

# OPEN DANCE PROJECT



Feb. 2-10  
Great for all ages!

Photo by Lynn Lane

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## The Performance Guide

## **ALICE - An Overview**

*ALICE* begins with our protagonist Alice, a little girl who loves adventure, enjoying a picnic with her family and neighbors on a lovely spring day. As she enjoys the sunshine, swinging, and playing with her cat, a White Rabbit runs across her path. She doesn't think anything of it at first, but when she realizes that the White Rabbit has a clock and keeps checking the time, she grows curious and chases after him.

When the White Rabbit jumps down a rabbit hole, Alice follows him. She falls down the rabbit hole for a very long time and sees many strange things floating around her during her fall. When Alice finally reaches the ground she finds a bottle labeled "Drink Me" and a tart labeled "Eat Me." When she takes a sip from the bottle, she shrinks very small. When she takes a bite from the tart, she grows so big that she hits her head on a roof. She is very frightened by her change in size, and she begins to cry. As she cries, she shrinks smaller and smaller until she begins to float on a pool of water made of her own tears.

When Alice stops crying, the pool of tears begins to shrink, and she sees the White Rabbit and a group of animals who invite her to do a "Caucus Race" with them to get dry. The Caucus Race is like no race that Alice has ever seen. She joins with the animals and has a wonderful time jumping and running and dancing to get dry. At the end of the race, Alice spots a Caterpillar hanging on a limb of a tree. She is mesmerized by the Caterpillar's silky sequential movements and green color. Soon the White Rabbit finds Alice again, but just as he is about to lead her away, they meet a silly duo named Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum who want Alice and the White Rabbit to play games with them.

The White Rabbit slips away from Alice once again. As she is looking for him, Alice meets a Cheshire Cat, who plays hide and seek with her. The cat entices Alice near and then sneaks away so many times that Alice finally grows tired of the game and asks the cat for help about which way to go in the forest. The cat tells her about a Hatter and a Hare, who are both quite goofy and silly. The Hatter and Hare appear with their friend the sleepy Dormouse and serve Alice and the White Rabbit tea along with many curious riddles and nonsensical songs.

After sneaking away from the Tea Party, Alice and the White Rabbit come upon a game of chess with giant chess pieces. The game is being played for the entertainment of a sour-faced queen dressed all in red. The Red Queen gets frustrated with the game and takes over, sacrificing her own Red King. The Red Queen celebrates her victory with a dance where she bosses the Red King and the Red Knave around, making her carry them this way and that. Alice learns that the Cheshire Cat is really the Queen's cat.

The entertainment for the Red Queen continues with a dance of tricks by the Hatter and the White Rabbit and a presentation of prize roses from the Queen's rose garden. Through the roses, Alice spots the handsome Knave of Hearts who teaches her some of his own dances and becomes her friend. The Red Queen is very jealous and becomes enraged by the new friendship between Alice and the Knave. She tries to put a stop to it by separating the two of them and taking the Knave with her deeper into the forest. Alice feels alone and helpless once again. As she begins to cry, she notices her old friend the Caterpillar is back but in a very different form. The Caterpillar, who has become a butterfly, first distracts and then comforts Alice with words that help Alice think about what kind of a person (or creature!) she really is and what kind of a person she wants to be.

Quite suddenly, the butterfly flies away, and Alice finds herself caught up in a trial! The Queen of Hearts accuses the Knave of Hearts of stealing her tarts - the very tarts that Alice found and ate when she first arrived in Wonderland. After all of the characters and friends that Alice has met on her journey through Wonderland have been called as witnesses, Alice saves the Knave by confessing to the crime and escaping back up the rabbit hole to her own world. When everything settles, Alice finds herself safe and sound back in the garden where she started.

# WHAT KIND OF DANCE IS IN ALICE?

Open Dance Project uses lots of different styles and techniques of dance in *ALICE*.

## **Modern Dance:**

In "Down the Rabbit Hole" and "Chess," **modern dance** is used to show two very different worlds. The chess game is full of struggle and strife, where the chess pieces battle for territory with every movement. "Down the Rabbit Hole" is a world full of weightlessness, wonder, and mystery. Modern dance originated in the early 20th century when concert dance **choreographers** began to invent new **shapes** and **forms** that defied the limitations of the classical ballet vocabulary. Modern dancers most often dance barefoot, connecting them to the floor and grounding them in a way that allows them to use their **weight** to create a more **dynamic** and varied range of movement possibilities.

In "Down the Rabbit Hole," the dancers move into and out of the floor with ease, moving their arms and legs in **spiraling pathways**. They use props of various sizes, tossing and catching them with **swinging movements** that use **weight** and **suspension** to create a sense of **resilience** and **free flow**.

In "Chess," the dancers are deeply rooted in the ground, using **bound flow** and **wringing** and **pressing** movements to create a sense of resistance and difficulty.

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/modern-dance-explained>

## **Contemporary Jazz Dance:**

The "Cheshire Cat" section of *ALICE* features **Contemporary Jazz** choreography. In this style of choreography, **musicality**, **rhythm**, and **accented movements** are foregrounded with the specific purpose of engaging the audience through a **dynamic** and entertaining performance. Like its classical jazz predecessor, contemporary jazz has connections to popular social dance forms and music. **Athletic virtuosity**, tricky steps, and a sense of "cool" are emphasized to show off the dancers' skills and abilities and to set their movement apart from everyday or **pedestrian** actions. <https://artsintegration.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/History-of-Jazz.pdf>

## **Ballet:**

When Alice and the White Rabbit leap into the air and prance about, they use ballet steps such as "**pas de chat**," "**pas de basque**," and "**tour jeté**." Ballet is a concert dance form that arose out of the French and Italian courts in the 15th century. It is a presentational dance style that was

originally only danced by men. Many ballet steps have their origins in folk dances from the French countryside. French is the language of ballet. "Pas de chat" means step of the cat. "Pas de basque" means step of the Basque country. "Tour jeté," which is a turning leap, means tossed turn.

<https://www.pbt.org/learn-and-engage/resources-audience-members/ballet-101/brief-history-ballet/>

### **Hip Hop:**

When Alice first meets the Knave, he introduces elements of a Hip Hop battle, where the Knave and Alice are each trying to out-dance the other. Early hip hop styles such as uprock, breaking, locking, robbing, boogaloo, and popping date all the way back to the late 1960s where they were developed in New York and California. In the 1970s Hip Hop became more widely known through professional crews like the Rock Steady Crew, The Lockers, and The Electric Boogaloes. Hip Hop is not a studio based dance form - although it is now taught in studios across the world. It was developed in urban neighborhoods with deep roots in African American social dance through improvisation, innovation, competition, experimentation, and evolution. The form continues to grow and develop on a global scale.

<https://dance-teacher.com/a-dance-teachers-guide-to-hip-hop/>

### **Aerial Dance:**

In "Pool of Tears," dancers from our professional and youth ensemble climb the silks and use the fabrics to dance in the air. This is called **aerial dance** and the silks are called **aerial fabrics**. In "Caterpillar," the dancer uses a **lyra**. This kind of dancing comes from the circus world and was first made popular in dance by modern dance innovator Alwin Nikolais. In the late 1960s, modern dancers began experimenting with **non-traditional** performance spaces, outside of the **proscenium stage**. The proscenium stage is a stage with an arch in front, often accompanied by a curtain, that separates the stage from the audience. Modern dance choreographer Alwin Nikolais began to experiment with new obstacles and apparatuses for his dancers. He created "Sorcerer" in 1960 that suspended a dancer in a rope and harness and "Ceremony for Bird People" that was performed in city streets in France by performers on ropes hanging from trees.

<https://dancespirit.com/aerial-dance/#:~:text=Aerial%20dance%20originated%20in%20the,of%20the%20modern%20dance%20vocabulary.>

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/alwin-nikolais-about-alwin-nikolais/674/>

## ***Making Connections: Related Themes/Subjects/Discussion Topics***

**Metamorphosis:** In *ALICE*, the Caterpillar from the beginning of the story becomes a butterfly at the end. This transformation is a true biological process in the life cycle of a butterfly. Are there any caterpillars or butterflies near your home or school? What are the stages in the butterfly's life cycle? How long does it take for this transformation to occur?

**Growing and Shrinking:** In this story, Alice drinks something that makes her shrink and then eats something that makes her grow. Can what we eat and drink really change how we grow? Is it really possible for a human to shrink? What does our body need to grow healthy and strong? How do nutrients, sleep, and exercise contribute to how our body works?

**Dissolving with a Tea Party theme:** The Hatter and his friends the Hare and the Dormouse talk about the "twinkle of the tea" and can be seen putting many different flavors and concoctions into the tea at their party. Many people put sugar into their tea to give it more "twinkle" or sweet flavor. How long does it take sugar to dissolve in liquid? Does it matter if that liquid is cold or hot? Why? Do other solids dissolve in liquid? <https://www.science-sparks.com/exploring-which-solids-dissolve-in-water/>

**Maps:** Alice is constantly losing her way in Wonderland. Would it not have been easier if she had a map? If you designed your own Wonderland, what characters and geographical landmarks would you include? Would your Wonderland have a "Pool of Tears" or a new water feature of your own invention? Come up with a list of new Wonderland characters and choose a place for each of them to live. Then draw a map to help Alice navigate your Wonderland without getting lost.

# WHO IS OPEN DANCE PROJECT?



Photo by Lynn Lane, "Flutter" choreographed by Annie Arnoult, presented by Houston Botanic Garden.

## EXPERIMENT. CONNECT. DIG DEEP.

Open Dance Project is a dance theater company that creates ensemble devised performances for young audiences and the general public. We use dance, theater, music, and visual storytelling to create interactive performance experiences that enliven and activate audiences, making dance more engaging and accessible to all.

Open Dance Project has been creating art with young people through its classroom dance theater workshops since its inception in 2015. The most important work Open Dance Project does is facilitating empowering connections between one human being and another. Whether we are in a science classroom helping teach the mechanics of an engine through dance or on a stage performing the story of an exiled artist, ODP students and artists work together, work hard, and work towards a more supportive, connected world.

Open Dance Project has served as a significant contributor to arts equity in Houston. Through its partnerships with HISD, Arts Connect Houston, Young Audiences, the Houston Arts Access Initiative, the Arts for Learning Lab at University of Houston, Shriner's Hospital, Memorial Hermann, KIPP Houston, and others, ODP's classroom residencies and professional development workshops for teachers have helped to ensure that students in underserved communities in Houston have greater access to the arts, and, through that access, a statistically better chance at success in life as defined by data driven research. ODP is on the Texas Commission on the Arts Touring Roster and is an HISD vendor. Please contact us at [info@opendanceproject.org](mailto:info@opendanceproject.org) if you'd like to learn more!

# ARTISTS



**Annie Arnoult (Artistic Director/Choreographer)** is the founding artistic director of Open Dance Project where she directs the company's professional performance season and oversees the company's extensive dance education work. Arnoult returned to her native Houston from Chicago where she was the artistic director of Chicago's Striding Lion Performance Group, garnering acclaim for the company as a "new center of gravity for indie dance in Chicago." Arnoult was named one of the "25 to Watch 2018" by Dance Magazine, citing her "keen attention to detail" and was a 2017 recipient of Houston Arts Alliance Individual Artist Grant

for the development of the critically acclaimed 'Bout a Stranger, deemed one of the "most fully realized pieces to come out of Houston in decades," by Nancy Wozny in Dance Magazine. Arnoult's creative work is deeply informed and influenced by her 25 years as an artist teacher and integrated arts education advocate in Chicago Public Schools, HISD, and surrounding districts. Arnoult is the director of Hunter Dance Center in the Heights and has been a guest artist/teacher at universities, festivals, conferences, and institutes throughout the U.S. Arnoult is a Certified Cecchetti Ballet teacher and a member of the National Dance Education Organization. Her research and choreography has been presented regionally and internationally. She has served on the dance faculty of Northwestern University and The School of Theatre and Dance at University of Houston.



**Joshua de Alba** has been dancing and choreographing in Houston, Texas for nearly 7 years. Originally a native of Central Florida, Joshua received his Bachelor of Science in Theatre from Northwestern State University in 2016. While his training focused largely on classical modern, ballet, and jazz. Joshua has also worked as a choreographer, actor, singer, musician, aerialist, stage combatant, and even as an event coordinator. Joshua's choreography has received awards at the American Dance Festival, and he has had the distinct pleasure of teaching 8 different nationally competitive programs across the country. Recent professional credits include Houston Grand Opera, Cirque la Vie, The Theatre Under the Stars, Hope Stone Inc., and NobleMotion Dance. Joshua is thrilled to be back for his fifth season with Open Dance Project!



**Sonia Engman** is a choreographer, performer, educator and certified personal trainer. Modern dance, ballet, and street and styles are the basis of her movement knowledge. Sonia received her B. A. in Dance and Arts Management in 2016 from the University of New Mexico. She has performed in productions like the Young Choreographer's Showcase in NYC, in principle roles in productions like Shira Greenberg's Nutcracker on the Rocks, Amazon Prime's Nutcracker Party and ensemble work including a multidisciplinary work in the



Alps of Austria. Sonia has taught dance in KC, TX, NM, MT, AZ, and MO. She has choreographed for the University of New Mexico and e2 Dance Company in Kansas City. Sonia relocated to Houston in 2019 to begin an adventure in search of opportunity and growth. Sonia is now a company member with Open Dance Project and Hip Hop and House dance crews, Assorted Flavas and The Lockin' Keez.



**Atticus Griffin** started dancing at age 18 in his hometown of Burlison, Texas at Studio C Dance. He continued his training at Texas State University, and later the University of Texas at Austin, receiving a Bachelors of Fine Arts in Dance Performance and Choreography. While he was in college he began working as a freelance dancer, performing with multiple dance companies such as Ballet Concerto, Chamacos Dance Company, Dance Theatre X, NobleMotion Dance, and other guest performances. His most notable appearance was in the inaugural cast of Ventana Ballet in Austin, Texas as the Nutcracker in The Watchmakers Song. He is a rehearsal director and choreographer for Open Dance Project 2 (ODP2), which was featured in Wonka! and Peter and Wendy. He was also a featured choreographer for recent ODP production Shortcuts. This is his third season as an artist with Open Dance Project.



**Madelyn Manlove** is a San Antonio native who began her dance training at the age of three and trained with Collective Dance Artistry since its opening under the direction of Ashley Lopez. After high school, she attended The University of Texas at Austin where she received a BFA in Dance Performance and a minor in Kinesiology. While completing her undergrad, she studied with Charles O. Anderson, Erica Gionfriddo, Gesel Mason, Andrea Beckham, Tina Curren, among others. This is her second season with Open Dance Project and Hunter Dance Center. In addition, she is also an Advanced Lagree Fitness trainer and teaches at FORM Lagree.



**Taylor McAnulty** is a choreographer/performer/teacher in her hometown of Houston, TX. Taylor has had the pleasure to perform with Open Dance Project, under the artistic direction of Annie Arnoult since 2014. Previously she performed with Psophonia Dance Company under the direction of Sophia Torres, along with performing in many festivals across Texas including "Brazos Contemporary Dance Festival" and "254 Dance Festival". In 2014 she was a featured soloist in the original score of Robert Paterson "The Book of Goddesses".



**Cameo Reneé**, born and raised in Kansas City, Missouri, received her BFA in Dance and Performance at the University of Missouri – Kansas City graduating with a double emphasis in ballet and modern. While there she was given the opportunity to work with the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Stirling Dance Theater, and many more guest artists. Since relocating to Houston, Cameo has performed with Urban Souls Dance Company, been a Black Angel for Tobe Nwigwe, as well as co-directing for The Lockin Keez Dance Company. She is now entering her 5th season with Open Dance Project.



**Jaime Garcia Vergara** is a dancer from Cali, Colombia. Jaime began his dance journey with a Colombian folkloric company in 2010 where he studied various dance styles such as Salsa, Paso Doble, and Rumba. From 2013-2015 Jaime became a member of FrenetiCore Dance Company where he began to receive his introduction to Ballet and Modern dance techniques. During this time Jaime was also able to work with many incredibly talented choreographers including Jane Weiner, Jennifer Salter, Rebecca French, Laura Harrell, Ashley Horn, and Annie Arnoult. While at Sam Houston State University (SHSU) Jaime had the opportunity to work with Erin Reck, Jennifer Mabus, Dionne Noble and Joshua Peugh amongst other great choreographers. Jaime has a BFA in Dance and a Pilates Certification, teaches Latin, Modern, and Aerial at Hunter Dance Center and is in his sixth season with Open Dance Project.



**Brenden Winkfield** began his career on Long Island, New York. He began formal training of Tap, Jazz and Ballet at local studios before settling into the well known competitive studio, David Sanders Dance Dynamics. There he broadened his studies into modern, lyrical, hip hop and contemporary. He also gained the opportunity to perform in multiple large-scale shows like The Radio City Christmas Spectacular. After eight years of intense competition in New York, he moved to Houston, Texas where he now resides. Brenden was then hired by Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines and Princess Cruise Lines as a dancer and performer on their entertainment fleets. He went on to perform as a tap soloist in Tokyo Disney's Big Band Beat in Japan, and was a top Academy finalist on season 14 of SYTYCD before settling down back here in Houston to direct The Lockin Keez Dance

Company. He is in his 2nd season with Open Dance Project.

## **The Language of Dance Theater**

**Choreography** – *the use of dance elements (shape, form, level, pathways, focus, qualities of motion, direction, contrast, and repetition) to express literal and abstract ideas on the stage.*

**Improvisation** - *the act of creating in the moment.* Our production used improvisation to generate ideas for the performance. Sometimes used in performance itself, improvisation is an important creative skill for actors, dancers, and musicians to develop and is used very frequently in the creation and rehearsal of a production.

**Lighting Design**- *the creative use of light to enhance a theatrical production.* A lighting designer who has been trained in the use of the color spectrum and in the technical manipulation of lighting instruments will create a specific plan of how and when to use light and color to convey mood and scene within a dramatic, music, or dance performance.

**Monologue** - *a (usually long) dramatic speech by a single actor.* In our production, one example of a monologue is Wonka's story about meeting the Oompa Loompas in Loompa Land.

**Sound Design**- *the creative use of sound to enhance a theatrical production.* A sound designer with special expertise in sound equipment (the sound board, sonic elements such as tone, e.q., and volume, and computer sound programs) will monitor the microphones and amplifiers used to enhance the voices and instruments used to provide literal and abstract sound elements for the production.

**Tableau** - *An interlude during a scene when all the performers on stage freeze in position to bring dramatic emphasis to a particular plot point or moment.* In our show, tableau is used to bring Mike Teavee's television fantasies to life and to show the Oompa Loompas eating green caterpillars and hating the taste.

## ***About Pre/Post-Show Classroom Workshops***

**Open Dance Project artists will come to your school for a day and visit up to 4 classrooms, guiding teachers and students through arts games and improvisational activities that explore major themes and events from WONKA!**

## **ONE-DAY WORKSHOPS**

Open Dance Project's classroom workshops are ensemble driven, interdisciplinary (dance/music/theater) composition workshops where students work together through improvisation and creative movement and drama exercises to create choreography, music and text based on a subject or theme given to us by the classroom teacher or school. These short workshops are completely process oriented, framing the students as art-makers, empowering them to find their individual creative voice and work collaboratively with an ensemble of their peers. All classroom workshops are co-taught by a two artist team who model the collaborative process they are teaching the students. Please let us know if you are interested in booking us for a one-day workshop by contacting [robin@opendanceproject.org](mailto:robin@opendanceproject.org).

## **RESIDENCY PROGRAMS**

Our residency programs extend the classroom workshop into a more fully-developed, progressive format that allows for the students to engage in the generation, development and rehearsal of a more fully realized performance that is shared with the school community in an informal "share-out" event that demonstrates the skills and vocabulary learned in the classroom in addition to the final performance that has been collaboratively developed by the students. These residencies usually involve multiple classrooms and/or grade levels and often kick-off with Open Dance Project's "STAGING STORY LIVE" performance in a school assembly, which serves to introduce the school to the artists who will be teaching in the classrooms as well as the creative process that the classroom workshops will follow. Please let us know if you are interested in booking us for a residency program by contacting [robin@opendanceproject.org](mailto:robin@opendanceproject.org).

**VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND MANY MORE RESOURCES  
INCLUDING ONLINE VIDEOS AND FOLLOW ALONG LESSONS!**

<https://opendanceproject.org/in-schools/>