

For Immediate Release

URBANITY DANCE

Contact:

Katlyn Morahan
Morahan Arts and Media
katlyn@morahanartsandmedia.com
(610) 914-3152

URBANITY DANCE LAUNCHES COMMUNITY RESIDENCY PROGRAM



**New Program Developed to Stand in Solidarity with
Boston Area BIPOC Artist Communities**

**AfroBeats Dance Boston and Diversify Our Narrative Boston Selected as
First Collectives-in-Residence**

May 18, 2021, Boston, MA — Urbanity Dance—dedicated to inspiring, engaging and empowering the Boston community with the art of dance and movement—has launched a new **Community Residency program** spearheaded by Julivic Marquez, Urbanity’s Education Manager, partnering with **AfroBeats Dance Boston** and **Diversify Our Narrative Boston** as its first two Collectives-in-Residence.

The new program was developed to stand in solidarity with BIPOC communities by leveraging Urbanity’s position of privilege and its institutional resources to create partnerships, provide support, and amplify the work of BIPOC-led cultural and activist organizations in Boston. Collectives-in-Residence will have access to free rehearsal and office space and joint collaborations with Urbanity on artistic projects, educational programming, funding opportunities, and more.

Afrobeats Dance Boston, a dance company focusing on Contemporary African music and dance, has been in residence at Urbanity since January 2021. Since this time, the company has used Urbanity’s physical space to hold dance classes for the community, as well as rehearsals for its professional company to prepare for upcoming performances.

"The Residency program has been instrumental to ABDB in these difficult times. We've been able to utilize Urbanity's space for virtual classes, private lessons, and more," said Stephanie Beja, ABDB Executive Director. "Julivic and the rest of Urbanity's staff are always open to dialogue in their support of our organization; this has been a great partnership so far!"

Diversity Our Narrative Boston (DON Boston), the local branch of Diversify Our Narrative, a youth-led organization that advocates for more diverse books within curricula across the United States, has been in residence at Urbanity since February 2021. In addition to having access to the usage of Urbanity’s space, DON Boston has collaborated with Urbanity for a Teen Talk, "Black Dance Icons & Influencers", a youth-led interactive virtual discussion on iconic black dancers, choreographers, and artists across history. Urbanity was initially introduced to DON Boston through its Co-Founder and President, Ziane Robert-Clarke, who previously served as an intern at Urbanity Dance.

"Diversify Our Narrative Boston is excited to partner with Urbanity Dance as its first Youth Collective-in-Residence in order to foster multi-generational dialogue regarding systemic change," said Ziane Roberts-Clarke, Co-Founder and President of DON Boston. "This Community Residency supports DON Boston’s mission to educate people on marginalized communities’ contributions to society."

Each Residency will have a two-year cycle, relieving the burden of finding affordable, regularly available space, thus opening up more time for the Collectives-in-Residence to focus on the creation and implementation of their programming. Applications for the next Collectives-in-Residence will open in spring 2022 and the next Community Residency cohorts will run from September 2022 to August 2024.

"Our entire Boston community is strengthened when diverse artists, activists, and young people have space and resources to freely practice and share their craft. I feel a responsibility to share what resources Urbanity has and to holistically support artists in our neighborhood. A dance space must pave the way for possible solutions," said Urbanity Dance Founder and Director Betsi Graves. "After just a couple of months, our space is already bustling with the energy that happens when artists are free to move in a safe space, connect with fellow neighbors, and share their craft with the community. I am excited to see how this program develops, and what conversations and creations unfold as we work together!"

"I believe that it is important to constantly engage with how internalized and institutionalized oppression influences our access to resources," said Urbanity Dance Education Manager Julivic Marquez. "The Community Residency program is one of Urbanity’s many initiatives to engage in this conversation from a place of action. We are not coming from a place of perfection, but continual growth, which helps the Community Residency program come from a position of listening and flexibility in order to form honest interactions with our partners."

Urbanity Dance's additional upcoming events include the world premiere of *Frame Recursion* on May 21 and 22 featuring members of Urbanity's Professional Company, summer classes for youth and adults, as well as a summer showcase featuring its Professional Company and Summer Intensive students.

About the Organizations

Urbanity Dance was founded as a non-profit arts organization in 2011 by Director Betsi Graves with the mission to engage, inspire, and empower individuals and communities through the art of dance and movement. This mission is manifested through Urbanity's organizational pillars of Company, School, and Community, which strive to achieve three objectives: to propel contemporary dance to the forefront of Boston's cultural landscape; fill an unmet demand for access to training in diverse dance forms; and use dance as a tool for fostering bodily autonomy and creativity in local schools and community spaces. Through its three South End studios and work in the community, Urbanity is proud to provide high-quality dance experiences to over 10,000 dance-lovers of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities every year.

Founded in 2017, **Afrobeats Dance Boston** is a dance company that focuses on Contemporary African music (African Pop Music). Afrobeats is a catch-all term created by a DJ from the United Kingdom but reflects a current Pan African spirit and movement towards Africa. Afrobeats is infused with both the music and dance of Ghana, Nigeria, Angola, Congo, Senegal, Black America, and so many other regions of the diaspora. Afrobeats Dance Boston was created from this very spirit and its name represents the momentum and energy of the community; Afrobeats as a genre radiates throughout its people.

Afrobeats Dance Boston holds regularly scheduled dance classes, hosts guest instructors from around the world and hosts an Afrobeats party. The company has classes for beginners (all levels) and an internal unit prepared for different event and performance inquiries. Classes involve learning technical skills and fundamental movement. The focus is on learning, teaching, and performing Afrobeats dance styles in connection to the spirit of Africa, and the joy that comes from it. The company also develops and builds core strength, stamina, rhythmic sensibility, and most importantly builds community and communal fun in a way that is accessible to the people.

Founded in 2020, **Diversify Our Narrative Boston** is the local branch of Diversify Our Narrative, an organization that advocates for more diverse books within curricula across the United States. DON Boston is a youth-led organization centered around advocacy work, and its mission is to foster a safe space for students at each and every Boston Public School. Its goal is to do this by expanding the English curriculum to include all historically marginalized voices. When passed, the new curriculum will be of service to Boston's high school students. Anyone connected to BPS can sign the petition. This includes current, former, and future students, parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators.

In addition to searching for books and grants to help implement them into the BPS curriculum, DON Boston designs and facilitates lessons in order to help its members learn about marginalized communities and their contributions to society. The organization also hosts events open to the Greater Boston Area community in order to build relationships and create a network full of passionate, empathetic leaders.

###