



Paracosm's
A Christmas Carol



A dark, atmospheric photograph of a couple dancing in a room. The scene is filled with falling red petals or sparks, creating a romantic and ethereal atmosphere. The couple is positioned in the center, with the man's arm around the woman's waist. The background is dark, making the red petals stand out.

Take Heed!
We're Dancing.

Early 1900s: an undefined world inspired by the aesthetic of early French vaudeville and imperial Russia's aristocracy, mixed with anachronistic moments of an undefined, more modern time period.

Christmas Eve. The snow is falling. Four lanterns on high lampposts light the stage. One is center stage. A bar sits stage left with four barstools.

On behalf of the entire company, I would like to formally welcome you to the premiere of Paracosm's A Christmas Carol.

Early September of this year, sitting in Quack's coffeehouse, I had a thought: what if Paracosm put on a winter show this year? Three months is enough time, right? We can absolutely bring this entire show to life from scratch in half a season...easy! (Ha.)

I mentioned it casually to Dustyn, my most beautiful wife and partner. We talked for a bit, and I realized immediately that I didn't want anything to do with another Nutcracker. But it also didn't feel right to create an original story – not this time around. Dustyn and I drank our coffees and I let my mind wander to my favorite winter holiday memories. What did I think of when the snow season came to mind?

Ah! There it was. In an instant, I knew. Dearest audience members: if you ever go to Portland, Oregon, you must – and I mean MUST – witness the absolute treasure that is the Portland Playhouse's *Christmas Carol*. They are a small, nonprofit theater group, and they created something absolutely magical with their theatrical version of Charles Dickens's Christmas tale. My warmest holiday memories include the family outing to witness their production. I haven't seen it live since COVID hit, but before that, it was a light in my world every Christmas. It was also one of the last shows I watched with my grandfather before he passed (and oh, did this show make him smile).

I realized, with growing glee, that I'd never heard of a movement adaptation of the tale. A dance production of *A Christmas Carol*? I was already in love. I could already see the three spirits in what was to become my adaptation. I could see a Jacob Marley, clad in chains and unable to speak, walking through smoke while playing his violin (yes – I absolutely assumed Behnam could and would take this role, and did not allow myself to consider a world where he couldn't). Within 1 hour, the colors of the adaptation were filling in. I knew that day who I wanted to cast in each role. It all clicked. And then, it was time to actually create the damn thing.

Somehow, from that excited starting point (when December felt ages away), we acquired a full cast. I wrote a thirty-page script, reimagining each character to fit our Paracosm narratives. We added twelve-hour rehearsal days to our already packed schedule and choreographed an entire show. We voice recorded an entire soundscape and created a world...a paracosm.

A paracosm that you are about to witness.

The amount of love and dedication that went into this show is overwhelming. Everyone has poured all they have into this. I could not be more proud of this company and all its artists.

It is my absolute honor to present to you our creation.

We are humbled that you are here. We are grateful.

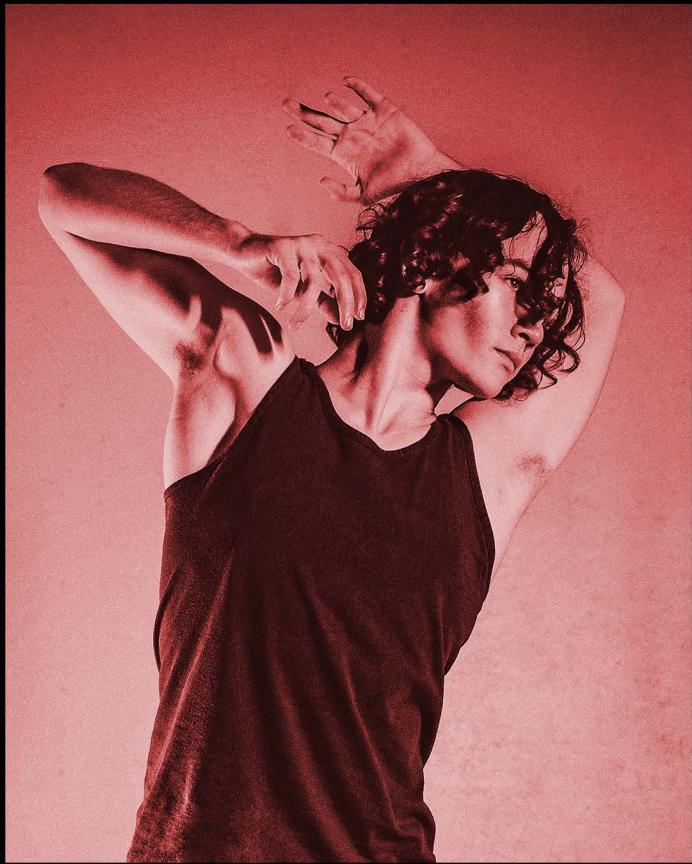
Enjoy the Paracosm!



Alyssa Johnson
Founder & Artistic Director

DEDICATED TO THOSE NO LONGER
HERE WITH US ON EARTH

YOU ARE MISSED
YOU ARE LOVED



GRYFFIN TOAVS

Gryffin is a dancer, student, and artist with a focus on growth and self-transcendence in all aspects of his life. This is his 9th year in the dance world; his story began at age 8 when he was introduced to the art of ballet on a class trip here in Austin. He began taking ballet classes shortly after and was recruited to Toni Bravo's company, Diverse Space Dance Theater. After 5 years of dancing and touring with Toni and the Diverse Space community, Gryffin was introduced to Alyssa and was eager to join Paracosm as it was just beginning to unfold into the vibrant community it is today. Aside from dance, Gryffin is an avid guitarist and writer, both of which are expressive outlets and daily practices.

Gryffin still encourages his own growth in ballet but is more focused on the many exploratory elements of dance that define Paracosm. Gryffin believes that dance is more than a form of self-expression; it is a path that changes and adapts as you do. Following it will lead to a greater understanding of self, and of the connections within your mind and body. He looks forward to the twists and turns his relationship with dance will surely bring, knowing they are guiding him along the right path.

EBENEZER SCROOGE

A cold-hearted man in charge of an undefined, lucrative enterprise. Filled with a dark hatred and deep anger, Scrooge lives a lonely life void of connection and love, despite the efforts of his friends and family. Three spirits visit Scrooge on Christmas Eve hoping to remind him of the love he once embraced and to help him heal from the trauma of losing his partner, Jacob Marley.



BEHNAMEH ARZAGHI

Behnam is a composer, violinist, and producer. He started playing violin at the age of 6, making his solo debut with orchestra at the age of 13. He started writing and performing his own compositions at the age of 12. By 17 he had premiered his own violin concerto and had several symphonic works performed by the Austin Symphony.

He went on to study violin performance at the Colburn School conservatory, and violin and music composition at the University of Houston.

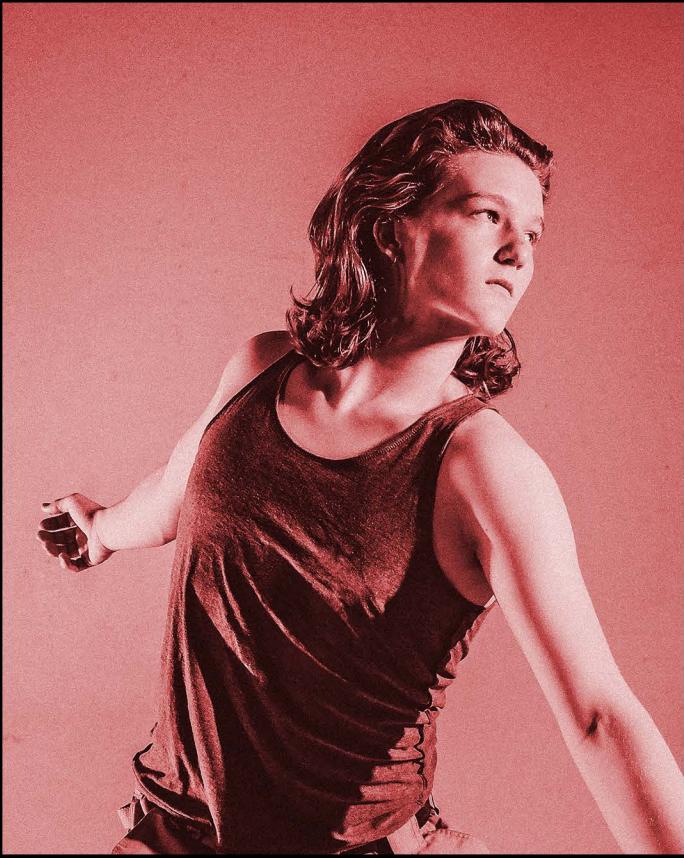
Behnam has composed for film, writing and mixing the music for "1 out of 30". As a musician in Austin, he has performed original

solo works for violin and voice at Zach Theater, worked as a session musician for local artists, and teaches violin, composition, and music production privately.

Behnam also holds degrees in computer science and physics, is a yoga instructor, and a competitive youth team climbing coach.

JACOB MARLEY

The deceased business partner and lover of Ebenezer Scrooge. Marley died seven years before the narrative's open of an unknown sickness. Now a ghost locked in the physical chains of Scrooge's debilitating refusal to fully confront and process Marley's death, he visits Scrooge on Christmas Eve hoping to save them both from a dark, cursed afterlife. He is always accompanied by his violin.



DEXTER BELLEE

The embodiment of chaotic-good energy, Dexter is honored to be making his Paracosm debut.

Dexter joins Paracosm YA for its 2022-2023 season and is excited to continue his journey into the dance world.

His love for movement finds its height through improvisational partner work – something Paracosm fosters and prioritizes.

He is also a competitive climber and musician.

BOB CRATCHIT

A loyal employee and long-time friend of Ebenezer Scrooge and Scrooge's family. He is a kind, humble man who continues to meet Scrooge's cruel rejections and cold expectations with unconditional patience and compassion. He was also a dear friend of Jacob Marley and maintains a reverence for his spirit.

HOST OF CHRISTMAS PAST

The first spirit to visit Ebenezer Scrooge. Harboring manic, chaotic (chaotic-good) energy, this child-like spirit takes Scrooge on a tour of his past Christmases, including the Christmas Jacob Marley died.



TARA COTTA

Having just passed her one-year Drag Anniversary, Tara Cotta has quickly become one of Austin's most memorable queens.

You can find her every week performing all over the city – from drag brunches to midnight competitions.

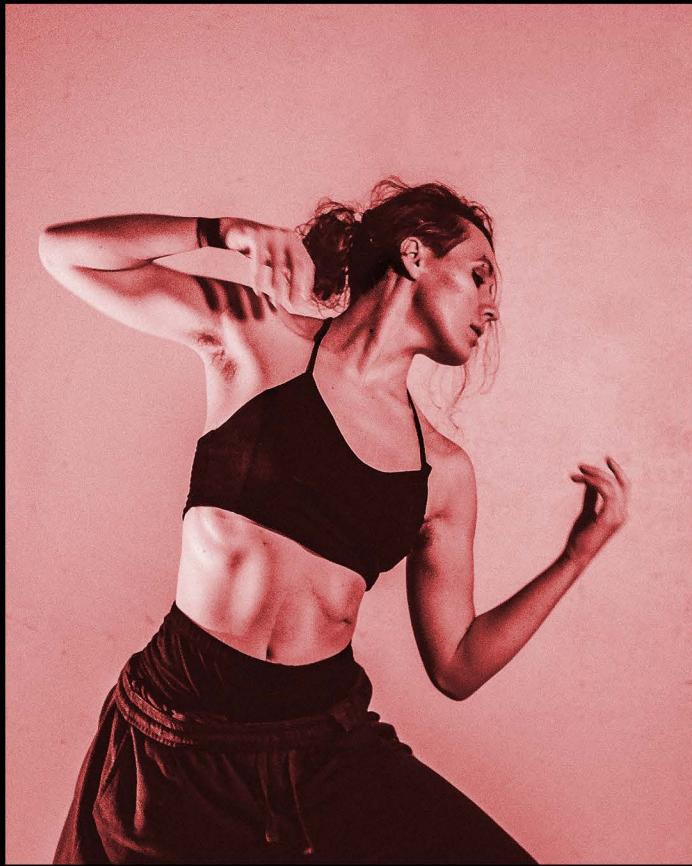
She is also a full-time seamstress, crafting not only her own gowns, but creating for many of Austin's drag artists, as well.

NARRATOR

An omniscient guide who exists within the world of Ebenezer Scrooge and the world of the audience, able to address those both in and out of the Christmas Carol Paracosm. An elegant drag queen with much sass and little patience for Scrooge's edginess.

HOST OF CHRISTMAS PRESENT

The second spirit to visit Ebenezer Scrooge. A majestic queen, this spirit embodies the euphoric, celebratory energy of Christmas. She shows Scrooge the many holiday celebrations he is missing.



ALYSSA JOHNSON

Founder and artistic director of Paracosm Dance, Alyssa began her training with the Brockus Conservatory in LA where she was introduced to her movement foundations of Luigi Jazz and the Lester Horton Technique. Integrating mixed martial arts with parkour and tricking, she then furthered her training at Alonzo King LINES Ballet and UC Berkeley.

She danced as a soloist with Peninsula Ballet Theater under the artistic direction of David Fonnegra, and performed in works by Copious Dance Theater's Kat Roman, Brickabrack Theater's Gabriel Grilli, and Scott Wells & Dancers. She danced as a guest artist with Alvin Ailey American

Dance Theater for Judith Jamison's retirement tour and choreographed works under the direction of Joe Goode. For her excellence in dance scholarship and performance, she received the Julia Payne Dance scholarship upon graduating from UCB. In Austin, she has danced with ARCOS Dance, Shakti Moves Dance Company, Ventana Ballet, and Blue Lapis Light. She also works as both a performer and the dance consultant for Royal Misfit Studios.

Alyssa spent the past 13 years teaching dance across the country in varying contexts. She graduated from UC Berkeley with a double major in Dance & Performance Studies and Forensic Anthropology, using her pedagogical, anatomical, neurological, and osteological studies to further the integration of science and dance technique. With that, she has delved into the benefits of movement outside the dance world, working to get all humans moving for their physical and mental health. This includes her work with BLL's Youth Taking Flight - a collaboration with several of Austin's social service organizations to empower Austin's youth.

HOST OF CHRISTMAS FUTURE/BRIDGE

One of two spirits who make up the third visit to Ebenezer Scrooge. Consistently near Scrooge and Marley, they eerily - and often vexatiously - bridge life and death throughout the narrative. Their slightly playful demeanor deteriorates to a monstrous, otherworldly state as they visit Scrooge to show him the future in store: a bleak, lonely death void of love and light, and eternal chains for both him and Jacob Marley.



AÍDA HERNANDEZ REYES

An ever-learning creative, Aída works with a variety of artistic mediums, from printmaking and installation art to stage and video performance. They are an interdisciplinary artist with a focus in dance performance.

Growing up in the southwest Austin area, they trained intensively with local dance studios, focusing generally on ballet and modern dance techniques. As a teenager, Aída danced with programs in New York (Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater), San Francisco (Alonzo King Lines Ballet), and throughout Europe in Dublin, Berlin, and Prague.

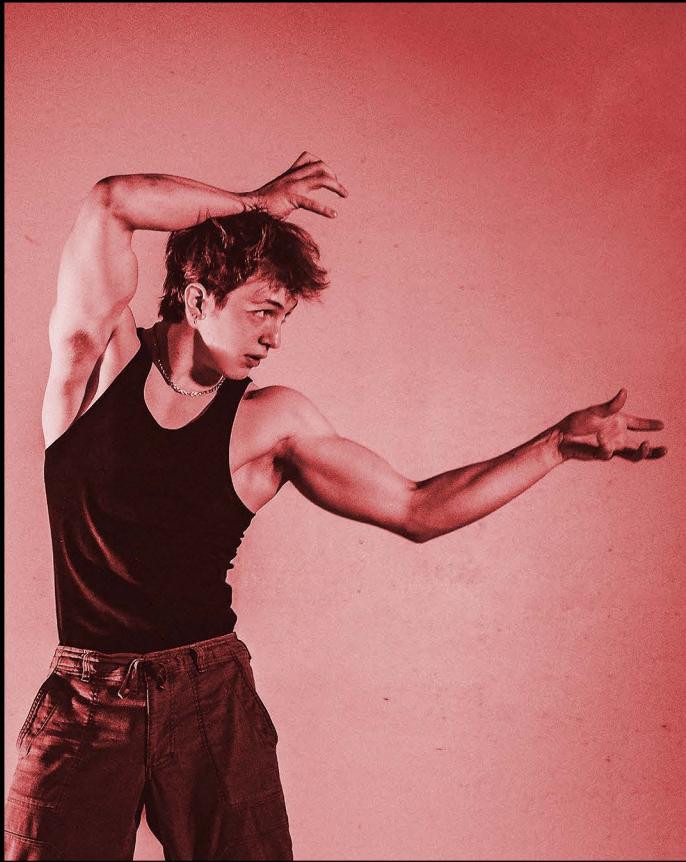
Training in a range of techniques, from afro-contemporary dance and modern dance styles to ballet and postmodern improvisation, they are currently pursuing their bachelor's degree in fine arts at the University of Texas at Austin.

They graduated the Paracosm YA company in 2020 and are now a part of the Paracosm company as a dancer and a mentor to Paracosm YA.

As a multiracial queer Latinx dancer, Aída notices the complexities, especially in their childhood dance training, of searching for health and authentic cultural identity within the context of a toxic and Eurocentric traditional ballet world of dance. They now seek to facilitate and participate in dance spaces and creative journeys that are accepting and exciting for all bodies and identities.

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RONE HARRIS

Rone is a recently graduated Paracosm YA student who enjoys dancing for many reasons. A curious dancer, who loves to move with sporadic and odd patterns, Rone grew up homeschooled and is currently growing through his gap year. With a passion for lifting weights, climbing, breath-work, and self-exploration, Rone's drive is rooted within a desire to see himself do things his previous self didn't see possible.

When Rone started dancing at 14, he knew he'd found something his body liked. Through Toni Bravo's Diverse Space Dance Theater, his love for the art was founded and fostered. After dancing with

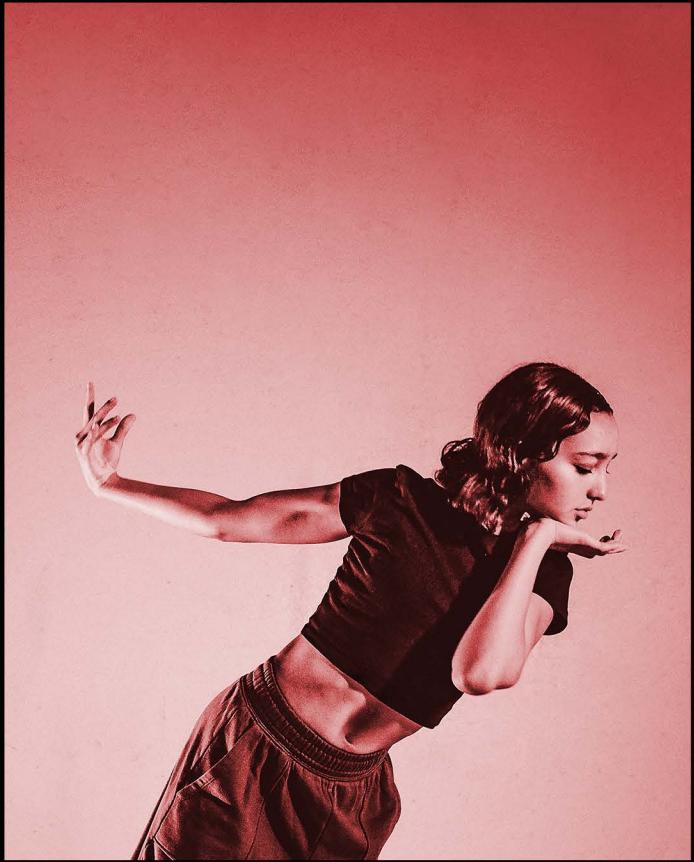
Diverse Space for 2 years and going on full length tour around Europe with the company, Rone moved away from dance and into the film universe. After working on Fear The Walking Dead as an extra for 6 months, he hopped into Paracosm's company and his love for dance multiplied. Since joining in 2020 his passions have only grown. After performing in ADF and SMDC's *Through the Looking Glass* in 2022, this is his next big show!

Much of Rone's personality and mannerisms shine in this performance via the intense emotional scenes. He loves to dive deep and dissect how we as humans react to these scenes in different ways. This connects his curious mindset with powerful movement. Rone's biggest role models are his friends, and he hopes to continue learning about the things he feels by expressing them through dance.

THE REFLECTION OF SCROOGE

The manifestation of Scrooge in various moments from his timeline, as presented to present-day Scrooge by the three spirits who haunt him.

TALIA MASALA



Talia is a founding member of Paracosm YA and a lover of dance, music, travel, and all forms of art.

She likes to say that she was born dancing. From a very young age she was constantly looking for ways to move her body. At age 12, she really committed to dance and started to get to know herself as a mover. She trained in many different styles beginning with hip hop and jazz, then moving into contemporary, ballet, and modern. She took classes at Balance Dance Studio for a year and then joined one of their youth companies, which she danced with up until she joined Paracosm.

Currently, she dances with this wonderful company, and takes ballet and pointe classes. She attended the very first Paracosm summer intensive, and the Modas summer intensive: two immersive and growth instigating dance experiences. She was also a part of Shakti Moves Dance Company's spring show, performing the incredible piece, *Mindscape*. In the fall, she performed as the sugar plum fairy in the Head to Toe Nutcracker.

Alyssa and all the YA members have supported Talia to develop her skill and passion for dance in ways she never knew possible. Her movement is constantly growing and evolving thanks to Alyssa's training, and her heart and soul are nurtured by the company's incredible culture. She truly has no words to express her gratitude for this beautiful family!

FRED

Ebenezer Scrooge's jovial nephew. Despite his uncle's radical withdrawal from his friends and family, Fred, with his brother George, continues to reach out to Scrooge.

ANNA

Ebenezer Scrooge's sister and mother to Fred and George. Anna and her wife, Leia, passed away fifteen years prior to the narrative's open. Glimpses of their effervescent family life are shown to Scrooge during his journey to the past.



IZI SEITZ

Izi is a dancer and creative in her fourth year with Paracosm. Dancing for as long as she can remember, Izi has trained at Tapestry Dance, Austin Dance India, Blue Lapis Light, and Paracosm in many dance styles including Bharatanatyam, aerial dance, ballet, tap, and modern.

They have performed in Tapestry's *Of Mice and Music: A Jazz Nutcracker* and Austin Dance India's *Girl Power!*, a work aligned with the 2016 United Nations Global Goals for gender equity, in addition to featured roles in Paracosm productions. In 2022, they created a role in and composed the music for *Strings*, which Paracosm was invited to perform

at Austin Dance Festival's youth showcase. They were also featured in the 2016 music video for the Les Rav (Lauren Bruno) song "Follow the Light."

In addition to dancing, they are a singer-songwriter learning music production—she has released three singles this year and is working to complete her first album next year—and an illustrator. They performed in, as well as composed the music for, a piece that was featured at ADF with Paracosm. She is currently a sophomore in high school and hopes to pursue a career in the arts in the future. Check out their website to see more of her art at izisworld.neocities.org

GEORGE

Ebenezer Scrooge's jovial nephew. Despite his uncle's radical withdrawal from his friends and family, Fred, with his brother George, continues to reach out to Scrooge.

LEIA

Anna's wife and mother to Fred and George. Leia passed away fifteen years prior to the narrative's open. Glimpses of their effervescent family life are shown to Scrooge during his journey to the past.



DUSTYN SHEKANE COSTUME DESIGNER

Dustyn has been the Head of Costume for Paracosm since its inception. Their creativity and passion for design and sewing started at an early age. She taught herself to sew at the age of 10, and by high school, she was making her own clothes. She took her passion to the next level with commissioned work that featured her unique designs, moving towards the fully fleshed creation of her own sustainable fashion line.

Her first Paracosm creation was a trash suit for Griffin Toavs. It was featured in a photoshoot at the Cathedral of Junk to shed

light on the need for society to take action on our waste. From there, she has been the lead HMUA and costume designer for Paracosm's productions, including Paracosm's upcoming film, *Mindscape* (coming in 2023).

She has also been the lead HMUA and costumer for Royal Misfit Studios, with work most recently featured in *Misery* and *Calypso*. She has also worked with Royal Misfit Studios as both a production assistant and camera assistant.

ERIC HUNTER

LIGHTING DESIGNER



Camera Clay was founded in 2009 as a collaborative effort to share ideas, and create films.

By 2012, we had created a handful of award-winning short films and were inspired to venture out into the world of advertising. We began producing commercials, quickly learning the ropes of advertising from some of the best strategic thinkers in the industry. In a few short years, our client work went from local broadcast to the jumbotrons of Times Square, creating several nationally-awarded campaigns along the way. After 3 years of dedicated agency work, we

decided to venture out on our own and return to our roots in Texas.

Since 2016, we continue to create impactful, branded content with destinations and businesses alike. We've developed a process that supports our clients goals by speaking directly to their audience, giving voice to their cause, and bringing about change.

Eric joined Paracosm's team of creatives over three years ago, working with Alyssa on film projects for both the YA program and the professional company. Most recently, he was the lead cinematographer for Paracosm's *Mindscape* (coming in 2023).

GRATITUDE

Paracosm Dance would like to extend an immeasurable amount of gratitude to the community of artists and supporters who made this show possible.

To Nicole, Evan, and Blue Lapis Light: You have given us a home. For four years, you've shared your space with us and offered us a sanctuary. Without you, we don't exist. Thank you for supporting our mission and for believing in our visions. Thank you for helping us build this show (and every other event we've ever put on). Thank you for the countless opportunities you've offered us both in and out of the home studio. Thank you for helping us fly (literally and metaphorically). We will never be able to repay the incredible gift you've shared. And to Nicole - we love you. We love you so, so dearly! You are an incredible mentor and friend, and we are so lucky to have you in our family.

To Solomon: You are one of the busiest humans alive, and yet somehow, you managed to swoop in and build all our set pieces. You took our haphazard visions, our stick-doodled plans, and in the blink of an eye, you transformed them into the perfect props. Because of you, the world of Paracosm's *A Christmas Carol* can truly come to life. Thank you for all you've done to bring this show to opening night (and for all you've ever done for Paracosm - without your family, this community would still be a far-off dream)!

To Katherine and Aaron Johnson: Thank you beyond thank you for your continued support of Paracosm Dance (your daughter's crazy experiment-turned-career). Thank you for funding so much of this show and for always offering to help in any and every way. You keep the artistic director grounded and sane! We are beyond honored to have you in the audience tonight. You're the grandparents of this company, and we will never be able to thank you enough!

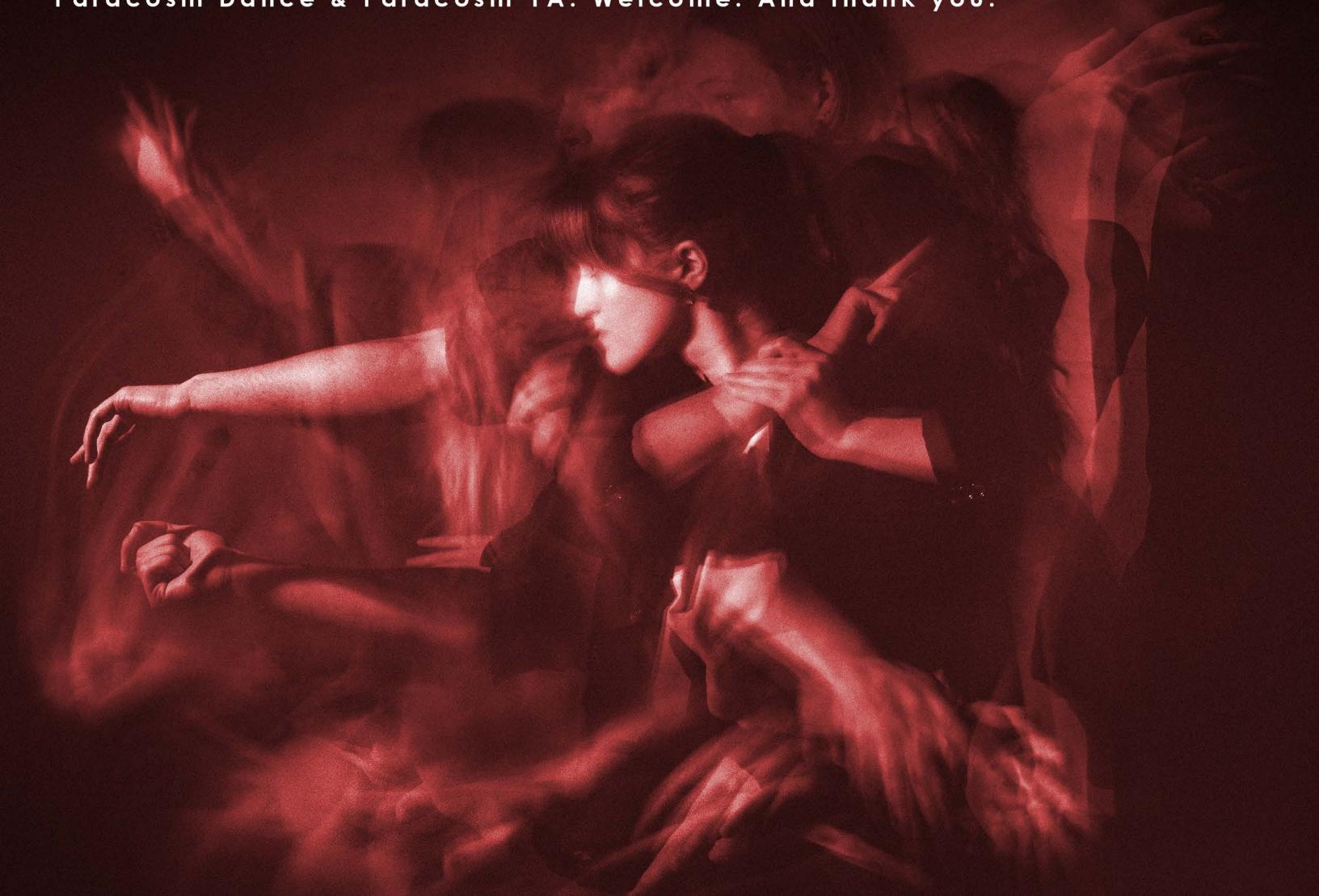
To the parents of our YAs: I, Alyssa, will never be able to express my gratitude. For the past four years, you've trusted me to hold space and offer mentorship to your artists. You've driven countless miles and juggled insane schedules. You've remained patient with me as I learn how to run a dance company. You've continued to reach out and offer support, wisdom, and love. I don't know what I did to deserve such an incredible support system. You've made the last four years an absolute dream. To all of you: thank you!

OUR HISTORY

In 2018 – nestled in the Masalas' living room – a creative seed was planted. A far-off dream was brought to the forefront as a tangible possibility. In 2019, Alyssa Johnson officially founded Paracosm Dance and Paracosm Youth Artists (YA)...a full-blown artistic experiment. Looking for an alternative to traditional arts conservatory experiences (and hungry for a more grounded, more supportive creative space), Alyssa and seven other dancers spent a year together exploring artistic growth and performance on their own terms.

After a successful inaugural year, even when met with COVID and contact-free quarantine, the company sustained its vibrant community and found ways to train and create through trying times. Incubating in our own world for the past two seasons, we are excited and ready to branch back out into our public community and share our years of exploration and inspiration.

We've become a multimedia hub for creative pursuits and mentorship. Our roster of mentors has grown from just Alyssa to a host of insanely creative talents eager to share their knowledge with Austin's emerging artists. We've doubled in size, opened our world to the public through classes and intensives, tackled virtual performances and film sets, and are now, in our fourth season, ready to share our live performances with Austin, Texas. And here you are, witnessing the first evening-length mind meld of Paracosm Dance & Paracosm YA. Welcome. And thank you.





DANCE ARTISTS CREATING TEMPORARY REALITIES THROUGH FIERCE MOVEMENT

Paracosm Dance is dedicated to a deep exploration of movement development, expression, and performance.

We push choreographic and performative boundaries within our evolving multimedia field, celebrating the continuous conversation between classical forms and contemporary vocabularies.

Working to create conscientious and captivating works for unconventional stages, Paracosm Dance prioritizes art accessibility.

Actively engaging audiences in revolutionary spaces and exploring new ways to bring dance education and experiences to our community, we provide financially and physically accessible performances around our city.

We strive to hold space for outside artists, allowing those in our community to bring their work to wider audiences.



Paracosm Youth Artists, centered upon the development of young dancers as vigorous technicians, distinctive artists, and actively present human beings, works to foster individual artistic growth in a unique, intimate setting that prioritizes classical training with cultural responsibility and long-term community engagement.

Offering an alternative to traditional conservatory models, Paracosm YA emphasizes flexible, individualized curricula with a focus on sustainable movement, holistic health, and creative agency.

Paracosm YA promotes multimedia exploration and incorporates varied voices to ensure the development of YAs as fully integrated performers - artists able to authentically and effectively navigate their contemporary reality.

An inclusive, non-competitive environment, Paracosm YA encourages outside opportunity while working internally to develop performative, conscientious works to be shared with the many communities of Austin and beyond.

www.paracosmdance.com



PARACOSM DANCE

Thank you