



Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company

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Contact: Janice L. Kaplan, 202-277-5461  
JaniceLKaplan@JaniceLKaplan.com

**NEW DANA TAI SOON BURGESS WORK ABOUT SPACE  
TO PREMIERE AT THE KENNEDY CENTER IN SEPTEMBER**

“We choose to go to the moon,” a new work by choreographer Dana Tai Soon Burgess about America's relationship to space, will have its world premiere at The John F. Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 19 and 20 at 7 p.m. The work was created in collaboration with NASA. It will be performed by Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company along with three other works: “Picasso Dances,” “Confluence” and “Mandala.” Tickets are available at <http://www.kennedy-center.org/calendar/event/RPXCD>.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company (DTSBDC) is devoted to performing personal and culturally inspired choreography on universal topics such as identity and belonging that resonate with global audiences. Burgess has been described by Pulitzer Prize-winning Washington Post dance critic Sarah Kaufman as “not only a Washington prize, but a national dance treasure” and “poet laureate of Washington dance.”

Nostalgic and sublime, the new work touches upon America's idealism around the space race, the mystery of the cosmos and the fragility of life. Burgess spent months talking with astronauts and scientists about their relationship to space and examining the importance of space to our culture. The title of the dance refers to a line from the 1962 speech by President Kennedy about the national effort to land a man on the moon.

“We choose to go to the moon” incorporates images supplied by NASA and 1960s-inspired costumes by Judy Hansen. In addition to a clip from Kennedy's speech, the sound score includes pop songs from the era of space exploration (“Stairway to Heaven,” “Stardust,” “Fly Me to the Moon,” “Catch a Falling Star,” and “My Previous Love”), as well as sounds from the magnetosphere. It also includes sound bites from interviews representing a range of perspectives including:

- Bruce McCandless, a former naval aviator with the Navy and former NASA astronaut. During the first of his two Space Shuttle missions he made the first-ever untethered free flight.
- Dr. Chryssa Kouveliotou, a senior technologist in high-energy astrophysics at NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Kouveliotou conducts extensive research on black, holes neutron stars and gamma-ray bursts.
- Dr. Neil Gehrels, an experimental physicist working in gamma-ray astronomy. His interests include gamma-ray bursts and supernovae.

- Dr. Jim Zimbelman, a National Air and Space Museum geologist whose research interests include topical geologic mapping of Mars and Venus.
- Mary Weahkee (Comanche/Santa Clara Pueblo), a Santa Fe-based medicine woman whose father was an electrician for the Apollo missions and whose childhood best friend Tamara Jernigan went on to be an astronaut.

In addition to the new dance, the company will perform three works from its repertory. "Picasso Dances," was commissioned by and premiered at The Kreeger Museum earlier this year. Performed to music by Spanish composer Manuel de Falla, the abstract work was inspired by four Picasso paintings in The Kreeger's collection. "Confluence" explores the psychological terrain of brief encounters, or trysts. The work was commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery when Burgess was the Smithsonian's first ever choreographer-in-residence. "Mandala," grew out of Burgess' 1999 visit as a cultural ambassador to Pakistan. The work was originally commissioned by The Kennedy Center.

After its Kennedy Center debut, "We choose to go to the moon" will be performed at NASA sites around the country.

### **About Dana Tai Soon Burgess**

Dana Tai Soon Burgess grew up in Santa Fe, the son of a Korean-American mother and Irish-German-Scotch father who were both artists. Throughout his career, he has explored this hyphenated cultural status in his choreography. Burgess, who began dancing when he was 16, went on to earn degrees in dance from the University of New Mexico and The George Washington University. Since founding DTSBDC in 1992, he has sought out dancers of diverse backgrounds. His experience in varied forms of movement – modern dance, ballet and martial arts – is reflected in such works as "Hyphen" and "Becoming American." Burgess serves as chair of G.W.'s Department of Theater and Dance and, for nearly two decades, as a State Department cultural ambassador. In addition, he is founder of DTSBDC Engaging Youth, which mentors Asian-American high school students and teaches dance to youth at Washington area schools.

For more information, visit [www.dtsbdc.org](http://www.dtsbdc.org), follow the company on Twitter @dtsbdc or become a friend on Facebook.

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