



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**June 25, 2018**

**Innovative Dance Performance Comes to Downtown Hartford Public Library Audiences**

*Judy Dworin Performance Project's Ensemble to present (US) at Hartford Public Library in October 2018*

**HARTFORD, CT— June 25, 2018**—This summer and fall, Judy Dworin Performance Project invites the public to a series of open rehearsals for its current work-in-progress, entitled, *(US)*.

*(US)* is about the historical and contemporary experience of immigration, explored through dance, visual images, and narratives. Choreographed and scripted by JDPP's Executive and Artistic Director, Judy Dworin with Associate Artistic Director, Kathy Bortek Gersten and the Ensemble, *(US)* is the JDPP Ensemble's first-ever site-specific work conceived to travel through the Hartford Public Library. The piece incorporates the Library's Main Street building's architecture to contrast themes of openness versus closed spaces, sanctuary versus barriers, and conflict versus welcome.

JDPP is embarking on an important partnership with Hartford Public Library on this project because of the unique roles libraries play in bringing together people of diverse

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backgrounds. Bringing the dance theater experience into the library space, is a way of connecting with the experience of many of Hartford's estimated 26,127 foreign-born residents (21.2%).

“Hartford Public Library is a central city hub for newcomers to engage with broader society,” says Judy Dworin, Executive & Artistic Director, JDPP. “Like immigrants from the past and present, audiences will go on a journey, traveling through the library as the piece progresses. On the way, they will observe the performance from various vantage points: while standing in its midst, looking down at it from above, and more traditionally as an audience spectator.”

Bridget Quinn-Carey, CEO of Hartford Public Library, adds, “Hartford Public Library is pleased to partner with JDPP on this project. Our goal is to demonstrate the alignment of the arts and humanities in the search for knowledge and understanding.”

“This innovative collaboration clearly demonstrates the important role of libraries and the arts in portraying an immigrants's challenges and joys,” said Kristina Newman-Scott, Director of Culture for the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD). “Judy Dworin was recently awarded our 2018 Lifetime Achievement Award from the CT Office of the Arts for her inspiring and innovative work on stage, in schools, in prisons and in the community and for her tireless work raising awareness about social issues and creating positive change through creative expression. This project does just that.”

The task of transferring the immigrant experience into performance has inspired and challenged JDPP's Ensemble of professional dance artists. The central visual motif is a collection of vintage suitcases. Says Kathy Borteck Gersten, Associate Artistic Director, “The suitcases remind us that everyone who moves from one place to another brings something with him or her, from possessions to fears and anxieties to cultural traditions. Most importantly, they

bring hope for themselves and their families.” Visual metaphors that suggest walls, doors, traveling, waiting in lines, and snapshot moments that encapsulate the journey **frame** the immigrant experience **with** text by Pablo Neruda, Marjorie Agosín, Tishani Doshi, and Dworin, among others.

### **Opening rehearsals to public viewing**

*(US)* offers a new direction in performance for those who view it both in rehearsal and performance. Says Judy Dworin, “The whole rehearsal process is an experiment in involving the audience in the process of developing the final work. We are looking to engage with viewers and hear how they respond. We know that dance theater is new for many people, but we also know that the stories we tell with movement, music, and spoken word humanize social issues, and connect across cultures and languages on the most basic level.”

JDPP rehearsals of *(US)* will take place at Hartford Public Library’s downtown Main Street branch throughout the summer and early fall. Full run-through rehearsals will happen from 10-11 am on June 28; August 21, and September 20. Working rehearsals will be on August 14, August 28, September 13, and September 27 from 9:30-12 noon. All rehearsals are free and the public is invited. The Hartford Public Library Main Street branch is handicapped accessible, with parking available in the parking ramp behind the building. For more information visit [www.judydworin.org](http://www.judydworin.org).

### **October 2018 premiere and beyond**

JDPP will premiere the final version of *(US)* at Hartford Public Library on October 12, 2018. On Oct. 12, there will be two ticketed performances for the general public, and a free performance for Hartford public school students. There will also be a ticketed performance on Oct. 13. The project includes a collaboration with Hartford-based Visual Communication Design

Artist, Constanza Segovia, who will work with Hartford public school students to translate their reactions and insights to (US) into her hallmark award winning “graffiti art.” Her work has been commissioned for projects such as the Hartford Envisionfest and the New Haven Neighborhoods: Wellbeing Survey. The resulting artwork will be exhibited in several public locations to be determined.

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Since 1989, **Judy Dworin Performance Project, Inc.** has used the arts to address social justice issues. JDPP’s mission is to innovate, inspire, educate, and build community to overcome the barriers of race, economic opportunity, culture, and other divisions. JDPP harnesses the arts as a powerful catalyst for positive change and collaboration. JDPP’s award-winning performance work premieres each year in Hartford and has toured throughout Connecticut, the Northeast and internationally. Over 1,000 largely underserved adults and children participate in fourteen JDPP residency sites that include public schools, prisons, and professional performance venues.

Now celebrating its 125<sup>th</sup> year, Hartford Public Library remains at the forefront of redefining the urban library experience in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. With seven locations throughout the city, the library provides education, intellectual enrichment and cultural development for thousands of children, youth and adults every year. Hartford Public Library has also gained local and national recognition for its wide range of new initiatives and partnerships designed to meet the needs of a diverse and dynamic city and region, including immigration services, employment assistance and youth leadership training. Please visit [www.hplct.org](http://www.hplct.org).

**For more information, press only:**

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## **Photos available**

### **Photo Captions**

#### Photo 1

Dancers (clockwise from bottom right) Mellissa Craig, Lisa Matias, Alexa Melonopoulos Fleury, Haley Zdebski, Heidi Klecak, and Tracy Lombardo surround Raechal Manga at a full rehearsal of *(US)*, a work-in-progress by Judy Dworin Performance Project. The rehearsal was held at Hartford Public Library's Downtown Branch. *(US)* explores the immigrant experience past and present through dance, visual images and spoken narratives. Additional full rehearsals of *(US)* will be held at the library from 10-11 am on August 21 and September 20. Working rehearsals will be held from 9:30 am – 12 noon on August 14 and 28 and September 13 and 27. The show itself will be held on October 12 and 13 at the library. For tickets and more information, go to [www.judydworin.org](http://www.judydworin.org).

#### Photo 3

Alexa Melonopoulos Fleury and Mellissa Craig rehearse a scene from *(US)*, a work-in-progress by Judy Dworin Performance Project, at Hartford Public Library's Downtown Branch. *(US)* explores the immigrant experience past and present through dance, visual images and spoken narratives. Additional full rehearsals of *(US)* will be held at the library from 10-11 am on

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#### Photo 5

Melissa Craig (left) and Raechal Manga (right) in a scene from a full dress rehearsal of *(US)*, a work-in-progress by Judy Dworin Performance Project. The rehearsal was held at Hartford Public Library's Downtown Branch. *(US)* explores the immigrant experience past and present through dance, visual images and spoken narratives. Additional full rehearsals of *(US)* will be held at the library from 10-11 am on August 21 and September 20. Working rehearsals will be held from 9:30 am – 12 noon on August 14 and 28 and September 13 and 27. The show itself will be held on October 12 and 13 at the library. For tickets and more information, go to [www.judydworin.org](http://www.judydworin.org).