

The Wooden Floor Names New Artistic Director, Falon Baltzell

SANTA ANA, Calif. (October 25, 2017) –After a nationwide search, The Board of Directors and staff of The Wooden Floor announced the selection of Falon Baltzell (FAL-un BALT-zell) as the organization's new Artistic Director. Baltzell is a dance artist, choreographer, dance educator, and youth developer. This leadership role is a natural progression in her career as a recognized choreographer and artist, and the former Director of Upper School Dance at Hathaway Brown School in Ohio, where she facilitated the commissioning of national and international touring artists, developed dance education curriculum and choreography, and built significant relationships with colleagues, students, and their parents.

In support of The Wooden Floor's long-term vision to break the cycle of poverty through generational change, Baltzell is charged with continuing to advance the organization's culture of artistic excellence through dance education, performances, community engagement, and collaborative projects. Baltzell is passionate about sharing the many benefits of dance in helping young people reach their potential, and will help further The Wooden Floor's goals to impact more children locally and nationally.

"One of the many things that made Falon stand out during the search process was her continual reference to the lives of the children she encouraged through dance," said Dawn S. Reese, The Wooden Floor's Chief Executive Officer. "She will advance the vitality, spirit, and quality of our artistic programs, and will set the momentum for artistic strategy and growth. Falon has a proven track record as a thoughtful and creative leader, who defines and builds upon an organization's artistic identity. She knows first-hand that the power of dance leads to academic, social, emotional, and intellectual development," she said.

Baltzell assumes her position immediately. "The Board of Directors, and staff are excited and proud to welcome Falon as part of our wonderful organization," said The Wooden Floor Board Chairman Arthur Ong. "We are confident in her ability to embody The Wooden Floor's values, further develop our artistic vision, manage and lead our nationally recognized Dance Education Program at two campus locations, keep our artistic collaborations leading-edge, and most importantly, inspire our students to remain on their 10-year journeys at The Wooden Floor towards their exceptional personal and higher education goals," said Ong.

Baltzell is just the third Artistic Director in The Wooden Floor's nearly 35-year history, preceded by Melanie Ríos Glaser from 2005-2016, and Founder Beth Burns who served as Artistic Director from the organization's founding in 1983 until her retirement in 2005.

Of her new role, Baltzell said, "It is an honor to become a part of the artistic leadership for such an inspiring organization. I am excited to collaborate with a network of people who are passionately committed to each student's transformational journey. The Wooden Floor has a long history of providing students with a platform for achievement and success, and I look forward to supporting that vision and developing new possibilities," she said.

Falon Baltzell Full Biography

Falon Baltzell holds an MFA in Performance and Choreography from State University of New York at Brockport, and a BFA in Dance Education with K-12 licensure from the University of Southern Mississippi. She is a certified teacher in the Bill Evans Method, a somatic investigation of movement with influences from Bartenieff Fundamentals (SM) and Laban, and has been teaching this method at colleges, conferences, and workshops such as Kona Dance and Performing Arts in Hawaii, American College Dance Festivals in New York and Pennsylvania, and The Ohio Dance Festival. Prior to that, she spent three years as the Director of Upper School of Dance at the Hathaway Brown School in Shaker Heights, Ohio. She was also a Graduate Teaching Assistant at State University of New York at Brockport as well as a Teaching Assistant for Bill Evans.

Her 2017 Choreographic Residencies include The MacDuffie School in Massachusetts and a month-long Water Rights Artist-in-Residence at the Santa Fe Art Institute in New Mexico. In 2016, she created: a site-specific work *Estoy Aqui* at the World Dance Alliance Conference in Cholula, Mexico; a museum gallery work titled *Speck* at SPACES Gallery in Cleveland, Ohio; and in 2015 she created site-specific works *Ohana* and *Desktop 2* at the World Dance Alliance Conference in Honolulu, Hawaii. Other commissions include *Unintended Consequences* in 2015 at Cleveland Public Theatre and in 2013, *Fervor* for the Society of New Music throughout New York, and *In All of Time*, a duet with Brett Cox, for Movement Research in Brooklyn, New York.

Falon is a member of the National Dance Education Organization and the World Dance Alliance-Americas, where she serves as Co-Chair for the Creation and Presentation Committee. She also volunteered as a Field Tester for the Ohio Arts Council.

Falon's awards and recognition include a Teacher Fellowship from Bates Dance Festival in Lewiston, ME, a Graduate Teaching Assistant Fellowship from the State University of New York in Brockport, and recognition as Outstanding Dance Educator from The University of Southern Mississippi.

About The Wooden Floor

Founded in 1983, The Wooden Floor is one of the foremost creative youth development nonprofit organizations in the country. We transform the lives of young people in low-income communities through the power of dance and access to higher education. In Orange County and through national licensed partners, we use a long-term approach grounded in exploratory dance education to foster the confidence and gifts within each child to innovate, communicate, and collaborate – skills necessary for success in school and in life. 100 percent of students who graduate from The Wooden Floor immediately enroll in higher education. Our students become change agents and beacons of hope within their own families, their neighborhoods, our community, and our world.

###