MEET THE IABD TEAM
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BLACKS IN DANCE
ANNOUNCES NEW STAFF MEMBERS

Washington, D.C. – The International Association of Blacks in Dance, Inc., (IABD), an international dance service organization that preserves and promotes Dance of African ancestry and/or origin, is proud to announce and welcome its newest staff members, Carol Foster, Omar Ingram, Gregory A. King, Aja Roberts, and Ashon T. Mask. In January 2018, the IABD Board of Directors appointed Denise Saunders Thompson, President and CEO from the position of Executive Director/Chairperson that she held for 7 years.

This is a landmark and historic achievement for the 27-year-old organization that will now employ two full time and four part time staff members/contractors. Its upcoming 30 year anniversary of the annual international conference and festival will take place in Los Angeles, CA. Joan Myers Brown, Founder and Honorary Chair of Philadanco!, hosted the first International Conference of Blacks in Dance, 1988 in Philadelphia, PA.

The IABD offices are open Monday - Friday, 10:00am - 6:00pm, along with some weekends. The staff can be reached at (202) 899-3859 or via email through the website: iabdassociation.org/meet-the-iabd-team.

Denise Saunders Thompson
President and CEO

Denise Saunders Thompson has extensive experience in non-profit and for-profit, established or start-up organizations. She has advised organizations on administrative, programmatic and fundraising issues including strategic plans, policy and procedures, communications programs, budgeting and contracts. Currently, Denise is the President and Chief Executive Officer for the International Association of Blacks in Dance, a non-profit service organization and D.d.Saunders & Associates, Inc., a comprehensive fine arts advisory firm offering artist management/representation, arts producing, consulting, and production services. She recently held the position of Professorial Lecturer at American University in the Graduate Arts Management Degree Program. In April 2015, Denise completed 17 years of service at Howard University in the capacities of Professor, Theatre Manager/Producing Artistic Director for the Department of Theatre Arts and Manager of Cramton Auditorium. She is Co-Founder of PlayRight Performing Arts Center, Inc., a non-profit arts organization in Atlanta, Georgia, and former Business Manager for The Malone Group, Inc. a non-profit arts organization in Washington, D.C. that co-produced Black Nativity at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts for six years. Denise currently serves on the Board of Trustees for Dance/USA and Friends of Theatre and Dance at Howard University, is a member of Actors Equity Association (AEA), and Women of Color in the Arts (WOCA). Freelancing in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and across the nation in production and arts management, Mrs. Thompson has held positions at The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Debbie Allen Dance Academy, Alliance Theatre Company, National Black Arts Festival, 1996 Olympic Arts Festival, 1996 Olympics, Lincoln Theatre, Several Dancers Core, the Atlanta Dance Initiative, the Mark Taper Forum, the Shakespeare Theatre at the Folger, Harrah’s Marina Hotel Casino as well as other numerous positions. In addition, she is a grant recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts, Smithsonian Institution National Museum of African Art, DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, and the St. Paul Companies. She holds an M.F.A. from the University of California, Los Angeles in Arts Producing and Management, and a B.F.A. from Howard University in Theatre Arts Administration.
Carol Foster
Executive Associate to the President and CEO / Programs Assistant
Carol Foster founded The D.C. Youth Ensemble in 1980. Ms. Foster worked in the D.C. Public School System for thirty-seven years and has recently retired. She has worked as the Arts Coordinator for the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. In addition, she has taught visual arts in DCPS and was on staff as Adjunct Professor of Dance at the University of the District of Columbia. Ms. Foster has personally worked as a choreographer, performer, writer, director, and visual artist. She has been involved with a number of special projects/programs related to the arts and arts education that were funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities. She is a founding board member the International Association of Blacks in Dance. Foster is also the recipient of the DC Mayor’s Art Award. Foster has given countless hours in community service and has offered advice and support to many aspiring arts students, instructors, future company directors, etc. Her favorite quote is an old African proverb that states “you must always proceed as though you cannot fail.”

Omar Ingram
Special Assistant, Programs
Omar Ingram, originally from Atlanta, Georgia, is the Project Manager of the International Association of Blacks in Dance (IABD). Most recently, he was the General Management Assistant at the Tony-Award winning Public Theater in New York City. Since 2012, he has worked extensively with IABD’s Annual International Conference and Festival of Blacks in Dance and The Pink Frog Foundation Benefit as Production Manager. In addition, his professional work has ranged from production stage manager to executive assistant working for premier artists such as Debbie Allen, Phylicia Rashad, and George Faison. Omar is a graduate of Howard University with a BFA in Musical Theater, and minor in Arts Administration. When he is not working, he enjoys exploring new countries, beaches and cooking.

Gregory A. King
Creative Communications Coordinator
Gregory King received his MFA in Choreographic Practice and Theory from Southern Methodist University. In addition, he is certified in Elementary Labanotation. His dance training began in Washington DC at the Washington Ballet and later at American University. He went on to participate in the Horton Project in conjunction with the Library of Congress. His training continued at the prestigious institutions such as The Dance Theatre of Harlem and The Alvin Alley School. Gregory has performed with The Washington Ballet, Rebecca Kelly Ballet, Erick Hawkins Dance Company, New York Theatre Ballet, Donald Byrd/The Group, The Metropolitan Opera Ballet, New York City Opera, and most recently in Disney’s The Lion King on Broadway. Gregory is also a dance writer for The Dance Enthusiast, The Philadelphia Dance Journal, Broad Street Review, and thINKingDANCE.

He has conducted master classes at Boston Conservatory, Boston University, Indiana University, Bowdoin College, Dallas Black Dance Theatre, Texas Ballet Theatre, Cleveland School of the Arts, Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing Arts in Dallas, TX. Additionally, he has served as a teaching artist in public schools in and around Dallas, as Resident Guest artist at Temple University, part time faculty at Boston Ballet, Assistant Professor of Dance at Dean College, and Visiting Professor of Dance and Consortium for Faculty Diversity Fellow at Swarthmore College. Recently, Mr. King received the Excellence in Teaching Award from the National Society of Leadership and Success and is a proud member of Actors’ Equity, The National Dance Education Organization, and The National Council for Black Studies.

His research agenda is grounded in embodied practice and his interest in dance as a social text. He is committed to exploring interdisciplinary approaches to his scholarship and teaching, hoping that his students will consider dance within its larger historical, cultural, and intellectual context.

In his recent TEDx Kent State presentation, Mr. King referenced the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexuality, encouraging dialogue that affirms the ideological differences between identity and self. Mr. King’s goal is to make his research rich, interesting, and reflective of contemporary preoccupations in a variety of academic disciplines. He is currently an assistant professor of dance at Kent State University where he teaches Horton, Dance Composition, and Dance as an Art Form.
Aja Roberts
Development Associate
Aja Roberts strives to be consistent and persistent in everything she does. With a background in hospitality management, musical theatre performance and six years working in event management, Aja is now extending her passion into the arts management arena. Aja has a Masters in Arts Management from American University, DC. Her academic interests and research include philanthropy, development, and culture and heritage. Since her short time in Washington, DC she has worked, completed an inaugural fellowship, and interned with some of the major arts institutions in the area. She is looking forward to working with IABD and making a meaningful contribution to the organization.

Ashon T. Mask
Bookkeeper/Finance
Ashon Mask is native of Lansing, Michigan and an alumnus of Howard University where he received his Bachelor of Fine Arts in Theatre Arts Administration. His studies focused on stage & event production, marketing/branding, finance/budget planning, and personnel management as they relate to arts organizations. Ashon has worked with a number of DMV area arts organizations as a freelance Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, and Production Assistant.

Currently, in addition to his role at IABD, Ashon is the Staff Accountant with Dance/USA, the national service organization for the professional field of dance.

“The expansion of the IABD team strengthens our ability to meet the needs of the Black dance community,” noted Denise Saunders Thompson, President and CEO of IABD. “Each team members unique skills and gifts will greatly benefit IABD, as the organization continues to fulfill it mission for our network of members, and constituency.”

Yvonne Walker, Board Chair, states, “We are extremely pleased to have all of these wonderful and committed people on the team, and look forward to a prosperous future with them.”

For more information about The International Association of Blacks in Dance and its 30th Annual International Conference and Festival hosted by Lula Washington Dance Theatre visit www.iabdassociation.org or call (202) 899-3859.

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About IABD
The International Association of Blacks in Dance preserves and promotes dance by people of African ancestry or origin, and assists and increases opportunities for artists in advocacy, audience development, education, funding, networking, performance, philosophical dialogue, and touring. IABD has become the Mecca for Blacks in Dance such as administrators, artists, choreographers, dance companies, directors, educators, scholars, and those interested in artistry, black dance issues, and performance presentations. The Association, founded in 1991, provides a network, formal newsletters, choreographers directory, published papers and is the raison d’être for the annual conference. The Association also responds to and initiates dialogue around issues that impact the Black Dance Community as well as the Dance community at large. IABD has developed national prominence and allowed the Black Dance Community to come together on issues important to them.