FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 24, 2020

Contact: Michelle Tabnick, (646) 765-4773, michelle@michelletabnickpr.com

The International Association of Blacks in Dance announces
Can You Hear Me Now? Campaign

The International Association of Blacks in Dance announces the launch of its Can You Hear Me Now? campaign with an open letter to the White American dance community. Can You Hear Me Now? is an online and social media campaign dedicated to acknowledging and dismantling long-standing racial disparities within the American dance community.

“After having read a number of solidarity statements issued by many of the White and large budget dance institutions from across the country, all we heard were empty and shallow promises. This was the time for many of my colleagues, who said they were about ‘the work’ in the many conversations that we had, to stand up and lean into all of the IDEA’s (inclusion, diversity, equity, access) to which they had committed. We are looking for your action plans. Statements are an act of silence,” said IABD’s President and CEO, Denise Saunders Thompson.

The letter, addressed to the white American dance community begins “The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) stands with the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) theatre-makers. We support their call and affirm The Ground We Stand On. We, who are Black, Brown and People of the Global Majority, come together to say to the White American Dance Community: The time of your systems of race preference is over. We are listening, we are watching and are no longer waiting for your stamp of approval… We have had enough. Your silence is no longer acceptable.”

The full contents of the letter may be found online at https://www.iabdassociation.org/mpage/canyouhearmenow.

To date, the letter has garnered the support of over 140 signatures, that includes artists, administrators, educators, organizations and individuals. Members of the dance community and organizations are invited share the letter within in their networks and sign on by visiting https://www.iabdassociation.org/page/sign.

In the coming weeks, IABD will be releasing THE BLACK REPORT. The report documents the organizational and financial health of a representative sample of Black-led dance companies across the United States. IABD traveled to the cities and communities of these companies collecting financial and organizational data in order to assess the needs of the Black Dance sector. As a result of the report findings, IABD is poised to bring to light the innovative methodologies in spite of pervasive and sometimes destabilizing racism as well as systemic financial inequities-utilizing dance as a means of protest, survival and social change.

In response to the impact of COVID-19 in the Black dance community, to date, The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD), has raised $168,775 in support of their Emergency Fund. Emergency grants have been awarded to 59 individuals and 31 companies. Grants are $1,000 for individuals and $2,500 for companies. IABD is actively soliciting funding for their fund to continue to support artists, companies and dance-related
personnel in the field. The fund was made possible with generous support from the Ford Foundation, Howard Gilman Foundation, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, and individual supporters.

IABD has also continued to serve the Black dance community, and dance field as a whole through its weekly artist connectivity series OPEN SPACE. This virtual series is a collaboration between Francine Sheffield (Sheffield Global Arts Management) and Kristopher McDowell (KMP Artists) and serves as a platform for Dance Artists of Color to share their collective experiences pre-COVID-19 and in these current times. The “open space connection” engages artists at all stages of their careers in a dialogue about pressing issues affecting the field of dance and how we all might dream about what our collective next steps and path will be moving forward.

For more information on IABD’s continued service to the field or to donate to their efforts, visit www.iabdassociation.org/

About The International Association of Blacks in Dance
For over 29 years, The International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD) has preserved and promoted dance by people of African ancestry or origin and has assisted and increased opportunities for artists in advocacy, audience development, education, funding, networking, performance, philosophical dialogue, and touring. IABD serves a diverse, national and international membership of agents and managers, dance companies and studios, educators and educational institutions, individual artists, researchers, and supporters of the Dance field.

For more information, visit https://www.iabdassociation.org/.

#