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Seven Greater Boston Dance and Circus Artists Selected as 2026 Next Steps for Boston Dance Grantees

For details, current and past recipients: <https://tpi.org/next-steps-for-boston-dance>

Seven Greater Boston dance and circus artists have been selected as the 2026 Next Steps for Boston Dance grantees. Now in its ninth year, and with a mission to strengthen the field of dance in Greater Boston, Next Steps for Boston Dance provides multi-layered support for Greater Boston’s choreographers and circus artists creating original work in any dance genre to move forward in their careers.

The 2026 Next Steps for Boston Dance recipients are: Carven Bernadeau; Priscilla Colon; Nino de los Reyes; Laila J. Franklin; Miranda Lawson; Joy Powers; Carmen S. Rizzo. This diverse group of emerging and established dance-makers create works in a variety of genres including ballet, circus, contemporary, flamenco, hip-hop, Latin, postmodern and beyond.

Grantees will receive subsidized rehearsal space; consultations with expert advisors on both artistic and administrative issues; flexible funds to create or complete a new artwork or take a “next step” in their work or career (e.g., build a new website; hire a fundraising expert); a supportive cohort that shares and learns from each other; and access to ongoing support that continues beyond the grant period. With a total grant value of over \$12,500, this unprecedented and vital program is designed to boost artists’ careers in ways as unique as each individual artist.

Grantees were chosen by an independent panel of experts in the field. The 2026 Next Steps Panel: Holly Jones, Producing Director, Jacob’s Pillow (Bethel, MA); Lori Jones, Director of Programming and Operations, Fairfield University’s Quick Center for the Performing Arts (CT); Kerren McKeeman, Aerialist, Cirque du Soleil (Las Vegas, NV); Scott McPheeters, Co-Director, Subcircle (Biddeford, ME); and Jessica T. Pearson, Professor, Rhode Island College’s Department of Theatre and Dance. We thank the panelists for their support and dedication throughout this process.

Next Steps for Boston Dance is a partnership between The Boston Foundation, Aliad Fund and Movement Arts Creation Studio (MACS), and is now managed by The Philanthropic Initiative.

“Boston’s movement artists deserve and require an infrastructure of reliable support and affordable, accessible, and appropriate facilities. Audiences yearn for, and gravitate to, innovative and high-caliber movement arts. Through its long-view programming, Next Steps

serves to address both objectives, and MACS is proud to partner with the Aliad Fund and TBF in this work.” —**Valentine Talland & Nagesh Mahanthappa**, Founders & Directors, MACS

Each year of Next Steps for Boston Dance is an exciting new adventure, seeing the variety of artists who apply and the cohort chosen. It has been gratifying to see the different ways the artists explore their craft and futures and how they benefit from the resources, the time and space to work, and their connections with each other. —**Amy Zell Ellsworth**, Aliad Fund Advisor

Since the program’s founding, it has awarded 61 grants to Greater Boston artists. To learn more about Next Steps, and to see current and past recipients, visit the Next Steps for Boston Dance webpage: <https://tpi.org/next-steps-for-boston-dance>

2026 Next Steps for Boston Dance Recipients

Carven Bernadeau (she/her/hers) is a Boston-based dancer, choreographer, and arts educator whose movement journey began at five years old. Trained in Haitian folklore, hip-hop, and Afro dance, she has honed her craft in both Boston and New York, developing a style rooted in culture, rhythm, and community. As a member of Trend N Motion, Carven contributes to the group’s identity by blending her artistic knowledge with a deep passion for teaching, mentorship, and youth development. Carven co-produced *Animal Dance Kingdom* alongside Trend N Motion—an interactive production designed to inspire physical wellness and cognitive growth. The production leverages the arts as a powerful tool for child development, fostering imagination, coordination, and confidence in young audiences. Today, as Chief Operating Officer of Nursery Groove Network, Carven continues to champion innovative programming that engages young learners, promotes active lifestyles, and empowers the next generation through creative expression. NurseryGroove.com; @NurseryGroove; facebook.com/carven.bernadeau

Priscilla Colon (she/her/hers), originally from the Bronx, NYC, is a Puerto Rican choreographer, teaching artist, and culture bearer committed to uplifting dance traditions rooted in the Afro-Latinx Diaspora. Her performance journey began as a personal quest to honor her heritage through folkloric forms such as Bomba y Plena, Salsa, Bachata, Merengue, and Hip Hop, later expanding into Latin Fusion Heels. Over the past decade, she has served as a culture bearer in Massachusetts, using storytelling, education, and community-based events that bring cultural dance traditions to learners of all ages. Priscilla founded The Diaspora Dance Collective, LLC to unite culture bearers across the Diaspora and create spaces where culture, artistry, and community come together. Today, the Collective produces performances, immersive experiences, and school programs that celebrate and sustain the living traditions shaping our global movement landscape. <https://mosaicmovement.my.canva.site>; @priscillamarie_dance; @diasporadance_boston

Nino de los Reyes (he/him/his) is the first dancer in history to be recognized with a Grammy Award for Best Latin Jazz Album for *Antidote*, a collaboration with music legend Chick Corea. In

2010, Nino won three awards in the “Certamen de coreografía de danza española y flamenco de Madrid” competition for his spectacle *Origen*: first place for solo choreography; flamenco young promise; best musical composition composed by Paco Cruz. Nino has created five unique spectacles: *Origen*, *Inside*, *Tierra*, *Uno Más de la Banda*, and his latest creation, *Vuelta al Sol*. He is currently part of the faculty at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee.

@ninodelosreyes_flamenco; facebook.com/ninodelosreyesoficial

Laila J. Franklin (she/they) is a multidisciplinary dance artist, practicing performance, teaching, administration, somatic bodywork, and guerilla archiving. Featured in *Dance Magazine*’s “25 to Watch” (2024), her practice extends from lineages of traditional and experimental Black, queer dance makers, exploring the collision of postmodernism and story ballet. Laila has been commissioned by Brown University, Salem State University, Boston Conservatory at Berklee, and Urbanity, and presented through Movement Research at The Judson Church, Philadelphia Fringe Festival, Boston Center for the Arts, Motion State Arts, School for Contemporary Dance and Thought, and Sideways Door Festival. Laila has been a performer in projects with Miguel Gutierrez, Dr. Christopher-Rasheem McMillan, Melinda Jean Myers, Stephanie Miracle, Ruckus Dance, and detritus dance. Laila holds an MFA from the University of Iowa, a BFA from The Boston Conservatory, and is a proud alumna of the Duke Ellington School of the Arts.

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Miranda Lawson (she/her/hers) is a Boston-based performer, choreographer, and educator whose work lives at the meeting point of contemporary and Hip Hop dance forms. She received her BA in Dance and Psychology from Mount Holyoke College in 2022, where she was recognized with awards in choreographic excellence and leadership through social justice work. She has performed in works by Shakia Barron, Shura Baryshnikov, Betsi Graves, Chloe London, and Jenna Riegel. She is currently performing with NunweilerTanz and Eliza Malecki Dance. Her own work has been presented at the School for Contemporary Dance and Thought (Northampton, MA), the Multicultural Arts Center (Cambridge, MA), Tufts University (Medford, MA), and The Dance Complex (Cambridge, MA). Miranda was a mentee of MIDDAY Movement’s BIPOC Professional Dancer Mentorship program from 2022–23, an Urbanity X resident in 2022, and the recipient of Massachusetts Cultural Council’s Pandemic Relief Grant and the Somerville Artists Fellowship both in 2023. mirandalawsondance.com;

@mirandalawsondance; facebook.com/miranda.lawson.5667

Joy Powers (she/her/hers) began clowning at a young age with Circus Smirkus, and has since gone on to tour the country with Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey, Cirque Us, and Hideaway Circus. She has also performed internationally with Theatre a Tempo, Si le Colibri, and will soon be joining the cast of Revel Pucks Circus in the UK. She co-created and starred in the Piccolini Trio’s *Circus in a Trunk*, and Theater in the Open’s *Petrushka and the Caterpillar*. She is also a healthcare clown year-round with the Laughter League, proudly serving Boston Children’s and Hasbro Children’s hospitals. Joy joined forces with her creative and life partner Aaron Dewitt in 2022, and together they created their own tiny touring theatrical circus show, *To the Moon*

and Back! joyandaaron.com; @joyandaaron; facebook.com/joy.s.powers

Carmen S. Rizzo (she/her/hers), from São Paulo, Brazil, is a Somerville-based dance artist, educator, fitness instructor, social media manager and administrator. She completed the eight-year professional training program at Escola de Dança de São Paulo and graduated from Manhattanville University (Dance and Business) summa cum laude. Her choreography has recently been performed at her evening-length productions, NACHMO, Boston WiP, Dance for World Community, Salem Arts Festival, Roots & Routes, WeCreate, LabWorks and ArtBeat. Carmen was also a guest choreographer at her alma mater and has had her dance films featured at Homegrown, Shut in Dance Festival, and the DFA College Exchange. Exploring the neuroscience of dance and of emotion, she choreographs collaboratively, showcasing dancers' abilities and expressive voices, bridging the gap between science and art. Debunking that science and dance are hard to understand, Carmen brings diversity into concert dance, making it more relatable and accessible. <https://csrizzo22.wixsite.com/carmen-rizzo>; @carmen.rizzo.dance; facebook.com/carmen.rizzo.798