unity Phelan, Caili Quan, Calvin Royal III, Cory Stearns, KJ Takahashi, Devon Teuscher, Melissa Toogood**, Ukrainian ballroom duo **Denys Drozdyuk** and **Antonina Skobina**, Festival newcomers **Mayfield Myers** (Philadelphia Ballet) and **Stephanie Terasaki** (A.I.M. by Kyle Abraham), and others to be announced. Programming throughout the duration of the Festival will feature these artists and many more in role debuts, "only in Vail" cross-company partnerships and new works, fulfilling the Festival's mission of providing innovative opportunities for artists at all stages of their careers.

**Spencer Lenain** (@spencerdancerrr on TikTok with 1.4MM followers), who will graduate from CalArts in spring 2023, will be this year's Scholar-In-Residence. Lenain will take part in daily classes and community events, observe rehearsals, and will be a part of the cast of Larry Keigwin's new work for the Festival.



### **Returning Signature Vail Dance Festival Programs include:**

A dazzling **Opening Night** of spectacular performances from artists and companies featured in the Vail Dance Festival will include Martha Graham Dance Company, L.A. Dance Project, Brazilian tap force Leonardo Sandoval, and BalletX, all making appearances on the same night alongside Festival stars as they kick off the new season. (Friday, July 28, 7:30pm, Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater, Vail)

The new book entitled *Mr. B: George Balanchine's 20th Century* by **Jennifer Homans** has been hailed by critics and dance fans as a remarkable biography of the legendary choreographer and founder of New York City Ballet. Ms. Homans joins famed Balanchine ballerina **Heather Watts**, Festival Director **Damian Woetzel**, and an all-star cast of dancers, for a special **UpClose** behind-the-scenes evening featuring rehearsal excerpts and performances of classic Balanchine repertory. (Sunday, July 30 at 6pm, Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater, Vail)

Celebrating affordable pricing and access for all, **Dance for \$20.23** (Tuesday, August 1 at 7:30pm, Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater, Vail) and the free **Dancing in the Park** (Thursday, August 3 at 5:30pm, Nottingham Park Pavilion, Avon) will both feature an all-star cast of Festival dancers and special surprises for dance fans of all ages.

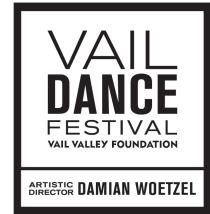
**International Evenings of Dance** is legendary for its glittery celebration of artistic collaboration and innovation with unique "only in Vail" partnerships and role debuts by a selection of today's dance stars from around the world. This year's roster includes dancers from Boston Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Philadelphia Ballet, and independent artists including Ukrainian ballroom duo Denys Drozdyuk and Antonina Skobina, and Broadway and ballet star Robbie Fairchild among many others. Joining the dancers in these signature performances are extraordinary musicians including Quartet-In-Residence Brooklyn Rider, vocalist, multi-instrumentalist, and Composer-In-Residence Caroline Shaw, and bass-baritone Davóne Tines. The schedule will include International Evening I on Friday, August 4 at 7:30pm and a different program of International Evening II on Saturday, August 5 at 5pm, and International Evening III on August 5 at 8pm. (Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater, Vail)

Details on additional Festival events including the popular **Conversations on Dance** podcast series, **Master Classes**, free **Dancing in the Streets** performances, the **Tiny Dancer Tea Party**, and educational events will be announced in June.

Performance tickets will go on sale to the public on March 28 at [vaildance.org](http://vaildance.org) or through the Box Office by phone at 970.845.TIXS (8497). The Box Office hours are 11am through 5pm daily. For more information, visit [vaildance.org](http://vaildance.org).

*\*Please note that the 2023 Vail Dance Festival schedule and casting are subject to changes and additions*

**About the Vail Dance Festival:** Established in 1989 and held each July-August, the Vail Dance Festival makes Colorado's Vail Valley one of the top summer dance destinations in the world. Hosted by the Vail Valley Foundation, and led by Artistic Director Damian Woetzel, the internationally renowned festival event brings a wide range of extraordinary dancers and musicians to Vail and features new works, collaborations, education initiatives, free community events, and a host of programs that welcome all to enjoy the world of dance.



The Vail Valley Foundation is a 501c3 Colorado nonprofit corporation with a mission to provide leadership in Arts, Athletics and Education, and address community needs to enhance our Valley as a place to live, work and visit.

The organization's work in education is through YouthPower365, a 501c3 Colorado nonprofit organization with a mission to inspire, educate and empower youth and families from early childhood to college and career readiness. The Vail Valley Foundation also provides the Vail Valley with several of its most treasured annual events, such as the GoPro Mountain Games, the Xfinity Birds of Prey Audi FIS Ski World Cup races, the Vail Dance Festival, and the Hot Summer Nights and ShowDown Town free concert series. The Vail Valley Foundation also manages and operates two performing arts centers, the Vilar Performing Arts Center in Beaver Creek Village and the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater in Vail, providing more than 100 Broadway, dance, comedy, classical, rock, pop, jazz, community and family events per year.

Vail Valley Foundation activities and events are in part made possible by cornerstone partners: the Town of Vail, Vail Resorts, Beaver Creek Resort Company, Nature Valley, Constellation Brands, CELSIUS Energy, TINCUP Whiskey, and Slifer Smith & Frampton Real Estate.

To learn more about the Vail Valley Foundation visit [www.vvf.org](http://www.vvf.org).

**Media contact:**

Joel Solari

[jsolari@vvf.org](mailto:jsolari@vvf.org)

d. 312.678.7568