



Cheryl Mann

River North Dance Chicago

Frank Chaves, Artistic Director • **Gail Kalver**, Executive Director

The Company: **Levizadik Buckins, Taeler Cyrus, Michael Gross, Hank Hunter, Lauren Kias, Ethan R. Kirschbaum, Melanie Manale-Hortin, Michael McDonald*, Hayley Meier, Olivia Rehrman, Ahmad Simmons, Jessica Wolfrum**

*Performing apprentice

Artistic & Production

Sara Bibik, Assistant to the Artistic Director • **Claire Bataille**, Ballet Mistress
Joshua Paul Weckesser, Production Stage Manager and Technical Director
Mari Jo Irbe, Rehearsal Director • **Laura Wade**, Ballet Mistress
Liz Rench, Wardrobe Supervisor

Administration

Alexis Jaworski, Director of Marketing • **Salena Watkins**, Business Manager
Diana Anton, Education Manager • **Paula Petrini Lynch**, Development Manager
Christopher W. Frerichs, Grant Writer
Lisa Kudo, Development and Special Events Assistant

PROGRAM

The Good Goodbyes
Beat
Eva (World Premiere)
-Intermission-
Three
Renatus
Forbidden Boundaries

Thursday, April 4 at 7:30 PM
Friday, April 5 at 8 PM
Saturday, April 6 at 2 PM & 8 PM

Abramson Cancer Center
 Penn Medicine



Media support for these performances is provided by WHYY.

PROGRAM

The Good Goodbyes

Choreography: Frank Chaves

Lighting Design: Todd Clark

Music: Original composition by Josephine Lee

Costume Design: Jordan Ross

Dancers: Taeler Cyrus, Michael Gross, Lauren Kias, Ethan R. Kirschbaum, Melanie Manale-Hortin, Hayley Meier, Jessica Wolfrum

Artistic Director Frank Chaves' newest work, *The Good Goodbyes*, is an homage to the relationships forged and nurtured within the dance community. Set to an original piano suite by Josephine Lee, artistic director of the acclaimed Chicago Children's Choir, this wistful and bittersweet work for seven dancers suggests "the beautiful memories and the wonderful relationships I've forged with dancers over the years. I want to celebrate the incredibly intimate, intense, fulfilling and—because of the nature of our profession—often short-lived connections we've made, and have bid goodbye along the way," says Chaves.

Choreography generously underwritten by the Bill and Orli Staley Foundation/William D. and Orli Staley. Additional support provided by Joyce and Bruce Chelberg and The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation.

Beat

Structured Improvisation Shaped By: Ashley Roland

Lighting Design: Ashley Roland / Recreated by Stephen Arnold

Original Music: Evan Solot

Costume Design: Ashley Roland

Dancer: Ahmad Simmons

Choreographed by co-Artistic Director of BodyVox Ashley Roland, *Beat* is a structured improvisation. This percussive and boldly rhythmic work combines the dancer's own improvised movement, with segments grounded and molded by Roland's specific movement vocabulary.

Generously underwritten by Richard + Diane Weinberg/Judd A. + Marjorie Weinberg Family Foundation and Thomas O. Weeks + Jillisa Brittan.

Eva

WORLD PREMIERE

Choreography: Frank Chaves

Lighting Design: Joshua P. Weckesser

Music: Eva Cassidy

Costume Design: Jordan Ross

Fields of Gold

Dancers: Levizadik Buckins, Taeler Cyrus, Hank Hunter, Ethan R. Kirschbaum, Melanie Manale-Hortin, Hayley Meier

Stormy Monday

Dancers: Jessica Wolfrum, Ahmad Simmons

Autumn Leaves

Dancers: Lauren Kias, Michael Gross

Wade in the Water

Dancers: The Company

Chaves' newest work is inspired by, and set to the music of Eva Cassidy, an American songbird known for her luscious interpretations of jazz, blues, folk and gospel favorites. Sadly, her unique voice was silenced all too soon when she tragically died of cancer in 1996 at the age of 33. Chaves evokes the intricate nuances of a chanteuse who deftly straddled genres, defied categorization and mastered the melding of different musical styles with her seemingly limitless range and imaginative phrasing: "Whether she beckons a soothing timbre for seductively restrained passages or shakes the rafters by unleashing her formidable power, Cassidy always fuse[s] her purity of tone with a purity of emotion" (*All Music Guide*).

Commissioned by Dance Celebration, presented by Dance Affiliates and the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, which hosted the world premiere in Philadelphia in April 2013.

-Intermission-

Three

Choreography: Robert Battle

Lighting Design: Todd Clark

Music: Eleventh Hour, Art of Noise, Taiko Drums: Music of Japan, Les Tambours du Bronx

Costume Design: Jordan Ross

Dancers: Michael Gross, Ethan R. Kirschbaum, Ahmad Simmons

Generously and exclusively underwritten by Karuna Maddava and Henry Beardsley.

Renatus

Choreography: Nejlá Yatkin

Lighting Design: Joshua Weckesser

Music: Giacomo Puccini

Costume Design: Jordan Ross

Dancer: Jessica Wolfrum

Nejlá Y. Yatkin is a 2011 National Performance Network Creation Fund recipient as well as a 2008 Princess Grace Choreography Fellow and is an Artist in Residence at the University of Notre Dame. Her choreography explores the beauty as well as complexity of memory, migration, transformation, identity and multiculturalism through movement. Yatkin achieves this by drawing upon extensive diverse traditions of dance cultures, as well as exploring subjects that are at once universal and timeless. *Renatus*, Latin for rebirth, is her first work for River North Dance Chicago.

Partially underwritten by Marcus Boggs.

Forbidden Boundaries

Choreography: Frank Chaves

Lighting Design: Christopher Ash

Editing and additional sound score: John Mennella/ID Music

Costume Design: Jackson Lowell

"In our quest for happiness and a well-balanced life we usually find ourselves bumping up against one huge obstacle, ourselves. More often than not the only thing standing

in the way of success is us. We tend to forbid ourselves that success by creating boundaries too difficult to break through, too difficult to understand. The answer to this conundrum continues to elude me. Why, when we know how, do we forbid ourselves to succeed, to grow, to change? The only thing holding you back is you.”
-Artistic Director Frank Chaves

Invitation

Music: Michael Cusson, original score by Evan Solot

Dancers: Levizadik Buckins, Taeler Cyrus, Hank Hunter, Lauren Kias, Ethan R. Kirschbaum, Melanie Manale-Hortin, Michael McDonald, Hayley Meier, Olivia Rehrman, Ahmad Simmons

Hidden Truth

Music: Ryuichi Sakamoto

Dancers: Levizadik Buckins, Michael Gross, Hayley Meier

Harmony

Music: Gustavo Santoalalla

Dancers: Taeler Cyrus, Hank Hunter, Lauren Kias, Ethan R. Kirschbaum, Melanie Manale-Hortin, Michael McDonald, Olivia Rehrman, Ahmad Simmons

Confrontation

Music: Original score by Evan Solot

Dancers: The Company

Artistic Director Frank Chaves premiered this ground-breaking piece at the Harris Theatre for Music & Dance in Chicago as part of RNDC's 20th Anniversary Season. Chaves initially conceptualized this piece when he was creating *Underground Movements* (2006), where the dancers utilize an unusual prop—an elastic and ever-expanding shirt—to portray the push/pull of internal, personal struggles in four sections: *Invitation*, *Hidden Truth*, *Harmony* and *Confrontation*.

Generously underwritten by Lauren Robishaw, Bill and Orli Staley Foundation/William D. and Orli Staley, and John Ryskiewicz in memory of Marva Ryskiewicz. Additional support from Pamela Atkinson, Timothy C. Sherk and Anonymous in memory of Jeff Lane.

Program and casting subject to change.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

River North Dance Chicago

Specializing in jazz-based contemporary style, River North Dance Chicago (RNDC) presents dynamic works that combine athletic prowess and artistic perspective with bold, theatrical flair. Founded in 1989, RNDC has since grown to become an internationally-acclaimed company that embodies a true flavor of “Americana” in its versatile repertoire. Under the artistic direction of Frank Chaves, the company demonstrates depth and sophistication with a commitment to accessible and enriching experiences for audiences, ranging from seasoned dance aficionados to those first encountering concert dance. Chaves aims for audiences to feel the complete spectrum of human emotions in a single evening leaving the audience with a feeling of joy and exhilaration at the end of each program. The *Chicago Sun-Times* has hailed RNDC as “Hotter than hot” and “One sleek, confident, athletic, daring, versatile company;” and the *Chicago Tribune* named the company as #2 in their “Top 10 Dance Performances of 2011.”

River North Dance Chicago has a varied, eclectic and powerful jazz-based contemporary repertoire. Core works by Chaves are complemented with an array of pieces by nationally- and internationally-renowned choreographers. The company has acquired and commissioned original works by Mauro Astolfi, Robert Battle, Sidra Bell, Randy Duncan, Daniel Ezralow, Kevin Iega Jeff, Harrison McEldowney, Julia Rhodes, Ashley Roland, Lauri Stallings, Lynne Taylor-Corbett, Sabrina and Ruben Veliz and former Co-Artistic Director Sherry Zunker. RNDC has traveled extensively throughout the United States. Since 2008, the company has conducted various international tours to Columbia, Germany, Korea and Switzerland and just returned from a 17-city tour of Russia. The company has been the subject of three WTTW Channel 11 Chicago television specials, produced and directed by Emmy® Award-winning HMS Video. The specials, *Reality of a Dreamer*, *River North Rising* and 2009’s *Every Dancer Has a Story*, have each garnered a Midwest Emmy® Award.

Frank Chaves (Artistic Director)

Chaves joined River North Dance Chicago in 1993 as Associate Director, became Co-Artistic Director with Sherry Zunker in 1994 and in May 2001, Chaves assumed sole artistic directorship of RNDC. Since then, he has created over 20 works in the company’s repertoire. An international choreographer and teacher, Chaves has also created numerous works for other companies including Spectrum Dance Theatre, Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago, Point Park College for the Performing Arts, Barat Repertory Dance Company, Kaleidoscope Dancers, Pori Dance Company (Finland) and the National Choreographers Initiative (twice invited). Chaves’s theatrical commissions include work for Steppenwolf Theatre Company and the Cleveland Playhouse. As a performer, Chaves has danced with Ballet Concerto of Miami, New York’s Ballet Hispanico, Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago and six years with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago. In 2000, Chaves received a Ruth Page Dance Achievement Award for Mission, co-created with Sherry Zunker, Co-Artistic Director Emerita of River North Chicago, in honor of the Company’s 10th anniversary. He has also been recognized with a 2008 Choo-San Goh Award for Choreography from the Choo-San Goh & H. Robert Magee Foundation for Tuscan Rift. Chaves is an Adjunct Professor of Dance for Western Michigan University.

Gail Kalver (Executive Director)

Kalver joined the company in 2009, which marked her 40th year working in the Chicago arts community. Previously, she was an arts management consultant and

project manager, whose client roster included the Auditorium Theatre of Roosevelt University, Chicago Human Rhythm Project, Concert Dance, Inc., Dance Affiliates of Philadelphia, Ensemble Español, The Grant Park Music Festival and the 2007 Chicago Dancing Festival. She served as Executive Director of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (1984-2007), Associate Manager of the Ravinia Festival (1976-1983) and was an active freelance clarinetist prior to her arts management work. Kalver serves on the boards of Audience Architects (home of SeeChicagoDance.com and TakeChicagoDance.com), Chicago Dancers United (Dance for Life) and Northshore Concert Band; and on the Advisory Boards of Chicago Human Rhythm Project, Child's Play Touring Company, Ensemble Español and Project Bandaloop. Kalver is the recipient of the 1988 Ruth Page Award for Service to the Field, the Arts & Business Council of Chicago's 2003 ABBY Award for Arts Management Excellence and the 2007 Ruth Page Award for Lifetime Service. She was also recognized by *Today's Chicago Woman* as one of 100 women making a difference in Chicago. In 2011, she served as Co-Chair of the Chicago Host Committee for the Dance/ USA Annual Conference, and as Co-Chair of the 2011 Dance for Life, the 20th Anniversary Celebration. Kalver is delighted to be reunited with Frank Chaves after many exciting years together at Hubbard Street Dance Chicago.

Sara Bibik (Assistant to the Artistic Director)

Bibik is a founding member of River North Dance Chicago and spent 10 years as a performer with the company. She is honored to have received a prestigious Ruth Page Award for "A Season of Outstanding Dancing" with River North Dance Chicago in 1996. In addition to serving RNDC by teaching, coaching and rehearsing the company, Bibik is passionate about training future generations of dancers as the Workshop Coordinator. She also teaches weekly classes at Inspire School of Dance (Naperville, IL) and the Irina Makkai Classical Ballet and Dance School (Highland Park, IL). She is privileged to guest teach and work with Company D (Memphis, TN), a dance company comprised of adults with Downs Syndrome. She has been on the faculties at the Gus Giordano Dance Center and the Lou Conte School of Dance. She has served as guest faculty for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Chicago National Association of Dance Masters and the Virginia School of the Arts where she was honored to have been the 1998 commencement speaker.

Mari Jo Irbe (Rehearsal Director)

Irbe is an accomplished performer, choreographer and teacher who has called Chicago home during much of her career. She was a featured performer with River North Dance Chicago under the direction of both Sherry Zunker and Frank Chaves for 15 years and has toured extensively performing works by dance's most acclaimed choreographers. Irbe danced with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, toured nationally and internationally with Joseph Holmes Chicago Dance Theatre under the direction of Randy Duncan and was the 2001 recipient of the Ruth Page Chicago Music and Dance Alliance Dance Achievement Award. In addition to her critical role with RNDC, she serves the Chicago dance community as a volunteer, dancer and committee chairperson with Dance for Life, an annual benefit to raise awareness and funds for HIV/AIDS care, prevention and education through dance. She also choreographs and teaches extensively throughout the country, is a faculty member with Loyola University of Chicago's Dance Department and is thrilled to be a certified BeMoved instructor, a new dance fitness experience for adults of all ages and skill levels designed by RNDC Co-Artistic Director Emerita Sherry Zunker.

Joshua Paul Weckesser (Production Stage Manager + Technical Director)

Weckesser joined River North Dance Chicago in January of 2009. Working primarily

in circles of dance, Weckesser's designs have been seen across Chicago, the U.S. and international borders. He works closely with Molly Shanahan/Mad Shak Dance Company as Lighting Designer and core collaborator on projects *Eye Cycle*, *My Name is a Blackbird* and the critically-acclaimed *Sharks Before Drowning*. He lit Sidra Bell's *Risoluta* for River North Dance Chicago as well as Frank Chaves' *Simply Miles*, *Simply Us* for the premiere at the Auditorium Theatre in April 2011. Weckesser is also Production Manager and Lighting Director for the annual Dance Chicago Festival, Chicago Human Rhythm Project, and Lighting Designer for Be the Groove and the Leopold Group. He has worked closely with other Chicago-based companies such as DanszLoop Chicago, Elements Contemporary Ballet and Inaside Chicago Dance. Recently, Weckesser founded Bread & Roses Productions with Lauren Girard, a company dedicated to providing production support to stages filled with dancing everywhere.

Levizadik Buckins (Dancer)

Buckins trained at the Educational Center for the Arts in Connecticut and is a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina School for the Arts where he studied under Ethan Stiefel, Brenda Daniels and Warren Conover. He has participated in the Winston-Salem Festival of Ballet in North Carolina and frequently teaches and performs ballet and contemporary work nationally. This is Buckin's first season with River North Dance Chicago.

Taeler Cyrus (Dancer)

Cyrus graduated with honors from the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre/Fordham University with a BFA in Dance and has participated in numerous prestigious training intensives including Laban School in London, Impulstanz in Vienna, Paul Taylor Dance Company and the American Dance Festival. Prior to joining River North Dance Chicago, Cyrus danced with Ailey II, Complexions Contemporary Ballet and the Metropolitan Opera, as well as numerous international festivals including the Holland Dance Festival, Cistermúsica Festival in Portugal, Kuopio Dance Festival in Finland and Vaison Danses in France. A recipient of an Emerging Young Artist Award and a semi-finalist at the Spotlight awards, Cyrus has also modeled for *Dance* and *Pointe* magazines and performed with Kanye West on *Saturday Night Live*. This is Cyrus' first season with RNDC.

Michael Gross (Dancer)

Gross is a graduate of the University of Arizona with a BFA in Dance under the direction of Jory Hancock. He received much of his training from Colorado Jazz Dance Company in Colorado Springs and has also attended summer intensives at the American Academy of Ballet. He has appeared as a guest performer with Mid-Atlantic Ballet and Elements Contemporary Ballet as well as performed in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's *Welcome Yule!* Christmas show. He is in his fifth season with River North Dance Chicago.

Hank Hunter (Dancer)

Hunter joins RNDC this season after his Spring 2012 graduation from Point Park University where he performed works by Ohad Naharin, David Parsons, Gerald Arpino and George Balanchine. After receiving his primary training in the Pittsburgh area, Hunter was a member of Texture Contemporary Ballet.

Lauren Kias (Dancer)

Kias began her training at the Dance Refinery in Indianapolis, IN. While attending Center Grove High School, she was invited to participate in Butler University's

early admissions program for gifted and talented students. Upon graduation from high school, she continued her education at the University of Cincinnati's College Conservatory of Music. After two years at CCM, Kias transferred to Butler University and joined Butler Ballet. Kias has performed soloist and corps de ballet roles in various productions, and was also featured in the Indianapolis Opera's production of *Rigoletto*. Upon moving to Chicago, Kias worked with companies such as the Civic Ballet of Chicago, Ballet Legere and Inaside Chicago Dance. In 2005, Kias was an ensemble member in the *Radio City Rockettes' Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. After two years as an apprentice with River North Dance Chicago, Kias is thrilled to be in her sixth season as a company member.

Ethan R. Kirschbaum (Dancer)

Kirschbaum began his dance training under Pamm Drake's Dance/10 Performing Arts Center, the San Francisco Ballet School and with Reginald Ray-Savage's Savage Jazz Dance Company where he was a performing apprentice. He continued his training with scholarships to summer programs at Alonzo King's LINES Ballet and the Juilliard School. Kirschbaum attended the Ailey School/Fordham University BFA program. In 2008, he joined Hubbard Street 2, dancing and teaching workshops around the globe while completing his degree. Upon graduating summa cum laude with departmental honors in Dance Performance, Kirschbaum moved to Saarbrücken, Germany to dance with Donlon Dance Company at the Saarländisches Staatstheatre under the direction of Marguerite Donlon. He has performed with the Santa Fe Opera, worked with Nacho Duato, danced in the Holland Dance Festival as well as at New York City Center and the Apollo Theater and been on faculty at The Ailey School and the Joffrey Academy. This season marks his second year with River North Dance Chicago.

Melanie Manale-Hortin (Dancer)

Manale-Hortin attended S.U.N.Y. Buffalo where she received her BA in Dance and was a member of the Zodiacque Dance Company. In addition to university, she has also trained with the José Limón Dance Company. Her professional credits include performances with Giordano Jazz Dance Chicago as well as Disney on stage and screen in the movie *Just Visiting* starring Christina Applegate. Manale-Hortin has taught for Dance Masters and Giordano Dance Center and currently teaches throughout the Chicago area. In addition to teaching dance, Manale-Hortin has been a certified Pilates instructor since 2002. She is currently on faculty at Chicago Ballet Arts teaching mat class and at the Pilates Center of the North Shore. This is Manale-Hortin's tenth season with River North Chicago.

Michael McDonald (Performing Apprentice)

McDonald received a BFA in dance from Western Michigan University where he studied under Whitney Moncrief and received a Partners in Dance Scholarship. He was a company member with Thodos Dance Chicago, Elements Contemporary Ballet and Ron De Jesus Dance. McDonald received scholarships to River North Dance Chicago Summer Intensives for two seasons prior to joining the company as a performing apprentice.

Hayley Meier (Dancer)

Meier received her early training from the Draper Center for Dance Education in upstate New York. In the summer of 2005, Meier accepted an invitation to partake in the 14th annual International Festival of Ballet in Peru. She then went on to earn a BFA in Dance at the University of Arizona on full scholarship where she had the opportunity to work with many renowned teachers and choreographers. Upon graduating in 2009, she joined the Rochester City Ballet for two seasons under the direction of Jamey Leverett. During this time, she performed numerous works

including George Balanchine's *Serenade*, Gerald Arpino's *Valentine* and Patrick Corbin's premiere work *Shady III*. Meier is thrilled to be in her second season with RNDC.

Olivia Rehrman (Dancer)

Rehrman received her training at the Academy of Dance Arts in Texas and graduated from the University of Arizona Dance program under the direction of Melissa Lowe, James Clouser, Sam Watson, Michael Williams and Susan Quinn. She was named *Dance Spirit* magazine's "Dancer to Watch" in 2011, awarded the top accolade for jazz dance by the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts and was a featured dancer in the HBO series *Masterclass* with choreographer Bill T. Jones. This is her first season with River North Dance Chicago.

Ahmad Simmons (Dancer)

Simmons began training at the Fort Worth Academy of Fine Arts. While in Texas, he trained extensively through the Dallas Black Dance Theatre, the Debbie Allen Dance Institute and the Dian Clough West Dance Center. Holding a BFA in Dance from Point Park University, under the direction of Susan Stowe, he has performed works by Bill T. Jones, Robert Battle, David Parsons, Daniel Ezralow, Martha Graham, Heidi Latsky and Kate Skarpatowska. In addition to concert dance work, he is a proud member of the Actors' Equity Association and has performed with Eisenhower Dance Ensemble and the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera in a number of shows including *Cats*, *West Side Story*, *Oklahoma* with Shirley Jones, *Peter Pan* with Cathy Rigby, *Hairspray*, *The Producers* and *Oliver*. Simmons is in his second season with River North Dance Chicago.

Jessica Wolfrum (Dancer)

Wolfrum (Buffalo, NY) received her early training from the David DeMarie Dance Studio, the Royal Academy of Ballet and the Buffalo Inner City Ballet School. Wolfrum was a May 2002 graduate of the University at Buffalo with a joint BA degree in Dance and Psychology. While at the University at Buffalo, she was a member of the Zodiac Dance Company. She was also a principal dancer with the Buffalo City Ballet Company for six years and choreographed their premiere of *Dracula*. While in Chicago, Wolfrum has been a guest artist in Chicagoland performances of *The Nutcracker Ballet*, as well as in Wisconsin, New York and Iowa. Wolfrum is also on faculty at the Lou Conte Dance Studio teaching various levels of ballet and jazz. Wolfrum is in her eleventh season with River North Dance Chicago.