

DANCING *Every* DAY

Q&A with Choreographer randy reyes '10

By Megan Tady



Using dance to raise eco-socio-political issues, randy reyes's (who prefers the pronoun they/them/their) work has been gaining notoriety. Among other nods, they received a Princess Grace in Choreography Fellowship in 2019, an award dedicated to elevating extraordinary emerging artists in theater, dance, and film to continue the legacy of Princess Grace Kelly. With some performance plans on pause because of the COVID-19 pandemic, reyes will still continue to dance, saying, "If I dance every day, inevitably I'm growing like a plant, and that is really the gift for me, to witness myself growing, shedding, in the process of becoming."

Q. What was your relationship to dance as a young person?

A. I started dancing in the complex context of the Pentecostal church my family attended where I grew up in New Jersey. The intersection of dance, movement, choreography, and spirituality was the stepping stone and is the thread and throughline to what I'm doing now within my choreographic work. I took dance even more seriously at Berkshire, but it wasn't until undergrad where I designed my own major in dance that I decided that dance was going to be my life.

Q. What grant/fellowship has had the most impact on you?

I truly am grateful for every opportunity I have been granted to date and am super excited about having received a Creative Capital Award this year because this grant will allow me to finally begin digging deep into my life vision of launching a subverted school, healing center, choreographic research incubator, queer club, and land-based initiative called La Escuela de Corporealidad y Artes Sutiles, set to launch in 2025.

Q. What stories do you seek to tell through your choreography?

A. I identify as a queer, Brown, AfroGuatemalan artist who has interrupted Mayan-indigenous ancestry. The stories that I'm interested in sharing are ones that invoke the presence of — Black, Indigenous, Queer, Trans, Artists of Color. And specifically folks who are first-generation and have parents who have emigrated to the U.S., because that's my reality. The themes I excavate choreographically include: reclaiming my erotic potential, reclaiming pleasure and time, integrating trauma, endurance-based improvisation, and incrementality.

Q. Why is dance important to the health of individuals and communities?

A. I don't think that movement alone is the solution to the issues of the world, but what it does provide is an aperture into a deep and innate understanding of who we are on a cellular level by taking us to a place where language becomes decentralized and an embodied form of knowing is pushed to the forefront. Choreography and movement are bridges for accessing more shared well being and are portals for rehearsing how to be in better relation with the earth and with one another.

Q. How did your Berkshire experience impact you?

A. My teachers Katherine Gurley and Della Schleunes were instrumental in my falling in love with dance. It was during this time at Berkshire where I was coming of age and coming out that dance entered my life. I could not have done it without the support of those teachers, my advisor, and the people in the dance program. My senior thesis performance was unexpectedly beautiful. So many people in the community showed up to watch and support me. I was finally able to meet myself with compassion and be like, "You have been through a lot, dancing has catalyzed and transformed you from the inside out, and these people in the room, my community, who came to witness your growth, have been critical to your development and holistic well being."