

Umami Playground Dance Inc.

NYC

Play, Make Mistakes, and Hardworking

Contemporary | House | Floor Work | Breaking | Popping | Hip Hop

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Umami Playground Dance Inc., founded in 2022, is a collective of movers who bring the core values of **Play, Make Mistakes and Hardworking**. With expertise in House, Popping, Tutting, Breaking, HipHop, Floorwork, and Contemporary, they are one of the rare companies blending street and contemporary dance. Their team includes contemporary dancer graduates from NYU, Alvin Alley to national breaking dance champions, uniquely positioning them to create fusion works that bridge these dance worlds with imagination and experience.

Humor and comedy are central to their storytelling, often drawing on the everyday experiences of ordinary people and reframing them on stage through their distinctive approach to dance. They believe that telling one's own stories is both unique and powerful, and use their core value—**Play**—to bring those stories to life.

They innovate by fusing cultural and traditional dance into theatrical works. Their 2023 piece, *Playground*, incorporated *gugak*, a Korean traditional music format, to explore play. Their 2024 production, *Elements of Life*, reimagined East Asian elemental symbols of the weekdays. They have also fused Korean traditional dance, Afro-Peruvian tap, and Filipino folk dance with street and contemporary styles.

TOURING REPERTORY

Toured in: **Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art; Zimmerli Art Museum; SEIU Annual Convention; Texas Amphibian Stage SparkFest Finale; Peridance Presents; Gibney Dance; Queensboro Dance Festival (2022–2025); NYC Pride Parade; Judson Movement Research; JCAL; Elements in Boston, Queens Theatre and more.**

Our repertory is highly adaptable and can be customized for different program lengths, cast sizes, and performance spaces. We have presented work in both indoor and outdoor settings, in venues ranging from intimate spaces of 30 seats to large-scale theaters and public venues serving audiences of up to 3,000. Our work engages diverse audiences, from children to all ages.

In addition to existing repertory, we can tailor excerpts or develop new works in response to specific contexts, settings, and audiences. As a street dance-based company, we bring a strong foundation in freestyle and improvisation, allowing us to respond quickly and creatively to a wide range of performance needs.

Elements of Life - 90 mins - 8 dancers

- Draws inspiration from the East Asian naming system for the days of the week, which is ordered after the "Seven Luminaries" (七曜 qī yào) - Sun, Moon and the five planets visible to the naked eye. Seven sections of the set are moon月, fire火, water水, wood木, metal or gold金, earth土, and sun日. The set explores and depicts the typical experiences of each day, including how it feels, the activities associated with it, and how people relate to these elemental representations. Additionally, it aims to reflect the cyclical nature of life as it progresses through the weekdays.

Clothing - 25 mins (will expand to 60 mins in 2026) - 12 dancers

- Initially inspired by the concept of a tube man and intriguing textures and movements by oversized clothing. We were like, "Why not make a set fully about us wearing different clothes and creating unique movements and illusions?" The entire set will be sectioned by different clothing textures: oversized clothing (XXXXL), tight clothing (XXXXS), pajamas, traditional culture clothing, different accessories and playing with different illusions created by the clothes.

NYC - 25 mins - 10 dancers

- A kinetic portrait of New York City—its subways, streets, noise, rhythms, and restless energy. Dancers move through the city's daily realities: crowded commutes, constant sound, the pressure of expensive rent, and the collision of cultures and languages. Shifting between grit and beauty, exhaustion and resilience, the work captures the chaos, pulse, and lived intensity that shape how New Yorkers survive, adapt, and keep moving.

Unbecoming - 15 mins - 6 dancers

- Directed by Bhutan artist - Puspa Ghalley, this piece reflect the artist personal experience with the outside world and inside world. Unbecoming is not an act of loss, but a return. You have cast aside the false and are now free to expand, to merge with the universe, to become the very space between stars. You are not the form, not the name, not the identity. You are the vastness. You are the stillness. You are the breath of all that is.

Playground - 10 mins (will expand to 25 mins in 2026) - 7 dancers

- "Playground," is a direct reflection of our company mission, which focuses on the value of play. As people grow up, we tend to limit ourselves as we gain more knowledge. Similarly, as artists train and grow more mature, we often move in certain ways, not necessarily because we want to but because we have been trained to. Additionally, with the prevalence of social media, dancers often focus more on how they look and try to produce work that pleases viewers. This piece aims to break free from those limitations and encourages dancers to be free from judgment and just play in the dance playground, like kids. We try to maintain the same mindset as when we first encountered dance, which was the pure joy of moving with music and rhythm and the endless possibility of moving in different ways.

Running - 3 mins - 3 dancers

- Drawing inspiration from the simple movement - running, the piece explores its various forms – from crawling, chasing to racing and beyond. With dynamic floor work and House dance elements.

Shogeki - 4 mins - 10 dancers

- Shogeki piece is inspired by the animation *Attack on Titan*. The piece explores human nature, which is ugly and beautiful at the same time. You will see lots of metaphors to reflect our human history and what's still happening all the time.

Mirror - Site specific Interactive Work - 4 dancers

- The interactive set Mirror, consisting of two parts, was premiered at Chashama's annual fundraiser and invited the audience to explore imagination and reflect on their behavior.

TEACHING

Dedicated to the community, we have hosted 60+ workshops, produced two free showcases, and performed 20+ free outdoor shows for Queens, NYC. Multiple members are regularly teaching in NYC studios like PJM, KBL, Modega, and AKF. They can provide classes in:

- Breaking
- Floorwork
- House
- Popping, Tutting and Animation
- Contemporary
- Waacking

Past workshop includes:

- Northeastern University (Boston, MA)
- Boston Dance Studios (Boston, MA)
- Modega (NYC, NY)
- New York Center for Creativity & Dance (NYC, NY)
- Queensboro Dance Festival (Queens, NY)
- Evolute Academia (Queens, NY)
- All Elementz Studio (Tianjin, China)
- Dream Vol. 5 Dance Festival (Hokkaido, Japan)

ENSEMBLE

Director / Performer: Guangmin Shen is a dancer and choreographer whose work bridges street dance and contemporary performance. He began dancing in 2009 and started his professional career in 2010 as an assistant choreographer for club and commercial events in Chengdu, China. Since relocating to New York City in 2016, he has trained extensively in street and contemporary forms, with a primary focus on House dance, mentored by pioneers Sekou Heru, Tony McGregor, and James "Cricket" Colter.

His movement practice fuses House, popping, breaking, and contemporary floorwork, informed by a background in martial arts, including a black belt in Taekwondo and ongoing training in Capoeira. From 2017 to 2021, Guangmin choreographed for The Neighbors dance team, leading the group to multiple competition wins. He founded Umami Playground Dance Company in 2022 and remains an active freestyle battler, placing second twice in major NYC House dance battles.

Artistic Director / Performer: Yurie Ono is a dancer and choreographer from Japan whose training bridges classical, street, and contemporary dance forms. She began studying ballet at age four and later transitioned into street dance, training in Street Jazz, Hip-Hop, Waacking, House, Locking, and Breaking. In Japan, she won the GATSBY Dance Competition in Hokkaido.

Since moving to New York City in 2018, Yurie has expanded her practice into contemporary dance and collaborative creation. She became co-director of A Rhythm Company, leading the group to win SAYAW in 2020, and placed in the top five at the Fabulous Waacking Battle in 2023. She is also an active educator, regularly teaching at PJM, Dreamer, AKF, and Evolute.

Artistic Consultants / Performer: Kevin Chen (Popping, Tutting and Animation), Roni Flores “RoFlow” (Breaking), Bea Martin (House and Hip Hop), Da Hyun Kim (Contemporary), Wan Rong Tseng (House, Hustle and Lite Feet), Puspa Ghalley (Waacking and Dancehall), Shannon Healey (Modern and Hustle), Rachel Hsu (Contemporary)

Performer: Jeanne Oliver, China Braekman, Luyan Li, Hatsune Ishihara, Maggie Chang, Kai Nakayama

CONTACT & PRODUCING INFORMATION

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