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McCallum Theatre Announces Finalists and Lifetime Achievement Award Recipients for Palm Desert Choreography Festival 2025

27 choreographers announced as Finalists to compete in this year's Festival

David Parsons, to be honored with 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award.

[Tickets Now on Sale for both public events, taking place November 8 & 9, 2025 at the McCallum Theatre](#)

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Palm Desert, CA – The McCallum Theatre is excited to share the names of Palm Desert Choreography Festival's Finalists and Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient for the Coachella Valley's signature annual event.

The Palm Desert Choreography Festival is a one-of-a-kind festival which promotes dance as an art form by creating a venue for emerging and established choreographers and developing new dance audiences. For more than two decades, the Festival has been dedicated to the advancement of dance as an art form through the support and promotion of quality choreography. A dynamic live platform for dancemakers and dancers to showcase their work, Palm Desert Choreography Festival powerfully engages audiences around dance in the Coachella Valley.

The Festival features a choreography competition in two divisions, offers education opportunities including workshops and residencies, and honors those who have made outstanding contributions to dance through the Lifetime Achievement Award. The City of Palm Desert is the Presenting Sponsor.

This year, the Festival will bestow its 2025 Lifetime Achievement Award to legendary choreographer David Parsons who founded Parsons Dance Company in 1985. Along with the late Tony® Award winning lighting designer Howell Binkley, the two knew exactly what they wanted to do: train dancers to develop the athletic prowess and technical skill that would engage audiences with the joy of it all. Throughout his career, Parsons has created more than 75 works for Parsons Dance. He has received commissions from American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, the American Dance Festival, Jacob's Pillow, the Spoleto Festival and Het Muziektheater in Amsterdam, among many others. In 2018, he received the Capezio Award, one of the most prestigious awards in dance. He has also worked on many diverse projects choreographing *Aida* at Arena di Verona and producing and co-choreographing *Maria de Buenos Aires* at the Skirball Center as well as creating the choreography for *Fool's Fire*, a 1992 film directed by Julie Taymor. One of his most thrilling assignments was choreographing the dance elements for *Times Square 2000*, the 24-hour festivities in NY's Times Square celebrating the turn of the Millennium. Parsons has credited his mentor, Paul Taylor, for inspiring him to

create good work and teaching him how to treat dancers fairly, to collaborate with artists in other disciplines and to be a generous mentor to the next generation's choreographers.

This year's Finalists, selected by a distinguished Festival screening panel from over 150 submissions, come from across the nation and will perform before an audience and a panel of judges. Over \$50,000.00 in cash awards are up for grabs and winners are announced at the conclusion of each performance. Finalists include festival favorites as well as a large number of choreographers new to the Festival whose works promise to engage, provoke, and entertain. Now in its 28th year, Festival has attracted over 45,500 audience members, has placed 779 choreographers in the limelight and has granted over \$850,000 in cash awards.

Those attending the Saturday event will witness the work of 12 choreographer finalists performed by professional dancers age 18 and up who possess seasoned artistry and fully mature technique, competing for the \$10,000 Grand Prize and \$5,000 Second Place awards, as well as the Lifetime Achievement presentation to David Parsons.

On Sunday, the audience will see the work of fifteen choreographer finalists performed by dancers of all ages from aspiring and emerging companies, colleges, and studios as they compete for the \$3,000 Grand Prize and \$1,500 Second Place Award.

Choreographers/companies featured in the Professional Division on Saturday, November 8 are:

Aidan Carberry, Jordan Johnson/JA Collective (Los Angeles, CA)
Sean Aaron Carmon/Dance Kaleidoscope (Indianapolis, IN)
Megan Doheny, Ilya Nukurov/Outrun the Bear (Irvine, CA)
Noelle Kayser/nk + collaborators (Chicago, IL)
Cecily Khuner (Memphis, TN)
Franco Nieto/Open Space Dance (Portland, OR)
Omar Román de Jesús/Boca Tuya (New York, NY)
Kellie St. Pierre/Ririe-Woodbury Dance Company (Salt Lake City, UT)
Martin Ortiz Tapia (Chicago, IL)
Morgan A. Williams/Water Street Dance Milwaukee (Milwaukee, WI)

Choreographers/companies featured in the Pre-professional Division on Sunday, November 9 are:

Melissa Bobick (Salt Lake City, UT)
Gillmer Duran/Ballet Arizona Studio Company (Phoenix, AZ)
Zachary Groenewold/Orange Coast College (Costa Mesa, CA)
Jacob Gutiérrez-Montoya/Hawkins School of Performing Arts (Folsom, CA)
Riley Hart/Aztec Arts Dance Company (Palm Desert, CA)
Madison Lucas, Ella Melideo (Los Angeles, CA)
Rochelle Mapes/Mater Dei Dance Conservatory (Orange, CA)
Hannah Millar/Imprints (Fresno, CA)
Alexandra Schooling (Oklahoma City, OK)
Michelle Shear/Mt. San Antonio College Repertory Dance Company (Walnut, CA)
Jayde Spiegel (Las Vegas, NV)
Ashton Titus (Long Beach, CA)
Avree Walker/Live Arts Collective (Las Vegas, NV)
Lian Long Xuan (Philadelphia, PA)

Celebrating dance as an art form, this unique event delivers an exciting variety of new work created by inventive choreographers and performed by extraordinary dancers, including original work of local students from East Valley Dance Project, an outreach program which gives student dancers from Desert Mirage and Coachella Valley High Schools in Thermal an opportunity to explore and create with professional choreographers.

Audiences really adore their experience attending the Festival.

"The Festival was unexpectedly interesting, varied, of high caliber, and fun, especially since local youth was included."

Viola Gallaway, Festival Audience Member

"Eclectic and extraordinary professional quality in dance and choreography."

Brad Miller, Festival Audience member

Tickets for the Palm Desert Choreography Festival are available now at McCallumTheatre.org, or by calling the Box Office at (760) 340-2787. Tickets may also be purchased in person at the Box Office (73000 Fred Waring Drive, Palm Desert CA 92260). Accepted payment methods are cash, personal check, VISA, MasterCard, Discover, and American Express. Tickets for the Saturday evening Division I performance are priced at \$58, \$43, and \$33, and tickets for the Sunday afternoon Division II performance are priced at \$48, \$38, and \$28.

The McCallum Box Office is currently open Monday-Friday from 12:00noon-5:00pm. The Box Office is closed on all major holidays, and hours vary on show days.

Sponsorships ranging from \$250 to \$10,000 are available, and any financial support makes it possible to bring this Festival to our community. All sponsors receive tickets to the Festival, along with recognition and invitations to Festival events, based on giving level. For more information about sponsorship opportunities, contact Tom Head, Associate VP - Development, at thead@mccallum-theatre.org or by calling (760) 776-6164.

"For over a quarter of a century, the McCallum Theatre has provided a unique platform for choreographers and dancers to showcase their work, push artistic boundaries, and propel their careers through the Palm Desert Choreography Festival," says Kajsa Thuresson-Frary, McCallum's Vice President--Education and longtime Festival Producer. "Thanks to our incredible donors and a supportive community, we continue to celebrate and support innovative choreography, inspiring both emerging and established artists to pursue their dreams and become brilliant, courageous creators. The Festival not only nurtures artistic talent but also shines an international spotlight on Palm Desert as a vibrant arts and cultural hub."

"Participating in Palm Desert Choreography Festival was such a rewarding and inspiring experience. Being in community with fellow creators and immersed in such a supportive environment is vital to growth as an artist. I'm truly honored to have been awarded the Grand Prize and to be recognized for my work Blooming Flowers and the Full Moon; it's fueling my drive to continue dreaming big. Thank you for providing this invaluable space and for an unforgettable experience!" – Natasha Adorlee/Concept o4, 2024 Grand Prize Award

About Education At McCallum Theatre

The Education Department of the McCallum Theatre produces programs that touch the lives of nearly 40,000 local students, educators, and community members every year. Palm Desert Choreography Festival -- combined with the McCallum's three additional core educational initiatives, The Aesthetic Education Program, The Field Trip Series, and Open Call Talent Project -- exist to uplift both the quality of learning and the quality of life within the Coachella Valley, today and for decades to come.

McCallum's education programs require tremendous philanthropic support, and anyone can make a difference in the lives of thousands of children, teachers, and families! With a donation of \$5,000 or more, donors may underwrite the cost of Teaching Artists, Teacher Professional Development, and the

professional productions and exhibits -- all crucial components of the McCallum's arts education programs.

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www.mcallumtheatre.org