

GIBNEY DANCE

**COMMUNITY ACTION RESIDENCY
INFORMATION KIT**



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ABOUT GIBNEY DANCE COMMUNITY ACTION

HISTORY

Founded in 2000, Gibney Dance's Community Action was the first program to unite survivors of domestic abuse, who often have issues of self-determination and autonomy, with professional dancers, who through years of training have learned to control their physical environment with freedom and confidence. Members of Gibney Dance Company facilitate workshops that empower women and help them to find a new voice through movement. Currently, the program offers over 365 free workshops annually to help NYC families gain confidence and break the cycle of violence.

Domestic violence survivors are often ashamed of and alienated from their bodies, but ironically, in most shelters little or no attention is paid to the body. Community Action provides free movement workshops for low-income shelter residents by partnering with some of the leading domestic violence organizations in the country. After receiving specialized training, dancers design and facilitate workshops that draw from their artistic practices to address the needs of survivors. Offered during support groups under the supervision of a clinical social worker, workshops underscore clinical themes, address group dynamics, and explore common issues.

PROGRAM MODEL

Community Action's four-part program model encourages survivors to:

- Look Inside and reflect upon personal qualities, experiences, and aspirations. Reflection and self-awareness lead to greater self-confidence.
- Speak through Movement and gain confidence through stress reduction and self-expression. Creative decision-making helps participants to express their feelings and assert their identities.
- Work Together and break the social isolation associated with abuse through interaction and collaboration. Mutual support and validation comes from moving and creating together.
- Take Care by learning techniques for breathing, stress reduction, and self-care. Colorful Take Care Cards™ encourage survivors to regularly use these practices.

Our approach leverages artistic resources through a strong conceptual framework that provides focus for the dancers, but affords them flexibility in using their own skills, training, and creativity while valuing their artistry. Similarly, survivors draw from their own identities and cultural backgrounds in a process that emphasizes creative expression and decision-making. Rather than "teaching" a specific style or concept, we provide tools for creative and physical exploration.

ABOUT COMMUNITY ACTION RESIDENCIES

OUR APPROACH

Community Action Residencies seamlessly blend artistry and outreach. By combining performance engagements with opportunities to learn about our program model, residencies provide local organizations with powerful tools for impacting their local community. Community Action works hand-in-hand with presenters and organizations to design a program that will be effective and compelling.

PERFORMANCE COMPONENT

Gibney Dance offers richly textured choreography performed by a stunning company of dancers. The physical strength, refined technique, and elegant style that these dancers bring to Gibney's choreography create artistically excellent work that is both passionate and introspective. As a reflection of Gibney's worldview, the Company is a community of equal parts sharing and cooperation and is based on an ideal of balance, human interaction, and personal reflection. Gina Gibney's work, praised by The New York Times for its "great intelligence and almost literary sensitivity," is distinguished by intricately crafted movement episodes with a sense of deep connection and emotional inevitability.

The company has been presented in the US and abroad by Danspace Project, Symphony Space, The Guggenheim Museum, Baryshnikov Arts Center, The Duke on 42nd Street, Yale Repertory Theater, The Joyce Theater, Ailey Citigroup Theater, Internationale Tanzmesse (Germany), Dance Theater Workshop, Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Central Park Summerstage, The World Trade Center, The Cleveland Museum of Art, Lincoln Center, and l'Agora de la Danse (Canada).

Company components include: dance master classes, informal showings, and public performances of Company repertory.

COMMUNITY COMPONENT

Gibney Dance is an established leader in using movement and creativity to reach new demographics in local communities. Our extensive experience includes work with domestic violence survivors, youth-at-risk, and people affected by HIV/AIDS. The Community component of our residencies is designed to share our expertise with local dancers, encourage them to use the arts to empower those in need, and help them to forge partnerships with local social service organizations.

Community components include: sample movement workshops, training to understand the issue of the domestic violence, sensitization training to prepare local dancers to work with specific populations, technical assistance in program and partnership development, lecture-demonstrations for social service organizations and other community partners.



PRESS GUIDE

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS WHEN COVERING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Due to the sensitive nature of the issues addressed by Community Action Residencies, Gibney Dance asks members of the press to remember the following when covering CAR activities:

1. The location of a domestic violence shelter is extremely confidential and should never be disclosed to the public, even in the most general of areas. Written information about these locations should be carefully guarded and should not be distributed.
2. The identities of the clients associated with our work are strictly confidential. Photographic images are available for public distribution; however other images and information obtained by the press in connection with our work should be cleared with participating domestic violence organizations to ensure the privacy and safety of the clients.
3. When interviewing a domestic violence survivor, always consider the safety needs of the interviewee. The identity of a survivor should never be revealed unless they have specifically given permission to do so. Survivors of domestic violence often face complex issues when deciding to remove themselves from an abusive situation, including the future safety of their families.
4. Avoid statements that describe an abusive relationship as a “violent relationship” or “troubled marriage.” These phrases inaccurately describe abuse as an issue between two people, thereby obscuring the fact that the abuser bears responsibility for the violence.
5. Coverage that conveys a sense of hopelessness and helplessness implies that there is nothing people can do. It is more productive to emphasize that people can take steps to address domestic violence in their communities by learning about the warning signs, resources available, and ways to support a friend or family member experiencing violence in their relationship.
6. Gibney Dance’s work is not dance therapy — we provide an artistic activity in a clinical setting that can have positive, therapeutic effects. Our program is designed to utilize the existing skills and wisdom of professional dancers in service of domestic violence survivors.

PRESS EXCERPTS

Because they not only make art but take action, bringing the wisdom they've acquired as dancers into the lives of women whose bodies house the memory of domestic violence.

-Holly Brubach, Gibney Dance's Hall of Fame Citation, Vanity Fair, April 2008

Sitting with [the members of Gibney Dance] one afternoon felt like being with an extended family of women who share a longing to set the world right.

-Susan Eisner Eley, "The Little Company That Could," Dance Teacher Magazine, March 2004

Integral to [Gibney's] work as a choreographer are her workshops with domestic-abuse survivors and families and individuals with HIV/AIDS. In conducting this facet of her work, Gibney harnesses the fierce focus of early 20th century modern-dance revolutionaries - giving participants powerful tools rooted in trust and physical awareness.

-Tim Duroche, "Gina Gibney Dance: Thoroughly modern Gina hotwires live art," Willamette Weekly, January 10, 2007

Since it weaves an unspeakable link between the body and the psyche, dance appears particularly well-suited to help...Physical abuse often leaves marks on the body, which in turn reflects to these women a negative image of themselves. Recovery, therefore, also lies in the healing of the body....These workshops are not based on traditional therapy, but can have a therapeutic effect and contribute to rebuilding these women's self-esteem in a provocative and concrete way. Even though the goal is not to learn to dance, it will often be for them a first dance, a kind of rebirth through the free movement of their bodies.

-Frédérique Doyon, "The First Dance," Le Devoir, December 3, 2009

The Gibney model distinguishes itself from "dance therapy"—opportunities for expression, not analysis of those expressions, are the focus.

-Jonelle Seitz, Gibney Dance Community Action Residency, The Austin Chronicle, November 4, 2011



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why dance and domestic violence?

Through our work we have learned that there is a powerful synergy between the two. Professional dancers have dedicated their lives to understanding the connection between their bodies and minds. They have learned to move freely and confidently, using movement as a means of expression. Survivors of domestic violence have had the opposite experience; their actions and instincts have been restricted and repressed due to repeated abuse and they have been stripped of the basic right to control their own lives. Dance artists care deeply about community issues and want to make a difference, however their skills, talents and sensitivities are often grossly underutilized. The two are a natural fit.

Where do the workshops take place?

The workshops take place in domestic violence shelters. If trained and sensitized to the issue of domestic violence, professional dancers can bring movement, creativity, and self-care to survivors as part of their journey to more healthy futures.

How does your community work relate to your artistic work? Are they separate or interconnected?

Ms. Gibney is often asked how the community work connects to her choreography. The answer lies in two fundamental concepts: process and collaboration. She wants to create a supportive and non-threatening atmosphere where participants are free to explore, and be in control of, their own movement choices and emotions. All of her work in the studio and in the community is driven by three actions: reflect, express, and collaborate.

How are the dancers trained?

In the Community Action model, professional dancers receive (1) intensive, ongoing training to understand the issue of the domestic violence; (2) tools and sensitization to effectively work with survivors; and (3) guidance in implementing our four-part program model. Our approach leverages artistic resources through a strong conceptual framework that provides focus for the dancers while affording them flexibility in using their own skills and creativity.

Are the sessions supervised?

Workshops are offered in conjunction with shelter support groups, under the supervision of a clinical social worker. Support groups are important to clients; they provide a safe place for women to share their experiences. Working with the clinical staff and with an established group ensures that the workshops will be integrated into the women's clinical recovery. Workshops underscore clinical themes, address group dynamics, and explore common issues.

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR GINA GIBNEY



Gina Gibney's distinctive choreographic voice has made her one of the most intellectually stimulating of New York dance artists. There is nothing particularly brainy about her dances. She does not play mind games. Instead, quietly, she deals in abstractions, making them do the work of expression for her.

-Jennifer Dunning, The New York Times

Gina Gibney's repertory of works and community outreach has received wide acclaim and support from audiences, colleagues and critics. Described as a "poet of modern dance" by the New York Times, the cornerstone of Gibney's repertory is a collection of eight evening-length dances composed over the last decade that explore the humanity and poetry of the moving body. Considered a pioneer in connecting the arts with the broader community partnerships, Gibney's Community Action work has reached thousands of domestic violence survivors, individuals affected by HIV/AIDS, and youth-at-risk.

Says Gibney about her work: *I want to reveal what it is to be human—in the most simple, basic terms. I want to create a choreographic world where strength and tenderness are equally important, where touch and separation are meaningful, and where movement takes on the quality of an intimate conversation. Much of my work is about connection. I want to create work that reminds us that we share a common environment and that our similarities are greater than our differences. As a choreographer, I am an observer. I try to look honestly at how dancers connect to movement and to the complex web of relationships. For example, I look for stillness, for that charged moment of non-movement and what that means to dancers examining their internal motivations and those of each other. I look for gestures that reach and enfold, hold and rebuff, contain and lose. I look for movement that has authenticity and weight. I look for focus that reaches deeply inward, yet is clear and open, with active awareness and a sense of reciprocity.*

Gibney received a Master of Fine Arts Degree from Case Western Reserve University, graduating with high honors. In addition to studies with Kathryn Karipides, David N. Brown, Kelley Holt, Mark Morris, and Jocelyn Lorenz, her choreography is greatly influenced by the performers and collaborators with whom she has worked. Gibney's work has received recognition and support from a wide range of organizations including the National Endowment for the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, New York Community Trust, and Robert Sterling Clark Foundation. Her work has been presented and commissioned by prestigious venues in the US and abroad. Gibney proudly serves on the Executive Committees of Danspace Project and Dance/USA. She was recently named to the Honorary Circle of Dance/NYC.

GIBNEY DANCE COMPANY



Natsuki Arai, a native of Japan, holds a BFA in dance from SUNY Purchase. After graduation, she worked with Kraig Patterson, Anita Cheng, Christopher Williams, Nilas Martins, Christopher d’Amboise, Neta Pulvermacher and CollectiveBody Dance Lab. Natsuki joined Gibney Dance in 2009.



Javier Baca, a California native, is a performer, dancer, educator and choreographer. He started his career with San Diego Dance Theater. After moving to New York City, Javier performed with Rebecca Alaly, HT Chen, Shen Wei Dance Arts, and many others. He has performed both domestically and abroad at the American Dance Festival, Lincoln Center Festival, Israel Festival, Edinburgh International Festival, the Kennedy Center, the Silk Road Festival, and Monaco Dance Forum for the princess. He has also shown work at Movement Research’s Improvisation Festival/New York (IF/NY). Javier also enjoys teaching and has taught as guest artist leading master classes, workshops and held residencies at Pomona College, Dance Place San Diego, University of California at Irvine, Riverside Community College, Santa Ana College and the University of Redlands. He is currently working towards a certification in Body Talk.



Zachary Leigh Denison is originally from Northwest Arkansas. He has trained at the Ailey School and at the Actors Workshop under Mike Nichols. Zachary has toured nationally and internationally as a dancer with Susan Stroman’s “The Music Man,” “Cats,” “West Side Story,” and “The Shadow Box.” He has been a member of the Sean Curran Company, Amanda Selwyn Dance Theatre, Salvatore LaRussa Dance Theatre, Project 44, Body Art, and Tough Cookie Dance, and has danced for Heidi Latsky, Bradley Shelver, Malcom Low, Mario Zambrano, LEVYdance, Christopher Huggins, Regina Nejman, and Steps Repertory Ensemble. Other credits include Broadway Bares, Fire Island Dance Festival, The American Repertory Festival the workshop of “Platforms” for New York Musical Theater Festival, Barrish at HERE Arts Center, and commercials for MTV and Dancing with the Stars. Zachary has also danced backup for Jennifer Hudson.



Amy Miller, a former member of the Ohio Ballet, is a New York City-based dancer and choreographer. She is currently the artistic associate and guest choreographer for Cleveland-based GroundWorks DanceTheater. Miller is the recipient of an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award for her choreography. Her ongoing collaboration with Oberlin Conservatory of Music professor/composer Peter Swendsen brought recent NYC premieres to Spoke the Hub and the Scandinavia House, home to the American-Scandinavian Foundation. Recent performing credits include David Parker and The Bang Group, jill sigman/thinkdance, Collective Body Dance Lab, and the Metropolitan Opera. Amy joined Gibney Dance in 2012.



Casey Loomis, a Skidmore College graduate, has performed with Compagnie Julie Bour, Buglisi Dance Theater and KEIGWIN + Company among others, and has appeared in music videos for Zola Jesus and The Forms. Recently, she has worked with Faye Driscoll at the Castleton Opera Festival and as Faye’s understudy in her evening length duet You’re Me. Casey is currently working with Gibney Dance, ChristinaNoel & the Creature and Jenny Rocha & Her Painted Ladies. The New York Times has written in reference to her work with Julie Bour: “Ms. Loomis...lends a luminous presence to the stage.” Casey worked with Doug Varone in a Metropolitan Opera production this Fall. Beyond dance, Casey is a visual artist who tinkers in a hodgepodge of mediums. Casey joined Gibney Dance in 2012.

ABOUT GIBNEY DANCE

Gibney Dance is a groundbreaking organization whose mission is to bring the possibility of movement and self-expression where it would not otherwise exist. Its vision is to tap into the vast potential of movement, creativity, and performance effect social change and personal transformation through its interrelated fields of action – Center, Company, and Community Action.

Gibney Dance Community Action is a vital arts/social service program that unites survivors of domestic violence with professional dancers. The program was founded in 2000 in collaboration with Sanctuary for Families and Safe Horizon, two of the most prominent domestic violence organizations in the country. On the part of domestic violence shelters, there is need and demand—but no funding—for arts and wellness activities. Our program addresses this urgent need by providing 365 movement workshops annually to women living in domestic violence shelters. Gibney Dance Community Action also reaches beyond the five boroughs of New York City and provides advocacy events, such as free wellness activities during Domestic Violence Awareness Month every October, and intensive trainings in our program model, such as the Community Action Residency in Istanbul, Turkey that will take place this April in partnership with Mimar Sinan University.

Gibney Dance Center is an integrated complex of eight spacious studios located in the historic 890 Broadway building in New York City. The Center aims to “make space for the future of dance” through both entrepreneurship and partnership and to push the boundaries of innovation within the NYC, national, and international dance scenes. As an artist-founded and artist-driven organization, Gibney Dance Center makes high quality rehearsal space accessible, affordable, and available for non-profit dance rehearsal. In addition to providing space, Gibney Dance Center incubates a robust and innovative roster of programs designed to serve, educate, and empower members of the New York City dance and performing arts field.

Gibney Dance Company is known for intricately crafted, powerful performances that honor the power of personal identity while speaking to the common experiences of human beings. Praised by the New York Times for “great intelligence and almost literary sensitivity,” an evening with the Company is one of commanding physicality and richly textured choreography. Now in its third decade a performance and social action dance company, Gibney Dance Company draws from a rich repertory of eight evening length dances balanced against the creation of new work. The Company’s five members additionally serve as the primary facilitators for the Community Action program’s movement workshops.

CONTACT

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PHOTOGRAPHY CREDITS

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Gibney Dance's *Unbounded* performed by
(left to right) Amy Miller and Casey Loomis

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