

# PRINCESS MHOON DANCE INSTITUTE



## HISTORY IN THE

*Making*

### WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER

#### **FROM OUR FOUNDER**

**GIRL POWER**  
by Princess Mhoon

#### **OUR PMDI PROGRAMS**

##### **BALLET FOR THE NEXT GENERATION**

How our Little Ballet Program Shapes our Tiniest Dancers

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In Search of Dancers with a Dream & How You Can Contribute

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Follow Us on Social Media to Learn More Black & Women's History

# GIRL *Power*

What a time to be alive!

As our world evolves, the role of women continues to be at the forefront of cultural change and history. This January we watched Madame Vice President Kamala Harris and an army of dynamic women take leadership positions in the highest government of our land. I am honored to be a part of this exclusive club of women who lead and even more honored to help usher in the next generation of female leaders through the work we do at the institute.

In truth, at PMDI every month is Black History & Women's History Month. We boldly embrace our identity and every move we make is rooted in self-love, diversity and uncovering the power we all possess. The foundation of our work is to treat each and every student as if they were the most important person in the room and to tap into their highest potential using dance as a catalyst for growth on and off the stage.

By default girls receive the greatest benefits of our mission, because society has deemed it more acceptable for girls to dance. I am the mother of a brilliant boy, and disagree with this antiquated way of thinking, however I've taken this false truth and used it to my advantage. It has been through dance that we have inspired and empowered thousands of girls to over the last ten years. I firmly believe that the future is female and I am humbled to be a catalyst for so much girl power.

Happy Women's History Month from our amazing girl gang at PMDI!

Sincerely,





# EVERY MONTH IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH AT PMDI

## Why Our Studios Are Named **Primus, McKayle & Dunham?**

As we prepared to reopen our studios in Fall 2020, what started as a need to organize our spaces in the safest way possible, led way to the opportunity to dedicate our three separate studios within PMDI to dancers that have influenced history & Princess Mhoon personally. She settled on her top 3 dance icons: Pearl Primus, Donald McKayle, and Katherine Dunham. From signage, to quotations, and even a mural (more to come!), we want our dancers to feel the spirit of their studio's namesake when they enter the space. It always helps to know about and be inspired by those who helped paved the way.

### **Pearl Primus**

Ms. Princess has always looked up to the dance icon as a trailblazer, bringing African dance to American audiences in the 1940s, with grace, amazing athleticism, and social activism. With a college education in dance studies and anthropology, Primus fused spirituals, jazz and blues and then combined these music forms with the literacy works of black writers in her choreography and performances. Her works 'Strange Fruit', 'Negro Speaks of Rivers', 'Hard Time Blues', and many more spoke on very important, often tragic topics for the black community. Her creative endeavors in social change makes Primus arguably one of the most political choreographers of her time because of her awareness of the issues of African Americans during that era. Eventually Primus formed her own dance troupe which toured the nation and opened a dance school in Harlem to train younger performers.

### **Donald McKayle**

McKayle was a famous dancer & choreographer behind acclaimed socially-conscious modern dance performances that reflected the black experience & struggles in the 1950s & 60s. From performing on Broadway, to becoming the first black man to both choreograph & direct a Broadway show, winning a Tony award for Best Musical in 1974, McKayle blazed a trail for black dancers & impacted all who watched his work. Princess herself studied under McKayle as a young dancer while performing at the American Dance Festival. He was an incredible teacher and one of her great influences when in the studio. She remembers his way of teaching vividly—kind and encouraging, but killer training.

### **Katherine Dunham**

Born in Chicago (just like Princess), Dunham was a dancer, choreographer, author, educator, anthropologist, social activist and creator of the Dunham Technique. The Dunham Technique is known as a fusion of ballet, modern and Afro-Caribbean dance over drum rhythms. Dunham had one of the most successful dance careers of the 20th century, and directed her own dance company for many years, earning her the title of "matriarch & queen mother of black dance." Princess was lucky to study under "the queen" at Dunham Technique conferences in East St. Louis in the late 90's while she was a student at Howard University. Princess helped organize, volunteered and took a notebook of notes she still has today. In Princess' words, Dunham "taught about more than dance. She taught us about life."

# Future Generation Ballet Dancers

HOW LITTLE BALLET & JAZZ INSTRUCTOR MS. BRE  
HELPS OUR TINIEST DANCERS START OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT



**Mrs. BreAnna Bellamy**  
**PMDI Ballet & Jazz**  
**Faculty Member**

The tiny patter of dancers' first pair of ballet slippers skipping down the hallway to Dunham Studio (usually practicing their leaps from yellow tile to yellow tile) brings joy to our studio every week. When our "Little Ballet Prince & Princesses" classes are in session, it is a special time where we get to see these youngest dancers at the very start of their journey with dance.

Offered to dancers ages 2-4 years old, families with toddlers that just love to move to music bring them into PMDI for their first "formal" dance class, led by our enthusiastic and encouraging teacher, Ms. Bre. She treats these young boys and girls to an energetic lesson in ballet basics, broken down to simple movements & enhanced with fun metaphors like beach balls & growing gardens.

While Ms. Bre is a natural with these child dancers, she is true dance artist and educator that has taught and performed internationally and holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Dance. During her time performing in the United Kingdom, BreAnna received the Jasmin Vardimon Prize for 'Excellence in Physical Theatre' and has trained in a range of styles. We are lucky to have her teach Jazz & Ballet with us at PMDI.

Ms. Bre's talent as a dancer & teacher shines bright when she is with our Little Ballerinas. She moves with grace, while teaching such basic movements as just bending the knees (plie) or tapping the toes (tendu). When you watch the patience and determination in her instruction, you realize the impact she makes on these youngest of students as they grow from shy kids, nervous to leave their parent's side, to excited dancers quick to show off their new skills within just a class or two.

We are filled with pride watching our tiny dancers and the hope and potential they are filled with. This young generation of ballet students may go on to pursue other activities, or they may be on the Broadway stage someday, but they all benefit from the experience Ms. Bre gives them every week as they learn movement, discipline, and the joy of dancing & growing.

# Testimonials



Lily Fitzpatrick & Family

"Our rambunctious toddler, Lily, has loved to dance since she could walk, and Princess Mhoon Dance Institute has taken all of that energy and channeled it into an educational experience that has become the highlight of her week. Lily adores her teacher, learning how to listen and follow instructions while still maintaining that infectious, carefree joy that we have always loved to watch in her dancing. Princess Mhoon Dance Institute has become an important part of her young life, and we are thrilled to have found it."

-Ryan Fitzpatrick, Father to Lily



Sage Massenburg & Family

"My daughter, Sage, loves to dance and Jojo Siwa, which explains this look. Her teacher urged me to enroll her in dance class because she was impressed with how much natural rhythm Sage has. I did a google search for dance school's in DC and was so happy to come across Princess Moon Dance Institute. I immediately recognized the name because Princess and I met before when she lived in NYC and we have mutual friends. I immediately check out the website and and was so thrilled that there was an upcoming Spring 2021 in-person class available, and I was able to sign up Sage for the last spot It's been one of the best decision I've made. We both look forward to going every Saturday. My hope is that Sage will continue to have a love for dance and that she will attend PMDI throughout her school age years."

-Dawn Collins, Mother to Sage

# Funding Dancer Dreams

## OUR NEWEST SCHOLARSHIP OFFERINGS FOR ASPIRING DANCERS & HOW YOU CAN CONTRIBUTE

For all those families who hoped their child could dance this Spring, but it just didn't fit in the budget...here's your chance to enroll for little to NO tuition!



### *For* Dancers:

Eligible to new students ages 5-18 starting this Spring, we have 10 scholarships to award to dancers in need of financial aid:

- 2 - 100% Scholarships
- 4 - 50% Scholarships
- 4 - 25% Scholarships

#### TO APPLY:

Please email by March 14th [info@princessmhoondance.com](mailto:info@princessmhoondance.com) for a scholarship application & to enroll for Spring 2021.

### *For* Donors:

Donate online:

[www.princessmhoondance.com](http://www.princessmhoondance.com)

Check by mail:

Princess Mhoon Dance Institute  
1800 Perry Street, NE  
Washington, DC 20018

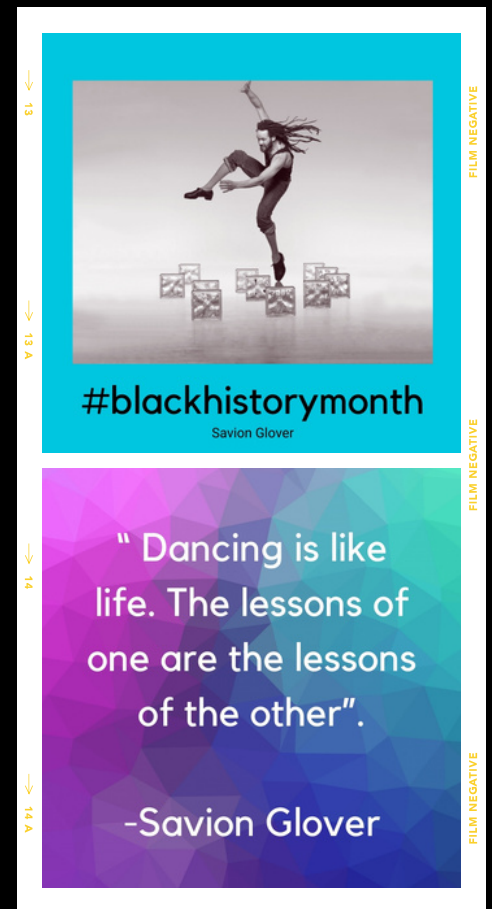
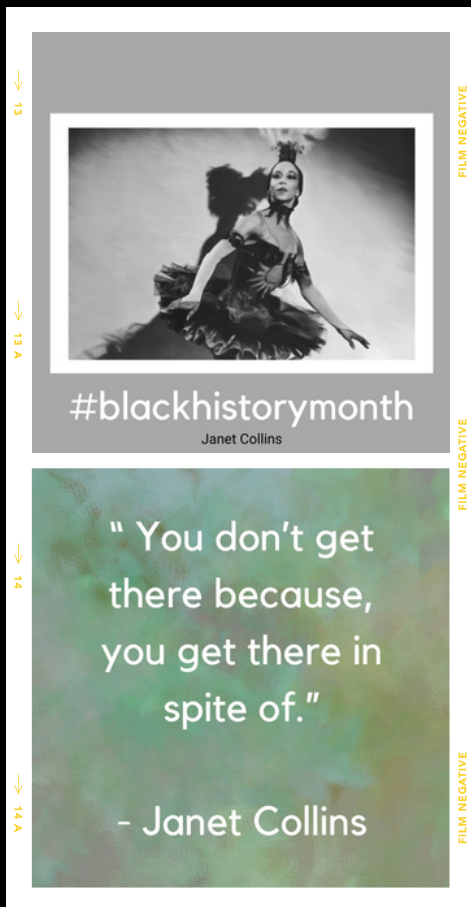
All contributions are tax deductible.

# OUR SOCIAL MOVEMENT

Follow us on Instagram and Facebook...

as we continue to celebrate Black History & Women's History Month!

Enjoy posts featuring African American & iconic women, their inspirational quotes & personal histories, including contributions to popular culture, civil rights, and the evolution of dance worldwide.



Instagram: @princessmhoondance



Facebook: "Princess Mhoon Dance Institute"