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This Year, the Fall for Dance Festival Is Digital

The festival will focus on New York City artists, with premieres by Jamar Roberts, Christopher Wheeldon, Camille A. Brown and Dormeshia, and Kyle Abraham.



Jamar Roberts of Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater will be performing a new solo he has choreographed in Program 1 of Fall for Dance. Credit...Justin Kaneps for The New York Times

By Mariel Wamsley

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Fall for Dance, New York City Center's annual festival, will be digital this year, its 17th. Performances will be recorded at City Center and available on Oct. 21 and 26, and then on demand through Nov. 1. For many of the dancers participating, the festival will be their first onstage performance since March, when the coronavirus outbreak closed theaters across the country.

With many performers unable to travel, this year's programs will focus on choreographers and dancers based in the city. A mission of this year's festival is to provide New York dancers, whose seasons have largely been canceled, an opportunity to perform onstage, Arlene Shuler, City Center's president and chief executive, said in an interview.

While much online dance programming has been free, [tickets are \\$15](#) for the Fall for Dance programs, consistent with the festival's prices for in-person shows. Ms. Shuler cited the costs of "a very highly produced program, with very high expenses," like health and safety protocols in place because of the coronavirus, and emphasized the importance of paying dancers and stage workers. (Tickets will be free for schools partnered with City Center Education and Community Engagement, as well as Fall for Dance Lab participants.)

Instead of the festival's usual five programs, there will be just two this year. Each program will showcase four works, two of which will be world premiere commissions.

The two new works in the first program will be a duet by Christopher Wheeldon for David Hallberg, the incoming artistic director of the Australian Ballet, and Sara Mearns, of New York City Ballet, as well as a solo piece choreographed and performed by [Jamar Roberts](#), the first resident choreographer at the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Program 1 will also have a New York premiere, of Ballet Hispánico's "18+1," with choreography by Gustavo Ramírez Sansano.

The second program's City Center commissions are a piece choreographed by both [Dormeshia](#) and Camille A. Brown, and one by Kyle Abraham for Calvin Royal III, a principal at American Ballet Theater.

In Program 2, two City Ballet principals — Adrian Danchig-Waring and Joseph Gordon — will perform a duet from "[Concerto Six Twenty-Two](#)," which Lar Lubovitch choreographed in 1985 amid the AIDS epidemic.

"They thought it was so important to have a piece like this," Ms. Shuler said, given the pandemic. "These are very deliberate programming choices that we made."

She also pointed to Martha Graham's "[Lamentation](#)," a solo that Graham created for herself in 1930 and that Natasha M. Diamond-Walker of the Graham company will perform in Program 1. "It is an important work about grief to be doing at this particular point in our lives, on so many levels," Ms. Shuler said.

Correction: Sept. 29, 2020

An earlier version of this article misstated the circumstances of the recording of the Fall for Dance programs. They are being recorded ahead of time; they are not live performances, and it is the first time that many dancers will be onstage in months, not the first time that they will be performing live. The article also misidentified the work by Ballet Hispánico. It is “18+1,” not “Mama Teach Me to Dance.”

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