

STRONGmovement Presents



S T O R Y T E L L E R S

April 12 - 14, 2024  
Luminary Arts Center

---

**CHOREOGRAPHER:**

Darrius Strong

**PERFORMERS:**

Darrius Strong, Gabby Abram, Davente Gilreath, Gabriel Blackburn, Aneka McMullen,  
Hassan Ingraham, colin Edwards

**APPRENTICES:**

Addie Beck & Olivia Geffre

**MUSIC:**

Biosphere, Thom Yorke,  
Edited by: Bionik

**LIGHTING DESIGN:**

Jacob Lee Hofer

**COSTUME DESIGN:**

Darrius Strong

**PHOTOGRAPHER:**

Bill Cameron

**VIDEOGRAPHER:**

Laura Sukowatey

---

— A NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR —

This project was inspired by the passing of Darrius's mother, Karen Morris, two years ago. He began conceptualizing this work and its evolution in the aftermath of her passing. While deeply rooted in Darrius's personal journey, it was paramount for him to assemble a remarkable team of performers to illuminate this narrative. Every dancer involved in this production is not just a performer but a source of personal inspiration for Darrius.

---

— SHOW ORDER —

*Mother Dialog Voicemail #1*

**Section 1: Breath** - It's crucial for inner peace. I often notice myself not fully utilizing my lungs' capacity when I'm stressed or experiencing strong emotions. This segment is entirely focused on the body—it has brought us this far, so now it's time to nourish it with oxygen. Let's speak in a common language; after all, we're all human.

**Section 2: Anxiety** - The turmoil in the mind that arises when the body is deprived of breath is profound. Inconsistency breeds confusion and dysfunction, disrupting the harmony between mind and body. What truly fascinates me is the intricate workings of the human mind—the realization that we are fundamentally animals, and that our primal instincts surface under certain circumstances or conditions.

**Section 3: Anger** - When energy builds up within, I find solace in channeling it through movement. It's as if the body yearns to express itself, and movement becomes its language. I firmly believe in the therapeutic power of movement, which is why I choose to let it speak for me once more.

**Section 4: Mother** - Anger most of the time got in the way of me spending time with you. Wishing I didn't wait this long but now I see you gave me a gift. Thank you for your guidance in this section of my life.

**Section 5: STORYTELLER** - THIS WAS A VISION FRESH AND CLEAR AS A MOUNTAIN STREAM. THE MIND REVEALING ITSELF TO ITSELF.

**Section 6: Birth** - There is something powerful about the number 3. Moving through the space together but separately. [Translation]"This is either a metal, or...if it is a metal, then its painted...cold surface...this is either a metal painted, or could be a plastic... Color... Bright...Seems like...perhaps it is a toy. The surface is smooth, but... there are some bumps on it...Even the finger gets stuck in it... Probably it is... Some marks, or is this a letter? ... Or just a bump... Looks like a toy...Colorful metal, or plastic, painted as a metal... that's all. Stop.

**Section 7: Jive** - Performance with a taste of spice.

**Section 8: STORYTELLER II** - The mind revealing itself to itself.

**Section 8: REAL** - Before he knew it, t'was time to dance.

---

— ARTIST BIO —

### DARRIUS STRONG

is a highly accomplished choreographer, dancer, and educator based in the Twin Cities. His creative work has garnered recognition and been featured in prestigious venues such as the Walker Art Centers, Choreographers Evening, and Rhythmically Speaking. As the founder and artistic director of STRONGmovement and the director of the Hip Hop program at Eleve Performing Arts Center, Strong continues to push boundaries and inspire others through his innovative approach to movement. Notable highlights of Strong's career include being featured in the 2015 New Griots Festival and an American Standard Billboard advertisement in NYC's Times Square in 2016. In 2017, he received the Momentum New Works recipient award, acknowledging his outstanding contributions to the field. Strong has also served as the Movement Director for esteemed theater organizations such as Guthrie Theater and Ten Thousand Things Theater, lending his expertise and artistic vision to enhance stage performances.

His choreographic talents have been sought after by renowned dance companies including Threads Dance Project, Flying Foot Forum, Alternative Motion Projects, TU Dance, and James Sewell Ballet, where he has created captivating works.

Additionally, Strong has dedicated the past seven years to bringing Hip Hop knowledge and technique to Anoka Middle School for the Arts, making a significant impact on the next generation of dancers.

Beyond the realm of dance, Strong has made his mark as a movement director for musicians as well. He has collaborated with notable bands such as Noneabove and has provided movement direction for various cover bands performing at prestigious galas.

Recognized for his artistic excellence, Strong is a recipient of the 2019 Jerome Hill Fellowship and the 2022 Choreographer McKnight Fellowship, solidifying his position as a trailblazer in the dance community.

### GABRIELLE ABRAM

better known As "Gabby TheBaddie " is a Gary, Indiana native. Abram is a self-taught, multi-lingual Hip Hop artist and has received training in Ballet, Modern, West African, and Jazz at The Perpich Center for Arts and Education, and TU Dance Center; more recently Gabby has worked with TU Dance as a Trainee in their Cultivate Program. Gabrielle has been awarded the Momentum New Dance Works Fellowship (2020) and MSAB's Creative Support for Individuals (2022).

In September of 2020 She made history as the first black woman to teach American Jazz dance at the University of Minnesota. As an educator, she inspires the next generation of movers, helping students cultivate their own artistic voices.

In 2018 Abram co-produced Listen. at The Lab Theater--a collective of 9 choreographers coming together to share Pan-African perspectives and personal stories of black identity. In November of 2021. Gabrielle made her choreographic debut with "Release" set on The Threads Dance Project as a Tapestries 5.0 Choreographer.

Gabrielle serves as a board member of RAT HAUS Productions as of 2020 and works with the company as Lead Choreographer and MC of their annual Show CABARAVE. She is a core company member of STRONGmovement, directed by Darrius Strong, and Co-founder of BGC Productions(2019); a Film and Media Production company dedicated to creating, collaborating, and producing art that elevates and inspires black and POC bodies. Through her multifaceted work in the arts, she seeks to bring people together and foster community while continuing to produce, dance, and create work in the Twin Cities.

### DAVENTE GILREATH

was born and raised in Minnesota. He began his dance training there at the Perpich Center for Arts Education where he was exposed to various forms and styles of dance including modern, ballet, jazz, African, and contact improvisation. Gilreath then furthered his career and studies in dance at the University of Minnesota where he received his BFA in Dance studying from professors such as Ananya Chatterjea, Erin Thompson, and Toni Pierce-Sands. During the pursuit of his degree, he was also able to perform and create work with local Minnesota-based companies such as

Contempo Physical Dance and Threads Dance Project. Gilreath Joined Garth Fagan Dance in 2014 and during his 8 years with the company he was promoted to senior company member and appointed the Director of the Garth Fagan Dance Student Ensemble. He also taught Intermediate/Advanced Fagan Technique for the Garth Fagan Dance School and for the Garth Fagan Summer Movement Institute. Gilreath is now a dance instructor at The University of Minnesota.

### GABRIELE BLACKBURN

is a Twin Cities native, and a lifelong student of movement, dedicating his life to the study of dance and parallel disciplines. Gabriel got his BFA in Dance from the University of MN, and is currently a choreographer and company member for Shapeshift. Alongside Shapeshift, he has performed on historic stages such as the Kennedy Center in DC, the Lincoln Center in NY, the O'shaughnessy Theater in MN, and many more. He is a part of the Timberwolves 612 Crew, and as a freelance dancer he's performed with companies such as STRONGmovement and RatHaus, among many others.

### ANEKA MCMULLEN

Dancer, Choreographer, Dance Educator and Multidisciplinary Performance Artist Aneka McMullen, hails from Minneapolis and is based in the Twin Cities. She holds a BFA in dance from The Ohio State University.

Aneka is a co-founder and the artistic director of *Epitome-No Question*, an open Old Skool Hip Hop dance ensemble dedicated to celebrating the community conscious roots of Hip Hop culture through dance theater.

She is also a former member of BLAQ, an Afro Modern observance based dance company in the twin cities as well as, a former teaching artist with the Ordway's Dance to Learn program and Minneapolis Public Schools, Additional company work includes Minneapolis based Maria, Colleen & Kids (Young Dance), Black Pearl, Threads Dance Project, Brkfst Dance Company (In New Company), Ananya Dance Theater (Women in Motion) and C Dance Company in Columbus, OH. Her work has been featured in Lori Carlos's Late Nite Series, Minnesota Mosaic (Pantages Theater), Black Choreographer's Evening (Intermedia Arts), the ground-breaking B Girl Be-Women In Hip Hop festival, the 2019 Special Edition of the award-winning Rooted Hip Hop Choreographer's Evening & Sistah Solo, the 2018 16 Feet: Splashes of Dance Choreographer's evening, and most recently, Body Prayers 2021 Choreographer's Evening for Walker Art Center. Aneka has been awarded the Cultural Community Partnership grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board & the Momentum New Dance Works grant from the Jerome Foundation.

### COLIN "BzyChIn" EDWARDS

Born and raised Saint Paul, Mn

Director of meridian movement co.

Dancing since the age of 14, he's trained in several styles ranging from ballet, modern and African to street styles such as breaking, krump and popin. With starting studies at SPCPA & TU he now's Performing at every major Venue from First ave to the Walker from the Ordway to Orchestra Hall and everything In between. His movement is a melding of open based modern in combination with Popin' sub genre "Waving", studying directly from the creators. Dedicated to the culture of hip hop and its motto of each one, reach one, teach one.

### HASSAN INGRAHAM

born and raised in Miami, FL, first discovered dance while attending Charles R. Drew Middle School. He continued his dance training at the New World School of the Arts and then received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from The Juilliard School in New York City. Hassan has worked with various prominent artists from the likes of Gregory Dolbashian, Dwight Rhoden, Norbert de la Cruz III, and Darrell Grand Moultrie among many others. In 2011, Hassan moved to Minnesota to join TU Dance, where he danced with the company for 5 years. He has also been a guest artist with the St. Paul Ballet, Wylliams/Henry Contemporary Dance, Peter London Global Dance Company, and Dance Iquail! In 2021, Hassan was a recipient of the McKnight Fellowship Award. Currently, you can find Hassan on faculty at the University of Minnesota dance program as a Horton-base modern instructor, and as a ballet and Horton-base modern instructor at the TU Dance School. You too can find him dancing, and his choreographic works throughout the Twin Cities.

### ADELINE BECK (Apprentice)

was born and raised in the Twin Cities. She began her dance training at Creo Arts and Dance Conservatory under the direction of Christa Anderson-Hill, where she

trained in a variety of styles. Throughout her time at Creo, she had the privilege of performing the lead roles of The Little Girl, and The Nutcracker's Gold Fairy and Rat Queen. Beck has attended numerous intensives within the U.S, and also abroad in Israel at the Kibbutz Contemporary Dance Company. While in Israel, she learned repertoire from KCDC's main company, as taught by company members. Additionally Beck has worked with notable choreographers Berit Ahlgren, Helen Hatch, Darrius Strong, and Jolene Konkel. Beck is currently apprenticing with STRONGmovement and Concerto Dance. Beck has also worked alongside Darrius Strong as assistant movement director for Alice In Wonderland at the

Children’s Theater Company. Beck is currently in a gap year developing her dance technique, working, teaching, performing, and exploring her interests and hopes for the future. In the fall, she will be attending Chapman University in Orange County, California to receive a BFA in Dance. After college, Beck would like to dance abroad professionally.

**OLIVIA GEFFRE (Apprentice)**

is a dancer and choreographer based in the twin cities. She began her training by attending classes at many different dance studios, eventually diving deeper into the art of dance when she attended the Saint Paul Conservatory for Performing Artists.

In the summer of 2022, she became a certified yoga teacher, furthering her kinesthetic knowledge and fascination with movement. She is currently teaching dance at Emerge Performing Arts, hoping to inspire the next generation to see the beauty and importance of art. She is now a member of CUL·TI·VATE, a trainee program with TU dance. She is also an apprentice with STRONGmovement. She is exploring shifting focus from the appearance of movement to the sensation of movement, along with finding stability throughout movement.

---

Land Acknowledgement  
THE LUMINARY ARTS CENTER IS LOCATED ON DAKOTA LAND.

Though we have arrived here in a multiplicity of ways, we recognize our occupation on land that is of great historical, spiritual, and cultural significance to Dakota people. We also acknowledge the past and present harm done to Dakota, Anishinaabe, and other Indigenous nations through the systematic forced removal of communities and the unjust seizure of their lands. We urge you to join us in reflecting on our place in these histories and rectifying the erasure of indigenous peoples in our artform.

---

— THANK YOU —

We are profoundly grateful to the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council for their unwavering support through the Arts for Groups grant. Without your generosity, our project would simply not have been possible.

A special expression of gratitude is extended to Stefon Bionik Taylor for his invaluable expertise in crafting the music composition for this production. Your contribution has truly elevated our work.

Additionally, we extend our appreciation to our sponsor Emerge, for generously providing rehearsal space for STRONGmovement.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to our STORYTELLER backers: Susana Di Palma, Gopi Jayakumar, David Geffre, Rebekah Geffre, Kelly Edlund, James Davies, and the Gary Peterson Rainbow Fund of Fidelity Charitable. Your support has been instrumental in bringing our vision to life.

To all our supporters over the years, we extend our deepest appreciation. Your unwavering belief in our mission and vision fuels our dedication to creating meaningful art for the communities of Minnesota. As a choreographer and artistic director, I am committed to producing work that not only pushes the boundaries of dance in innovative ways but also resonates with audiences long after the curtain falls.

“This activity is funded, in part, by an appropriation from the Minnesota State Legislature with money from the State’s general fund.”