

CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING AND CINEMATIC ARTS

Boyer College of Music and Dance

MFA Thesis Concert II:
Olivia Mohsen Alsamadi,
Yihang Li and
Esmeralda Luciano

Point of Departure

*Dance performances are sponsored in part by
Temple University's General Activities Fund and
the Rose Vernick Fund*

Friday, March 13, 2026 at 7:30 PM
Saturday, March 14, 2026 at 7:30 PM
Conwell Dance Theater
1801 North Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122

Program

مسقط رأسي (masqaṭ ra'sī)

Olivia Mohsen Alsamadi in collaboration with dancers

Dancers: Sara Hicenbothem, Julia Koban Payne, Zhaisia Lessey,
Zaria Louis-Charles, Esmeralda Luciano Nieves, Daniela Sala,
Lily Santana and Carla Saunders

Music: "Sheel Sheel Ya Ajmal" by Ahmed Abu Amsha and Gaza Birds
Singing, "Lovers Hymn" by El Funoun Palestinian Dance Troupe,
"Space 1" and "Continuum 3" by Nala Sinephro, "On This Land" by
Mahmoud Darwish, "Destruction" by El Funoun Palestinian Dance
Troupe, and "Haramlek" by Iyad Rimawi

Costumes: Olivia Mohsen Alsamadi

Lighting: Lia Haynes

Video: Leila Ibrahim

*With gratitude to my advisor, Dr. yaTande Whitney V. Hunter, and to my family
for their unconditional love and support.*

Dancers: Yihang Li, Yunfan Xing, Esmeralda Luciano, Lian Long Xuan,
Olivia Mohsen Alsamadi and Kolby Bauman.

Music: “Sacred Mountain Drumming” by Wychazel, “Anti-General Remix”
by Anti-General, Ming, Yangwood, “祭” by Anti-General, “蛇” by
71, “Temple Fes” by Code wu, “Callback” By Wychazel, “呼来呼来”
by 张渠, and “雉舞” by 明子

Costumes: Yihang Li

Lighting: Dani Sala

Masks were designed and hand-painted by Yihang Li.

Tracing back to the origin of dance, we find its echoes in ancient rituals. Dance was a sacred act—a form of shamanic movement, and within Shamanic culture, a sacred bridge connecting the mortal with the divine, a means to purify the soul and heal the body. Inspired by this ancient wisdom, this work uses the vocabulary of contemporary dance to deconstruct and reimagine the spiritual essence of Shamanic rituals. The piece unfolds in three movements: “Summoning the Spirits,” “Divine Presence,” and “Offering Blessings.” Guided by the dancers, we are invited to cross the threshold between the physical and the spiritual, embarking on a journey of soul-cleansing. Finally, we offer this dance as a blessing to every audience member: may your path be blessed with peace and fulfillment.

First, thank you to my family, especially my mom—your support has brought me to this stage tonight.

To my incredible dancers, and a special thank you to my best friends Esmeralda and Olivia: you’ve taught me so much more than just performing these past three years.

I’m also grateful to my advisor for your guidance.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who made this possible.

En un día mejor, estaré soñando

Esmeralda Luciano Nieves in collaboration with dancers

Dancers: Amara Baker, Jaelyn Drummond, Saja Faye, Lia Haynes, Yihang Li,
and Olivia Mohsen Alsamadi

Music: “for the Shapalaceer” by Carlos Niño and friends, “CAFÉ CON
RON” instrumental by Bad Bunny, “Music for pieces of wood” by
Steve Reich and Smoke and Mirrors percussion ensemble, “Copas
De Soledad” by Bobby Valentin, and “Everyone’s sleeping”
instrumental by River Tiber

Costumes: Esmeralda Luciano Nieves

Lighting: Zhaisia Lessey

Video: Esmeralda Luciano Nieves

Para la gente de Borikén

*Rooted in memory and resistance and shaped by the enduring realities of colonialism
in Puerto Rico, this work is offered with sincere gratitude to all who supported and
encouraged me throughout this process, especially my dancers and the stage crew
whose dedication and collaboration brought this piece to life.*

Production Crew

Stage Manager: Benja Newnam

Backstage Crew: Madison Forbes, Zhaisia Lessey, Trinity McFadden,
Dani Sala, Saja Singletary, Courtney Taylor and
Madison Wells-McFee

House Crew: Dasha Klim and Eduarda Melgar

Livestream: Blatino Cineninja

The use of photographic, audio and video recording is not permitted.

Please turn off all electronic devices.

Two hundred twenty-sixth and two hundred twenty-ninth performances of the 2025-2026 season.

About the Artists

OLIVIA MOHSEN ALSAMADI is a Palestinian-American dancer, choreographer, educator, and scholar whose work centers Palestinian culture, embodied knowledge, and decolonial creative practice.

She approaches choreography as cultural making, where memory, repetition, and collective presence shape both process and form. Drawing from Palestinian ways of knowing sustained across generations despite displacement and erasure, her work investigates how improvisation, cultural practice, and somatic intelligence inform ethical, community-centered approaches to dance-making and performance in the diaspora.

She is pursuing an MFA in Dance at Temple University, where she was awarded the prestigious University Fellowship and serves as an instructor and graduate teaching assistant in the Department of Dance. In 2025, she received the Sarah K. Hilsendager Award for Innovation in Dance Education in recognition of her contributions to the Boyer College of Music and Dance. Her creative and scholarly research has been presented through the Dance Studies Association, Kun-Yang Lin/Dancers Exhale Series, Common Threads Press, and the Temple University Graduate School.

Her choreographic and pedagogical practices challenge Western dance training models that reproduce hierarchy and extraction, instead cultivating collaborative environments grounded in care, accountability, and collective authorship. Integrating improvisation, practice-as-research, and critical theory into studio-based learning, she supports students in developing their artistic voices while building the clarity and agency needed to navigate professional and academic dance spaces.

Alsamadi holds a BFA in Dance and Choreography from Virginia Commonwealth University, where she studied with esteemed faculty members including MK Abadoo, Dr. Gaynell Sherrod, and Trebien Pollard. During her undergraduate studies, her artistic and academic work was recognized by the VCU Honors College, the Institute for Inclusion, Inquiry, & Innovation, the VCU Department of Dance and Choreography, and VCU Scholars Compass through scholarships, awards, and publication opportunities. Through choreography, teaching, and scholarship, she brings research and lived experience into dialogue with embodied practice, honoring ancestral knowledge while cultivating liberatory futures through movement and collective continuity.

YIHANG LI is a dancer, choreographer, dance educator, and scholar whose practice is rooted in the belief that dance is a universal language of liberation, empathy, and personal truth. Her work often reflects on specific social phenomena or explores subjects that are overlooked or misunderstood.

She was first introduced to Chinese dance at age four and went on to receive eighteen years of systematic training in both ballet and Chinese dance. During her undergraduate studies, she participated in and contributed to the choreography of several large-scale productions for China Central Television (CCTV) and received multiple awards. After graduation, she was awarded a full scholarship to pursue an MFA in Modern Dance at Temple University. Throughout her graduate studies, she has created numerous original works and conducted research in dance education through teaching assistantships and fieldwork—focusing on how different age groups, from young children to adults, can more effectively understand and apply dance performance techniques.

Her artistic process is both intuitive and deliberate: inspiration often emerges from observing social issues such as gender rights and mental health, and is developed through sketching, iterative improvisation, video analysis, and collaborative feedback. She is dedicated to creating work that fosters deep emotional resonance and audience immersion. She also brings seven years of cross-cultural teaching experience with both children and adults.

Her teaching philosophy consciously synthesizes the rigor of Chinese dance training with the student-centered, exploratory approaches of Western pedagogy. She is committed to creating an inclusive “transparent world” in her classroom—one where every student, regardless of background or ability, can find their unique voice of expression. As an educator, she sees herself not as a shaper, but as an excavator of potential. She emphasizes: “Education is not about giving students ‘conclusions,’ but about helping them find their own voice.”

ESMERALDA LUCIANO NIEVES is a Puerto Rican dancer, performer, educator, and scholar whose work is deeply rooted in identity, heritage, and the power of embodied expression. Luciano's movement practice draws from a rich tapestry of influences including modern, floorwork, improvisation, and Hispanic partnering dances. They are woven together through a lens shaped by her cultural background and lived experience.

Growing up Puerto Rican has profoundly influenced Luciano's artistic voice. It informs the way she approaches movement and the narratives she creates in her creative works; stories of resilience, joy, struggle, and belonging. Luciano approaches dance as a language of the body, a way to communicate across borders, and a means to celebrate the complexity of identity. Growing up her parents emphasized the importance of being proud of her roots and encouraged her to take up space as a Hispanic-Caribbean woman. The goal isn't to blend in, but to celebrate differences and have others join in this celebration. Luciano continues to explore how tradition and innovation can coexist and how form and freedom can support one another in performance and pedagogy.

Luciano's practice is a site of transformation that is personal, communal, and political. Through her work, she aims to inspire dialogue, deepen understanding, and uplift the next generation of artists with honesty, heart, and purpose.

Boyer College of Music and Dance

The Boyer College of Music and Dance offers over 500 events open to the public each year. Students have the unique opportunity to interact with leading performers, composers, conductors, educators, choreographers and guest artists while experiencing a challenging and diverse academic curriculum. The Boyer faculty are recognized globally as leaders in their respective fields. Boyer alumni are ambassadors of artistic leadership and perform with major orchestras, opera and dance companies, teach at schools and colleges and work as professional music therapists, choreographers and composers. Boyer's recording label, BCM&D records, has produced more than thirty recordings, five of which have received Grammy nominations.

boyer.temple.edu

The Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts

The Center for the Performing and Cinematic Arts consists of the Boyer College of Music and Dance, School of Theater, Film and Media Arts, the George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater and the Temple Performing Arts Center. The School of Theater, Film and Media Arts engages gifted students with nationally and internationally recognized faculty scholars and professionals. A hallmark of the School of Theater, Film and Media Arts is the Los Angeles Study Away program, housed at historic Raleigh Studios. The George and Joy Abbott Center for Musical Theater engages visiting performers, guest artists, set designers, playwrights and other Broadway professionals. The Temple Performing Arts Center (TPAC), a historic landmark on campus, is home to a state-of-the-art 1,200 seat auditorium and 200 seat chapel. More than 500 concerts, classes, lectures and performances take place at TPAC each year.

arts.temple.edu

Temple University

Temple University's history begins in 1884, when a young working man asked Russell Conwell if he could tutor him at night. It wasn't long before he was teaching several dozen students—working people who could only attend class at night but had a strong desire to make something of themselves. Conwell recruited volunteer faculty to participate in the burgeoning night school, and in 1888 he received a charter of incorporation for "The Temple College." His founding vision for the school was to provide superior educational opportunities for academically talented and highly motivated students, regardless of their backgrounds or means. The fledgling college continued to grow, adding programs and students throughout the following decades. Today, Temple's more than 35,000 students continue to follow the university's official motto—*Perseverantia Vincit*, or "Perseverance Conquers"—with their supreme dedication to excellence in academics, research, athletics, the arts and more.

temple.edu

Boyer College of Music and Dance

Upcoming Events

Senior Recital: Philippe Jean-Louis, jazz voice

Saturday, March 14 at 5:30 PM

Klein Recital Hall

Master's Recital: Bryana Crockett, jazz drums

Saturday, March 14 at 7:30 PM

Klein Recital Hall

World Music: African Dance with Sena Atsugah

5:00 PM Class I

6:15 PM Class II

Sunday, March 15

Arronson Hall

Master's Recital: Madalyn Sadler, viola

Sunday, March 15 at 5:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Doctoral Chamber Recital: Samantha Humen, flute

Sunday, March 15 at 7:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Graduate Conductors Chorus

Adrianna Barnett, graduate conductor

Monday, March 16 at 3:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Student Recital: Jaylon Keller, viola

Monday, March 16 at 5:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Master's Recital: Yajing Li, collaborative piano

Monday, March 16 at 7:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

CPCA AIR: Sarah Drury

Location-based mixed reality storytelling in contested urban environments

Tuesday, March 17 at 5:00 PM

Temple Performing Arts Center Chapel

Student Recital: Andrew Desiderio and Caleb Etchison, composers

Tuesday, March 17 at 5:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Festival of Winds

Wednesday, March 18

Temple Performing Arts Center

Temple University Wind Symphony

“Echoes of Time and Place”

Patricia Cornett, conductor

Matthew Brunner, guest conductor

Michael Fahrner, euphonium

PUTS *Millennium Canons*

LIKHUTA *Home Away from Home*

KRUSH *Kenjockey* (world premiere)

BOLCOM *Graceful Ghost Rag*

COPLAND *Down A Country Lane*

GRAINGER *The Gum-Suckers March*

Wednesday, March 18 at 2:00 PM

Temple Performing Arts Center

Recital Chorus

Matthew Lista, conductor

Thursday, March 19 at 3:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Early Music Ensemble

Thursday, March 19 at 7:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Guest Artist Lecture-Recital: Katelyn Bouska, piano

Friday, March 20 at 12:00 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Final Doctoral Recital: Rachel Anemone, piano

Friday, March 20 at 5:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

Temple Opera Theater: *La Scala di Seta* and *Monsieur et Madame Denis*

Kyle Lang, stage director

José Luis Domínguez, music director

Friday, March 20 at 7:30 PM

Sunday, March 22 at 3:00 PM

Tomlinson Theater

Master's Recital: Anthony Aldissi, jazz piano

Friday, March 20 at 7:30 PM

Klein Recital Hall

Center for Gifted Young Musicians Master Class: Amy Yang

Saturday, March 21 at 2:40 PM

Temple University Center City 222

Senior Recital: Emily Rota, jazz bass

Saturday, March 21 at 5:30 PM

Klein Recital Hall

Senior Recital: Charlie Allen, jazz bass

Saturday, March 21 at 7:30 PM

Klein Recital Hall

Student Recital: Shawn Pierce, percussion

Sunday, March 22 at 5:30 PM

Klein Recital Hall

Master's Recital: Mike Raymond, jazz guitar

Sunday, March 22 at 7:30 PM

Klein Recital Hall

Master's Recital: Nathan Lavender, cello

Monday, March 23 at 5:30 PM

Rock Hall Auditorium

All events are free unless otherwise noted. Programs are subject to change without notice.

For further information or to confirm events, please call 215.204.7609

or visit www.boyer.temple.edu.