

# Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion

Demonstration and Discussion

April 6, 2018

UCLA Freud Playhouse



## **ABOUT KYLE ABRAHAM/ABRAHAM.IN.MOTION**

2016 Doris Duke recipient and 2015 City Center Choreographer in Residence, Kyle Abraham is a 2013 MacArthur Fellow who began his dance training at the Civic Light Opera Academy and the Creative and Performing Arts High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He continued his dance studies in New York, receiving a BFA from SUNY Purchase and an MFA from NYU Tisch School of the Arts, an honorary doctorate in Fine Arts from Washington Jefferson College, and is currently serving as a visiting professor in residence at UCLA.

The mission of Abraham.In.Motion is to create an evocative interdisciplinary body of work. Born into hip-hop culture in the late 1970s and grounded in Abraham's artistic upbringing in classical cello, piano, and the visual arts, the goal of the movement is to delve into identity in relation to a personal history. The work entwines a sensual and provocative vocabulary with a strong emphasis on sound, human behavior and all things visual in an effort to create an avenue for personal investigation and exposing that on stage. A.I.M is a representation of dancers from various disciplines and diverse personal backgrounds. Combined together, these individualities create movement that is manipulated and molded into something fresh and unique.

## **WHAT IS THEATRE-IN-THE-ROUND?**

Today's performance is formatted in-the-round, meaning that you, the audience, will be seated in a circle surrounding the performance. Theatre-in-the-round dates all the way back to ancient Greek theatre. It was initiated as a means of improving the connection between audience members and performers.

During the late 17th century the proscenium format became the dominant stage set-up. A proscenium theatre is what we usually think of as a "theatre". Its primary feature is the Proscenium, a "picture frame" at the end of the stage, through which the audience views the performance. Scenery can surround the acting area on all sides except towards audience.

Beginning about 1930, however, theatre-in-the-round became popular with stage designers who were dissatisfied with the limitations of the proscenium. An audience surrounding the scene offers a wider range of stage size and activity and often allows for a larger audience. Most importantly, this format allows audiences to view a performance from multiple perspectives; whereas seeing the back of a performer is discouraged in proscenium formats, such a vantage point is encouraged and integral to the genre of theatre-in-the-round. By the late 1960s, in-the-round theatre became part of the mainstream, earning just as much respect and popularity as proscenium-staged theatre.

## **DANCE VOCABULARY**

### **Modern (or Contemporary) Dance**

A dance form developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Instead of following classical ballet storylines and techniques, modern dancers base their works on personal experience, using their bodies as instruments to express emotions.

### **Choreography**

The art of composing dances by planning and arranging the movements, steps, and patterns of dancers.

### **Movement Vocabulary**

A set of movements or a style of dancing which is specific to, or characteristic of, a choreographer, dancer, or dance company.

### **Phrase**

A short combination of movements. Phrases are put together to create movement sequences.

### **Repertory**

All the works—specific plays, dances, musical pieces, etc.—that a company performs.

### **Score**

A structure or set of rules in improvisation to generate movement or define an approach to the act of performing.

### **Dynamics**

The variations of energy, intensity or emotional quality in the performance of dance.



### **Dig Deeper: Videos and Further Reading**

Hear more about [the beginnings of Abraham.In.Motion](#) and what Kyle thinks about when choreographing.

[Go behind the scenes](#) and watch the company rehearse 2014's "The Radio Show".

Watch this special performance of [Kyle Abraham at TEDxMet](#) for an example of repetition and accumulation creating meaning through movement.

### **MOVEMENT EXERCISE**

Kyle Abraham's choreography often utilizes gestural movement, attaching choreographic meaning to our everyday gestures.

In relation to the theme of identity, what gesture or movement represents your personal story?

Choreograph a sequence of gestures, playing with structure and repetition, to create your own choreographic phrase work.

Now, you have a gestural vocabulary to inspire future choreography. Remain alert to the gestures you see in your everyday life; even the smallest gestures tell so much about our stories, our identities, our homes, and the world around us.



### **Post-Show: Demonstration and Discussion Reflection**

In 2-3 short paragraphs, review your experience watching Kyle Abraham/Abraham.In.Motion in rehearsal. Here are some things to think about when writing your reflection:

- **What words would you use to describe this demonstration?**
- **How would you describe your own creative process? How does it compare to the company's creative process that you just saw at work?**
- **How did it feel to sit in-the-round as opposed to proscenium seating? How did it change your relationship to the performance and the performers?**
- **What choreographic themes did you see at play?**
- **What gestures did you recognize in the demonstration? How did you interpret those gestures on the stage, instead of at your home, your school, or other places involved in your everyday life?**

## PREPARE FOR YOUR VISIT TO UCLA

- Please bring the attached Directions for Bus Drivers with you in case your driver does not have proper directions.
- Design for Sharing volunteers will meet your bus and direct you to the theater; please be ready to leave the bus when directed to do so.
- Count your students and teachers before you arrive; the ushers will need to know how many people you have before they can seat you.
- Adequate adult supervision is important to the success of these events. Chaperones may need to supervise students in restrooms and be alert when students are entering or leaving the auditorium. Adults are expected to sit with students and help maintain appropriate standards of behavior.
- The hall is opened for seating a half hour before the performance is scheduled to begin. We make every effort to begin on time, but occasionally the opening is delayed five to ten minutes due to late arrivals from other schools or technical problems.
- Restrooms are located to your left as you enter the theater. Have your students use the restrooms before the performance begins.
- **Flash photography is not allowed in the theater**, as it can be dangerous for the performers - the flash may temporarily blind them causing an accident. Use of any flash camera, laser pointer or recording device whatsoever may be cause for ejection from the hall.
- Remind your students that chewing gum, loud talking and running are inappropriate in the theater, even before and after the actual performance.
- Please do not allow students to bring lunches or snacks to their seats. Lunches can be stored in the lobby during the performance.
- Please remain seated when the performance is over. Schools will be dismissed a few at a time.