

Ryan K Johnson: CV

Ryan K. Johnson, MFA

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Skills: Authentic leader, social justice advocate, multidisciplinary artist, practitioner of African Diasporic Percussive Dance pedagogies, curriculum and program design, curating main stage performances, and arts-integrated curriculum, Federal grant reviewer, non-profit leadership, online instruction and mentorship.

Professional Profile:

- Specializing in designing interactive, outcome-learning based learning experiences using sound pedagogy, and best practices aligned with institutional missions, and national accreditation organizations, teaching dance education, arts integration, cultural competency professional development and movement workshops for private and public organizations.
- Holding leadership positions in non-profit arts education organizations and K-12 public and private schools.
- Spearheading performing arts and social justice initiatives, collaborating on community projects, and consultant for private and public arts organizations.
- Develop short and long-term strategic plans, generating income, board of director leadership, building teams, hiring artists and crew, and organizing community projects.
- Collaborating with diverse populations and artist approaches to cultivate performances, panel discussions and anti-racist training.

Education:

2023: Dance and Social Justice, Master of Fine Arts.

University of Texas at Austin

Thesis: The Belonging and Othering of African Diaspora Percussive Dance.

Graduate Teaching Assistant

Graduate Research Assistant

2020: Theatre: Dance & Movement Studies, Bachelor of Science. [GPA: 4.0]

Bowie State University

Member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc.

Performance Experience:

- 2021** **Little Island Inaugural Dance Festival**
 Little Island, New York, NY
 Three performances intersecting percussive dance, audience participation and original soundscapes.
- 2020** **Ayodele Casel's Diary of a Tap Dancer v.6**
 New York City Center, New York, Ny.
 Featured Percussive Dance Artist: Embodied storytelling exploring personal lineage, systematic oppression, race relations and identity.
- 2018-2020** **Rose Rabbit Lie**
 The Cosmopolitan Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV.
 Resident Tap Dancer
- 2016-2018** **Broadway's After Midnight**
 NCL Cruise Lines
 Character: The Nicolas Brothers co-star Brenda Braxton & Sharon Wilkens
 Tap & Jazz Dancer
- 2015-2016** **The Beatles LOVE by Cirque Du Soleil**
 Mirage Hotel & Casino, Las Vegas, NV
 Character: Sugar Plum
- 2011-2015** **STOMP**
 Off-Broadway & Tour of the Americas
 Character: Particle Man & Ringo
- 2006-2011** **Step Afrika!**
 National & International Tour
 Soloist, Company Member, Choreographer & Production Manager.
- 2009-2011** **The Washington Ballet**
 John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts
 Resident Tap Dancer
- 2004-2006** **Footworks Percussive Dance Company**
 National Tour
 Resident Tap Dancer & Soloist

- 2003-2005** **Artscape**
 Baltimore, MD
 Summer performance series.
- 2000** **Marvin Hamlisch at The Baltimore Symphony Orchestra**
 Baltimore, MD
 Feature Tap Soloist
- 2000** **Gregory Hines at Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall**
 Baltimore, MD
 Feature Tap Dancer

International Performance + Cultural Exchange Programming

- 2019** **Tap in Rio Festival**
 Rio De Janeiro, Brazil
 Taught Stepping and Tap Dance workshop with main stage performances, panel discussion and adjudicate tap competition.
- 2011** **International Festival de Cajon Festival**
 United States Embassy, Cultural Affairs Department
 Lima, Peru
 Collaborative performances with local musicians and dancers. Lead workshop teaching the histories and movement qualities of Stepping, Body Percussion and Tap Dance.
- 2010/13** **International Body Music Festival**
 Rio De Janeiro, Brazil
 Taught Stepping workshop to pre-professionals and professional artists.
- 2008/10/11** **DancEncore**
 Quebec, Canada
 Performances with SOLE Defined and Step Afrika including Tap and Gumboot movement workshops.
- 2010** **TDC Festival**
 Cairo, Egypt
 United States Embassy, Cultural Affairs Department
 Performance and Workshop teaching the histories and movement qualities of Stepping, Body Percussion.

- 2010** **HIFA**
The Republic of Zimbabwe
United States Embassy, Cultural Affairs Department
Premiered a new work intersecting Stepping, Body Percussion and Tap Dance with Audience Participation.
- 2010** **Festival Gnaoua, Essaouira**
Casablanca, Morocco
A late-night fusion concert between the popular malaam Mustapha Baqbou and other local performance artists.

Academic Employment: Bowie State University, Curriculum & Program Consultant, 2019-2021

- Developed a comprehensive strategic plan highlighting goals and objectives for a new Dance Major.
- Co-lead the creation of three educational tracks: Performance, Dance & Technology and Dance of the African Diaspora.
- Attend and engage in conversations to decolonize current programming and advance new programming that reflects the community in service.
- Cultivate new syllabus specific to African Diasporic physical practices, methodologies and histories.

Academic Employment: Ball State University, Adjunct Professor of Dance, 2020

- Provide quality African Diasporic percussive dance classes for a diverse population of dance majors and minors.
- Served as Assistant Artistic Director and choreographer for Intertextuality fall dance concert.
- Attend and engage in weekly production meetings with department heads and creative teams.
- Provide mentorship, assessments and grading for scholars.

Academic Employment: University of Maryland Baltimore County, Guest Lecturer, 2018

- Taught a workshop series for University of Maryland Dance Educators Training Institute exploring engaging teaching methods combined with cultural competency components.
- Taught art integrated workshop connecting Stepping with Mathematics exploring teaching methodologies for k-12 educators.

Academic Employment: Coppin State University, Adjunct Professor of Dance, 2006

- Prepared and taught quality Tap Dance classes for a diverse population of dance majors and minors.
 - Provide artistic support for fall and spring dance concerts with choreography contributions and solo performance.
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Nonprofit Leadership and Management: SOLE Defined Percussive Dance Company: Founding Executive Artistic Director, 2011- Present

SOLE Defined is the Washington Metro area's leading arts organization specializing in percussive dance – using the body as an instrument to create musical expression. SD advances styles such as Tap, Stepping, Body Percussion, Sand Dance, and Gumboot. This Black, Indigenous, and People of Color led company infuses powerful skills to delight and inspire audiences.

- Responsible for conceiving and implementing the artistic vision and focus of SOLE Defined.
- Create and implement a variety of artistic programs advancing African Diasporic Percussive dance from across the mid-Atlantic region.
- Develop and maintain strategic planning; including grant writing, paid social media marketing, manage multiple program budgets, create and implement core values.
- Spearhead operations and manage all production activities; regular responsibilities include administration, staff development, touring logistics, scheduling, budget management, marketing and community engagement.
- Collaborate with local and national arts organizations and presenters to address inequalities in the performing arts community, create events to showcase and support the sustainability of BIPOC led arts organizations and to provide cultural exchange opportunities for artists.
- Cultivated SOLE Defined's Inaugural Board of Directors consisting of ten active and diverse members.
- Prepared annual budget and doubled projected revenue during COVID-19, breaking the six-figure mark for the first time in the company's history.
- Initiated & completed company trademarks, Bi-laws, and Federal & Local registrations.
- Oversee all contractual agreements with presenters, agents, artists, crew and collaborators for all performing engagements.

Nonprofit Leadership: Collaborative Growth Project w/ Young Audience of Maryland: Collaborator, Mentor and Facilitator, 2020- Present

The Collaborative Growth Project consist of Teaching Artists that are invested in transforming their Teaching Artist practice to include an anti-racist lens while advancing and unpacking their own held beliefs and biases.

- Co-design curriculum, specifically the four domains of global cultural competency and Belonging and Othering.
- Weekly mentorship to practicing Teaching Artist supporting the decolonization of current teaching practices and curricula.
- Develop a resource guide for continuing education.
- Facilitate a professional development workshop connecting the four domains of global cultural competency and Belonging and Othering to culturally responsive teaching practices.
- Support other collaborators in the creation of The Collaborative Growth Project

Artistic Directing, Dramaturgy: Digital: *Speak Up, A John Lewis Story*.

Speak Up is a 45-minute virtual interactive educational and rhythmic performance utilizing tap dance, stepping, and body percussion to explore the contributions of John Lewis. *Speak Up* by SOLE Defined is catered for school aged youth grades K-12 taking students through three specific points in the Civil Rights Movement, section 1: Who is John Lewis, section 2: Good Trouble, section 3: The Lewis Effect. *Speak Up* was commissioned by Young Audience of Eastern PA and New Jersey and PGAHC.

Artistic Directing: Stage: *SOLE Defined LIVE Tour: VIBEZ* [SOLE Defined.com](https://www.soledefined.com)

The Golden Age of Hip Hop was a defining moment that continues to leave an indelible mark on our culture, identity, and way of life today! *VIBEZ* takes us back to the roots of hip-hop, where it began as an innovative sound, a form of social protest, Afrocentric expression, and a celebration of life. SOLE Defined's magnetic performers take viewers on a journey back in time with a live DJ spinning the sounds of the 90s, original orchestration and their toe-tapping blend of styles tuning any venue into one big party. *VIBEZ* premiered at The Hip Hop Theater Festival at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Creative Directing, Chorography and Directing: Digital: *Rhythm Is Our Business*: August 2021 [The Kennedy Center YouTube](https://www.kennedycenter.org/performances/rhythm-is-our-business)

Rhythm Is Our Business is a dance film focused on the legacy of African American female tap dancers whose contributions (many unknown) to tap dance from the 1920s through the 1960s

have inspired and impacted audiences today. Historically, tap dance has elevated male and white female tap dancers, placing women of color in the background. Today, that narrative has shifted and female tap dancers of color are gaining visibility—headlining performances, creating new works, and producing their own festivals globally. *Rhythm Is Our Business* celebrates the important impact of master female practitioners while furthering the conversation of what's next for tap dance. Created by Quynn Johnson, 2020/2021 Kennedy Center Local Dance Commissioning Project awardee and Directed by Ryan K. Johnson.

Artistic Directing: Digital: SOLE Defined & Dance Place: *Is the dance community silent?: Summer of 2020* [Episode 1-5](#)

In response to the recent and historical violence against Black people and systemic racism in our dance community, I curated a series of live conversations to discuss the climate of our nation and the lack of response from members in the dance community in partnership with Dance Place. These digital sessions feature panelists representing a wide range of socio-economic demographics from over 20 states and cover topics such as nonprofit operating procedures, business practices, funding streams, touring expectations, presenting limitations, pedagogy, andragogy, education methods, and the illusion of inclusion. Each conversation spotlighted Black artists or companies doing incredible work in the field. The decision to showcase artists while hosting solution-oriented discussions was to combat the inequalities presented by booking conferences whose price points block accessibility to BIPOC led organizations.

Conversations included:

What Now: actionable next steps for equity and justice in dance, welcomed host Goldie Patrick alongside LaTasha Barnes, Becky Ferrell, Melanie George, and Tim Wilson.

Decolonizing Dance and Shifting the Rubrics, welcomed host TJ Alladin alongside Conrhonda Baker, Nicole De Weever, Alison McNeil, and Jane Rabinovitz.

The MisEducation: Arts Education 101, welcomed host Aysha Upchurch alongside Dr. Vanessa L. Jackson, Emma Sarfaty, Jamaal 'Mr. Root' Collier, and Giani Clarkson.

The Illusion of Inclusion welcomed host Gregory King alongside panelists Ayodele Castle, Goldie Patrick, Dani Tirrell, and Brian Williams.

Featured Artists/ Companies included, Charles A. Anderson (Austin, TX), *M.A.D.D. Rhythms* (Chicago, IL), *Molodi* (Las Vegas, NV), and *Farafina Kan* (Washington, DC).

Artistic Directing, Writer, Dramaturgy: Stage: *Zaz The Big Easy: Fall 2019* [Zaz Mini Documentary](#)

SOLE Defined's electric performers embark on a spiritual journey through percussive dance. This multifaceted percussive dance performance uses storytelling, digital projection, song, and

brass music to explore the events of Hurricane Katrina, consisting of intimate, first-person testimonies, told from a small speakeasy in New Orleans. An evening-length adventure that propels the audiences on a high-energy immersive roller coaster taking you from the depths of environmental tragedy to the heights of community triumphs and celebration. *Zaz The Big Easy* premiered at Dance Place in Washington, DC a part of the inaugural Artist In Residency cohort.

Artistic Directing: Digital: Queens Theatre Summer Spectacular: July 2020 [Summer VibeZ](#)

Queens Theatre brings together the electrifying talents of D.C. based Ryan K Johnson, SOLE Defined and local dance companies from the Queensboro Dance Festival (QDF) for a sensational 60 minutes of a cultural dance experience! The program includes four integrated performances by QDF companies' dancers choreographed by SOLE Defined artists, a live dance class for the public conducted by Crishon Jerome and a digital dance party for all by DJ RBI featuring dancers from QDF companies. Special Guest Performances by Tamar Greene (Hamilton), Lindsay Roberts- Greene (Phantom), Kenji Angu (Riverdance) Krystal Renée (STOMP).

Diversity Statement

As a Black and Native Indigenous male, I acknowledge both my privilege and marginalization in this world. I am committed to equity, inclusion, and belonging because I do not have the luxury of forgetting my identity. I use my privilege to advance equity for individuals and art forms subjected to conventional systems of oppression by facilitating spaces that limit “othering” and accelerate “belonging,” and developing safe classrooms and working environments. In turn, these environments of belonging promote creativity, performance, and social and emotional growth. My mission is to assist in creating a world that breaks down social constructs that marginalize and segregate people, building bridges of belonging. I will not be considered or allow other BIPOC individuals to be treated as three-fifths human. Nor will I allow spaces, systems, and the environments I occupy to isolate people who do not “fit” the status quo of Western ideologies.

As a Cultural Ambassador for the United States, I had the opportunity to train with the Zulu Nation in Durban, South Africa. I learned the word Sawubona. Its translation means “I see you.” As leaders, community activists, and educators, we are responsible for authentically seeing and affirming the identities of our students and colleagues. When you see me, see all of me as I strive to see all of you. We must see one another’s abilities, cultures, ethnic backgrounds, gender, and religious practices. These parts of our identity create embodied storytelling, foster new understanding, and are entry points for cross-cultural exchange and solution-oriented conversation. Simultaneously, these parts of our identity allow us to understand our own bias and privilege in the spaces we occupy.

It is imperative that we all investigate our privilege, critically deconstruct our biases, and reprogram our learned behaviors. This investigation starts with self-reflection, actions, and an understanding that prepares us to educate the next generation. I firmly believe we can establish deeply inclusive and familial environments by deconstructing colonial systems of oppression. These ingrained systems continue to perpetuate the marginalization and erasure of those who do not fit the patriarchal identity. Removing the narrative that the hierarchy of whiteness is pure and correct allows us to heal. Malcolm X stated, “When I is replaced by We, Illness becomes wellness.” Expanding the “we” of humanity creates an environment that increases the circle of human understanding and fosters healing. Through personal healing, solution-oriented conversation, and tangible action items, we will advance safe communal space.

To advance these spaces, I have curated a series in partnership with Dance Place, titled, *Is the Dance Community Silent: A Virtual Town Hall Series*, on YouTube grounded in solution-oriented conversations addressing inequalities in our community. In partnership with Young Audience of Maryland, I codeveloped the Collaborative Growth Project, anti-racist training for K-12 teaching artists. In my ongoing relationship with The International Association of Black in Dance, I’ve led a virtual series, *Open Spaces*, addressing masculinity in the arts. These initiatives are informed by my lived experiences, passion, and understanding of the four domains of global competencies, which are at the foundation of my pedagogical practice and service. Investigating the world, recognizing perspectives, communicating ideas, and taking action all cultivate a culture embracing belonging is evident in all the spaces I create. The four domains of global cultural competency encourage the acknowledgment and acceptance of differences in relationships with students, collaborators, colleagues, and leadership, establishing a community of belonging. Education can no longer be transactional; it must be transformative. To do so, we must continue to create a safe, engaging, and culturally responsive learning environment. I facilitate spaces that limit “othering” and accelerate “belonging” to develop safe classrooms and a working culture that promotes creativity, performance, social and emotional growth. This approach provides transformational learning experiences and revolutionizes dance education for future generations.

Syllabus: Tap I

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS- AUSTIN

COURSE NUMBER: DANC259-555

COURSE TITLE: Tap Dance Technique I

MEETING TIMES: T/TH 11:00-12:15

INSTRUCTOR: Ryan K. Johnson

COURSE PREREQUISITE(S) There are no prerequisites for Tap 1.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This is an entry investigation of the origins, history, and trajectory Black American percussive dance form; tap dance, stepping and body percussion. It will include basic movement technique, investigative research, video reviews of past and present practitioners and conversations to contextualize the art forms. Students will be introduced to concepts of music theory, polyrhythms and choreographic phrasing to learn and perform traditional tap dance combinations including the Shim Sham and Henry LeTangs signature routines.