

DANA TAI SOON BURGESS DANCE COMPANY



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### **DANA TAI SOON BURGESS DANCE COMPANY 25TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON FEATURES WORLD PREMIERE**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The psychological impact of war on soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan is the focus of a new dance by choreographer Dana Tai Soon Burgess. Inspired by the National Portrait Gallery’s current exhibition, “The Face of Battle: Americans at War, 9/11 to Now,” the new dance will have its world premiere at the museum on July 8 at 2 and 4 p.m. Burgess is the Smithsonian’s first choreographer-in-residence at the National Portrait Gallery. “The Face of Battle” is on view through Jan. 28, 2018.

Dana Tai Soon Burgess Dance Company (DTSBDC) marks its 25th anniversary this year with performances, classes, an international tour, and two world premieres at the Portrait Gallery.

#### **Smithsonian Residency**

“Dana’s work is bringing both modern dance and visual art to a broader audience and ultimately enriching the life of the museum and its many visitors,” said Portrait Gallery director Kim Sajet. Burgess has a long history of partnering with museums including the National Gallery of Art, Corcoran Gallery and The Kreeger Museum.

The title of the new dance, “After 1001 Nights,” is a reference to the stories of the Arabian Nights. The dance is inspired by artworks in “The Face of Battle” exhibition: photographs by Ashley Gilbertson of bedrooms the combat dead left behind; Louie Palu’s psychologically complex portraits of military personnel; and pencil portraits by Emily Prince that correspond to soldiers’ skin tones. Those tones inform the costumes designed by Judy Hansen.

The choreography also was informed by interviews Burgess conducted with veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan “who talked about everything from the boredom during long periods of waiting to the sounds of war to coming face-to-face with their own mortality,” Burgess said. The dust in the desert came up over and over including this line from one interview: “You knew when someone was badly injured because they turned to dust.”

The dance focuses on a soldier looking back at his younger self and trying to come to terms with what he saw and did in war. It is set to the melodic, elegant music of composer John Zorn, “Leonard: The Book of Angels Volume 30,” performed by Garth Knox and the Saltarello Trio.

The company will hold open rehearsals in the museum on June 10 and 17 from 11:30 to 2 p.m. to provide visitors a window into the choreographer’s creative process.

In the fall, Burgess will create a new dance based on the exhibition, “One Life: Sylvia Plath.” All of the Smithsonian events are free and open to the public. The National

Portrait Gallery is located at Eighth and F Streets N.W. Visit [npg.si.edu](http://npg.si.edu).

A portrait of Dana by the Korean American artist CYJO is part of the Portrait Gallery's permanent collection and has been displayed alongside portraits of Oprah Winfrey, Michelle Obama, Sonia Sotomayor and Serena Williams, among other luminaries at the top of their fields.

### **Anniversary Year**

"Over the past 25 years, I've seen Dana and his company grow into what *Washington Post* dance critic Sarah Kaufman has called 'not only a Washington prize, but a national dance treasure,'" said DTSBDC Board President Bonnie Kogod. "The son of a Irish-German-Scottish father and Korean-American mother, Dana's choreography focuses on such topics as identity, heritage, belonging, and what it means to be a hyphenated American – themes that are both personal and universal, and that have renewed relevance given the current political conversation in this country."

On May 19, the Arts Club of Washington, 2017 I Street, N.W., will present "An Evening of Conversation and Dance with Dana Tai Soon Burgess," including a lecture, demonstration and dinner. The event begins at 6:30 pm. Tickets are \$60 for the program and dinner; \$20 for the program only. Reservations are required; contact [administrator@artsclubofwashington.org](mailto:administrator@artsclubofwashington.org)

As a U.S. Department of State Cultural Ambassador, Burgess and his company have toured to more than 30 countries over more than two decades. An international tour to Panama is tentatively scheduled for fall 2017. "Contemporary dance has the capacity to bring different cultures together in the shared language of movement," says the choreographer.

The 25th anniversary will culminate in a performance at The Kennedy Center's Terrace Theater June 15-17, 2018, featuring a world premiere and dances from the company's repertoire over the past 25 years.

The company recently returned from touring to Burgess's hometown of Santa Fe, New Mexico, where the mayor proclaimed March 18 as "Dana Tai Soon Burgess Day." The company also performed at the Spring Meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund earlier this month.

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

Washington, D.C.'s foremost modern dance choreographer, Burgess has been described by Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* dance critic Sarah Kaufman as "poet laureate of Washington dance." He is a graduate of the University of New Mexico and The George Washington University, where he is chair of the Department of Theater and Dance. The company manages the dance program at Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia; offers a Summer Dance Intensive at Georgetown Day School in the District; and public classes at Glen Echo Park in Bethesda, Maryland. In addition, DTSBDC has performed across the U.S. and around the world, including at the White House at the request of President and Mrs. Obama. For more information visit [dtsbdc.org](http://dtsbdc.org) or 202-497-2436.

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