

# Midway Contemporary Art

## ***IN THE RIVER* | Credits & Bios**

Conceived and directed by Karthik Pandian  
Choreography by Karthik Pandian with Sam Aros Mitchell, Leila Awadallah & Lela Pierce  
Featuring compositions, instruments & music by Douglas R. Ewart and vocals & drum by Lakota "Hokie" Clairmont

### **Part I The Promise of Youth**

Written by Mike Forcia, Karthik Pandian & Ta Pejuta Wicahpi Win  
Performed by Thomas Draskovic-Chetan Ohitika, Mike Forcia, Ta Pejuta Wicahpi Win, Sam Aros Mitchell, Leila Awadallah & Lela Pierce

### **Part II In the River**

Adapted from Edward Benton-Banai's "The Seven Fires" (permission granted by his son Anishinabe J. Benton) with additional writing by Mike Forcia & Karthik Pandian  
Instruments by Karthik Pandian

### **Part III An Absence of Light**

Written by Sam Aros Mitchell, Thomas Draskovic-Chetan Ohitika, Leila Awadallah & Lela Pierce  
Set design by Karthik Pandian  
Sculptural backdrop by Cameron Downey & Jonathon Rosemond  
Additional instrumentation by Sam Aros Mitchell & Karthik Pandian

Video by Akičita Šunja-Wakanj Ska  
and Xiaolu Wang  
Additional camera by Danny Carroll  
Sound recording by Robby MacBain  
Still photography by Tim Evans  
A/V by John Ballinger and Tyler Gardin at Showcore

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Production management by Eben Kowler

Midway Contemporary Art  
John Rasmussen, Director/Curator  
Megan McCready, Deputy Director  
Kelsey Olson, Programming Manager  
Candice Davis, Development & Outreach Assistant  
Rio Gordon, Intern  
Emmy Smith, Intern

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**Sam Aros Mitchell** (enrolled with the Texas Band of Yaqui Indians) is a postdoctoral scholar at Arizona State University at the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands. Sam earned a Ph.D. in Theater and Performance Studies at the University of California, San Diego, where he was a Presidential Dissertation Fellow. Sam earned his M.F.A. in Dance Theatre from the University of California, San Diego and a B.F.A. in Dance from the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has performed and taught theater and dance professionally for over 25 years. Sam has performed with New Native Theater, performing in two play readings, *Tewa Rising*, written by Jaren Navenma and *Salt Baby*, written by Falen Johnson. Sam's publishing company, Aros and Son Publishing, has just recently published a collection of poetry titled, *Longview Road*, written by Yaqui poet and writer, Manny Monolin.

**Leila Awadallah** moves with a body born of Mediterranean oranges that pop amongst the luscious green lands of Palestine, and the lemons that bring abundant bright yellows across Sicily. A daughter to the Palestinian poet from Beit Jala, doctor (healer) Sami Awadallah, whose words and ways reverberate into her artistry. A daughter of a Sicilian, German woman from New York, nurse and nurturer, Kim Awadallah whose addiction to reading is paralleled by Leila's addiction to movement. Born near the Thick Wooded River on Dakota and Lakota lands (Sioux Falls, SD), she now calls Minneapolis, Mni Sota and Beirut, Lebanon her homes. Dance lineages, collaborations, and curiosities lead her path. Honoring time spent performing with Ananya Dance Theatre in the form: Yorchha - Odissi, Chauu, and Yoga merge inside her bodies' history and presence. Arabic dance forms Baladi, Raqs Sharqi, Dabke, and the rhythms of Arabic music and life root Leila to her ancestral pulse. But most often, Leila is improvising surrounded by the natural world, water bodies, and within charged contexts. Where dancing is a force capable of weaving our collective communal webs, committing to physicalize fights against injustice down to the cellular level, and dancing with / ancestors of past, and future.

**Timmy Châu** is an ember in a sea of flames. Committed to realizing total abolition, he is guided by a politics of the present-moment. In every militant manifesto Timmy sees a love letter, in every burning cop car, an image from the future we deserve. As the son of a survivor of war, he takes aim at all settler-colonial imperialisms—to avenge the ancestors who came before him and defend his kin to come. He fights for a world without militaries, borders, police, and prisons, a world where third and fourth world autonomies have everything they need to thrive. Until then, he finds joy in taking direct-action and is sustained by incendiary intimacies and rebellious complicities. Through deep mutuality and collective care, Timmy believes in our capacity to transform and tend to the social tissues that connect us. Day to day, he can be found moving alongside a crew of dedicated abolitionists at the Prison + Neighborhood Arts / Education project, working to build inside/outside networks of mutual support and resistance between incarcerated and free-world activists, scholars, thinkers and artists. He's also co-starter of Dissenters, a new youth-led abolitionist anti-imperialist organization.

**Lakota "Hokie" Clairmont** (Hochunk / Lakota) has been a singer since he was two years old. Born and raised in St. Paul, MN. Co-founder of the championship drum group The Boyz.

**Cameron Patricia Downey** is the lineage of quick-witted women and rhythm makers. South Carolina, Mississippi, and the various nowhere of the Midwest make Blackness in its likeness and myth, a focus. Cameron is at once preceded and surrounded by storytellers, musicians, technicians of faith and machination, as well as architects of community and tangible love.

**Thomas Draskovic-Chetan Ohitika** (Standing Rock Lakota) is a connector of progressive positive energy, cultural

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strength, and internal beauty.

**Douglas R. Ewart** endeavors to be canabrava, a source of life, a source of light, a source of laughter, a source of past-present-future.

**Mike Forcia** (Bad River Anishinaabe) is a relative, healing and fighting colonialism and systemic racism as a helper of the creator.

**Isa Gagarin** is a wayfinder of light and color. Isa means rainbow in CHamoru (Chamorro), the language indigenous to Guahan (Guam), where she was born. Guahan is a small Pacific island located near the Mariana Trench, the deepest oceanic trench on Earth. Isa's ancestors were ocean navigators, weavers and farmers in Guahan (maternal lineage including the Goro and Bira family clans) and Ilocos Norte, Philippines (paternal lineage). She also claims ancestry in England, France and Germany. Isa is a student of the CHamoru language, and has recently started conversing with her fluent grandmother Josefina Newby. In her artistic practice, Isa works with light and color, manifested through materials such as textured paper and earth pigments in site-responsive installations. She lives with her partner Michael Gordon and their son Rae in Minneapolis, Mni Sota Makoce (Minnesota), ancestral territory of the Dakota people.

**Karthik Pandian** is a conductor of energy. He is the son of healers, Mariappan Ganesa Pandian (body) and Lalitha Pandian (spirit), who landed in the Bronx region of Turtle Island in 1972. Karthik is the grandson of South Indian Tamil Nadars who moved from rural villages to urban centers as far flung as Okpo, Burma, surviving invasion, perilous migration, and caste discrimination long enough to see the end of British colonialism. Karthik was born on the ancestral territory of the Tongva peoples in what is now known as Southern California in 1981. He was an unexpected and doted on third child, surrounded by the love of his older siblings and parents as well as the comforts afforded by his father's income as a cardiologist. His mother is a proud caregiver and devout Hindu. Her spiritual energy carries into Karthik's practice, which spans film, sculpture, theater, dance, and music. Karthik cares for and is cared for by his partner Paige K. Johnston and his son, Aaru Motherwell Pandian. They share a home and studio on unceded Nipmuck territory which they call Sun & Moon Refuge. Karthik teaches nearby in the Department of Art, Film, and Visual Studies at Harvard University.

**Ta Pejuta Wicahpi Win** (Hunkpati Dakota Oyate) means Her Star Medicine Woman. She is one with the Star Nation, able to communicate with the Great Mystery and other Star People.

**Lela Pierce** is situated in the expansive spectrum of blackness. A seeker of truth and love - deeply curious about time and space. She was born, raised, cared for, and remains connected to the rural landscape of MniSota Makoce and Hoǵáŋ Waŋká kiŋ - ancestral lands of the Dakota and Anishinabe people. Lela was brought into this world by artist/educator/homemaker Carol Pierce, and Eulis/Sonny/Surya Pierce - drummer, horse lover, hairdresser and first black business owner in her hometown. She is the granddaughter of Eulis Pierce Sr. a Pullman Porter who migrated to the Rondo Neighborhood in 1942 from Jackson MS with fiercely independent fashion icon Jonnye Mae Pierce. Ancestrally she comes from Rusyn/Lemko mountain people - deeply connected to nature but caught in the violence that is a borderland region (between nation-states of Poland/Ukraine). Her DNA has survived the middle passage, the horrors of American chattel slavery, and the continued systemic effects of racial inequity. Her privilege and health have come from a relationship cultivated with land due to her father's fearlessness in gravitating towards it, as well as the social literacy and capital that has come with navigating certain communities in proximity