



"The directness of Christopher K. Morgan's work hooks you from the first move. The transcendence of it keeps you hooked, even after the last moves are over."
Sarah Kaufman, *The Washington Post*

Photo by Brianne Bland

Christopher K. Morgan & Artists

A professional contemporary dance company based just outside Washington, D.C. in Bethesda, MD, **Christopher K. Morgan & Artists** creates work from a belief in the urgency of live performance in an increasingly isolating, commercial, and digital world. Founded in July 2011, as a vehicle for Morgan's choreographic exploration of social and cultural issues, the company provides a creative outlet for its artists and collaborators through virtuosic and expressive dance performances.

CKM&A works to demystify contemporary dance through community dialogue and online video content. Through the company's "[Behind Closed Doors](#)" video trailers, audiences enter the world of the company, getting behind-the-scenes footage of rehearsals and deepening their understanding about the work and creative process. The company also provides professional and pre-professional educational opportunities through its intensives, workshops and university residencies. Through commissioning work by other choreographers and its *Dance and Deserts* program, the company also provides facilitation and performance opportunities to other professional dance artists.

The company recently received two prestigious grants: a National Dance Project Production Grant (NDP) from The New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) and a Creation Fund Award from the National Performance Network (NPN) for future engagements at Dance Place in Washington, D.C. and the Maui Arts and Cultural Center in Hawaii, as well as additional national touring.

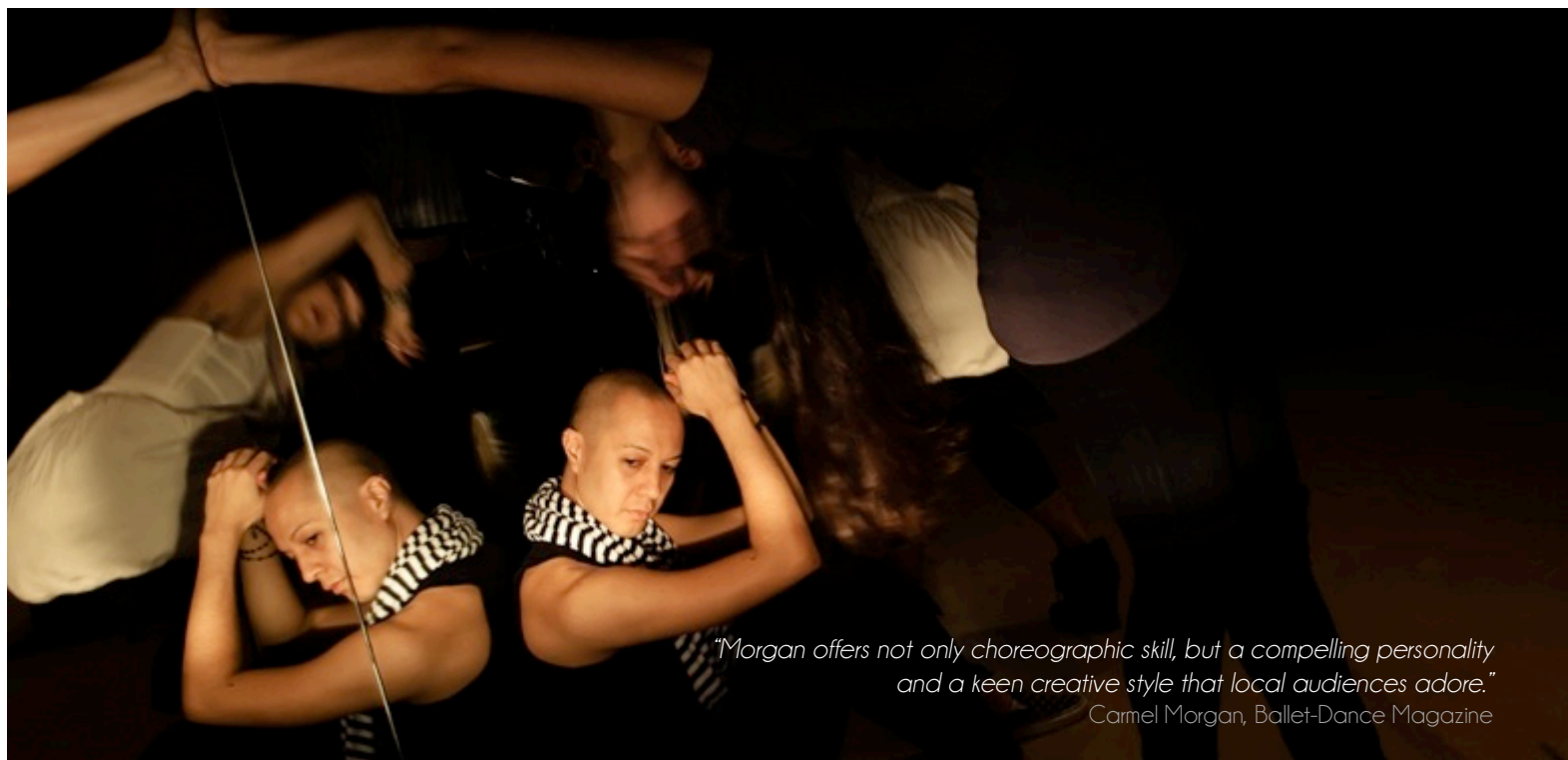
"... among the best, if not the best, of the Washington area's choreographers."
Carmel Morgan, *Critical Dance*



Photo by Brianne Bland

Quick Facts

- CKM&A maintains a dual residency at **American Dance Institute** in Rockville, MD, where they present work annually and maintain rehearsal and office space, and **The Alden** in McLean, VA, where they also present annual performances.
- CKM&A collaborates with several musicians including Ignacio Alcover, Monstah Black, Jonathan Kolm, David Schulman and Wytold who provide original scores and at times, live performances.
- CKM&A premiered 5 new works in 2014, Morgan's *Dissolving*, *Inconstancy*, *In The Cold Room* and *Bruised*, and *Deprivation* by Assistant Director Tiffanie Carson.
- CKM&A's the upcoming remount of Morgan's 2012 evening length work, *Limited Visibility*, at **American Dance Institute** in May 2015 will feature a new score by electric cellist Wytold. Available for touring, the piece is a suite of dances connected in theme and design, incorporating Morgan's sinuous, athletic movement style and an industrial, sleek design that "makes for a fascinating backdrop against which the dancers laid bare their souls" (Carmel Morgan, *Ballet-Dance Magazine*).
- CKM&A recently received substantial grant support from the National Performance Network (**NPN**), New England Foundation for the Arts (**NEFA**), and Maryland State Arts Council, who awarded Morgan a 2014 Individual Artist Award for Solo Dance Performance. Morgan's much anticipated new solo work *Pohaku*, an exploration of his Hawaiian identity, will be eligible for NEFA tour support beginning in January 2016.
- Since it's founding in July of 2011, CKM&A has been seen by over 12,587 audience members in 64 different performances at 31 different venues throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region, including the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Velocity Dance Festival, Steel Stacks in Bethlehem, PA, and annual seasons at **The Alden** and **American Dance Institute**.
- CKM&A has conducted residencies at 16 universities and conservatories throughout the United States, reaching over 2,687 pre-professional and professional students. These institutions include American University, Radford University, DeSales University, Old Dominion University, George Mason University, Stephens College Missouri, The CityDance Conservatory, Ecole Supérieure de Danse de Cannes Rosella Hightower in France, and several others.



"Morgan offers not only choreographic skill, but a compelling personality and a keen creative style that local audiences adore."
Carmel Morgan, Ballet-Dance Magazine

Photo by Brianne Bland

The Artistic Director

Born in Orange County, California, Christopher's Native Hawaiian ancestry and a diverse, international modern dance career that had him move to Munich, Washington DC, New York, Dublin and London, all influence his unique choreographic voice. Said to be "charming and poignant" by *The New York Times*, his work has been presented in 18 countries on five continents and has addressed issues including sexuality, gender identity, race, climate change, and water conservation.

In 2011, *Dance Magazine* profiled Christopher as one of six breakout choreographers in the United States, the same year he founded CKM&A. His 2010 work *+1/-1*, commissioned by the US State Department and CityDance, opened the Ramallah International Dance Festival and won the Dance Metro DC award for Outstanding New Work that year. Presenting highlights include The Kennedy Center (Washington, DC), The Maly Theatre (Moscow, Russia), the Hong Kong Cultural Center (China), The National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC), and the South Lawn of the White House. From 2007-2011, he served as Choreographer in Residence and Rehearsal Director for CityDance Ensemble.

Recent Awards include a 2011 Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award for Choreography, a 2012 and 2013 Individual Artist Grant from the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, a 2013 Native Arts and Cultures Foundation Fellowship and a 2014 Maryland State Arts Council Individual Artist Award for Solo Dance Performance.

Teaching highlights include the Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Shawbrook (Ireland), Iwanson Schule (Munich), Teatro di San Carlo (Italy), the Ecole Supérieur de Danse Cannes (France), Aura Dance Company (Lithuania).

Performing credits include Fabulous Beast Dance Theater (Ireland/UK), David Gordon, Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, Kevin Wynn and the Collection, Shapiro & Smith, Malashock Dance & Company, Selfish Shellfish (Germany), and as a soloist with the Washington National, Houston Grand, and New York City Operas. He was in the original Olivier nominated cast of Fabulous Beast Dance Theater's *Ciselle*. TV and film credits include a PBS Great Performance with Plácido Domingo, and on film dancing with Kate Winslet and Christopher Walken.

Known as an eloquent speaker and advocate for artists, Christopher is frequently sought as a speaker and panelist. He has adjudicated for the American College Dance Festival and served on panels for the NEA, Maryland State Arts Council and McKnight Foundation among many others.

In addition to directing CKM&A, Christopher is also the director of the Dance Omi International Dance Collective, an annual collaborative residency for choreographers that takes place each summer in New York. Christopher is the Dance Artist in Residence in The School of Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies at the University of Maryland.



"As a choreographer, Morgan stands out for his innovation of form, fascinating collaborations and his capacity as a storyteller."
The Native Arts and Cultures Foundation

Place Names at The Alden, March 2013
Photo by Brianne Bland

The Artists

Christopher K. Morgan - Artistic Director / Choreographer

Tiffanie Carson - Assistant Director / Dancer

Dancers

Lauren Christie - Dancer

Amanda Engelhardt - Dancer

Thomas L. Moore, Jr. - Dancer

Ellie van Bever - Dancer

Nicholas Brock - Guest Dancer

Mat Elder - Guest Dancer

Zenas Okanlawon - Guest Dancer

Designers

Roxanne Morgan - Costume Designer

Sebastian Arango - Costume Designer

Brianne Bland - Photographer

Shannon Braine - Dance Technologist

Sareen Hairabedian - Videographer

Gracie Corapi - Apprentice / Videographer

Brian Allard - Lighting Designer

Jason Arnold - Lighting Designer

Jason Wells - Lighting Designer

Musical Collaborators

Ignacio Alcover - Composer

Monstah Black - Composer

Jonathan Kolm - Composer

David Schulman - Composer

Wytold - Composer

Guest Choreographers

Junichi Fukuda - 2012-2013 Season

Sydney Skybetter - 2012-2013 Season

Christian Von Howard - 2012-2013 Season

Tiffanie Carson - 2014-2015 Season



Photo by Brianne Bland

Christopher K. Morgan & Artists 2014-2015 Season

Acceleration

New Dance Festival
James Madison University
September 5 & 6, 2014

CKM&A shares an evening of dance with JMU dance program faculty at the Forbes Center for the Performing Arts. The company will present *In The Cold Room*, *Bruised*, and *Selling Out* all declared by *The Washington Post* to be "direct, transcendent and entrancing".

Velocity DC Dance Festival
Sidney Harman Hall
October 11, 2014

CKM&A will present Morgan's critically acclaimed duet *Bruised*, with live electric cellist score performed by Wytold in Washington, D.C.'s annual dance festival.

Inconstancy
The Alden Theatre
November 14 & 15, 2014

CKM&A's fourth season at The Alden includes the world premieres of *Deprivation* by Assistant Director Tiffanie Carson and the world premiere of *Inconstancy* by Morgan with an original score by David Schulman, which takes a look at how the grass is always greener on the other side.

Dance & Dessert
American Dance Institute
September 28 & October 19, 2014
March 1 & April 12, 2015

This series brings together innovative dance makers and inquisitive audiences. Each event showcases two choreographers, who each present a work-in-progress, followed by Morgan facilitating a critical response process between the choreographer and the audience. Sponsored by American Dance Institute and The Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County.

Winter Workshop
American Dance Institute
January 5 – 7, 2015

Join CKM&A for its second annual Winter Workshop with three days of technique classes and repertoire, designed to inspire and challenge serious pre-professional and professional students. The workshop is a fantastic way to refresh your practice as a working professional and get back into your body after the holidays.

Traveling
Steel Stacks, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania
March 15 – 22, 2015

An evening of mixed repertoire and new work previews will conclude a week-long residency at Silo that includes master classes at DeSales University and Muhlenberg College.

Summer Intensive
American Dance Institute
May 25 – June 5, 2015

Join CKM&A for two weeks of technique, repertoire, and seminars designed to inspire and challenge serious pre-professional and professional students. The intensive includes a professional photo shoot and a culminating intensive performance that is free and open to the public.

Limited Visibility
American Dance Institute
May 30 & 31, 2015

CKM&A remounts Morgan's 2012 evening length work, *Limited Visibility*, featuring a reworked score by electric cellist Wytold. The work incorporates Morgan's sinuous, athletic movement style and an industrial, sleek design that "makes for a fascinating backdrop against which the dancers laid bare their souls" (Carmel Morgan, Ballet-Dance Magazine).



*"Christopher is a wonderful teacher, talented choreographer
and artist... an inspiration to the dance field."*

*Greg Halloran, University of Idaho
Associate Professor of Dance*

Photo by Brianne Bland

Performances

The company is available for an array of performances, including the NDP supported solo Pohaku (eligible for NDP tour support and tours with other repertory), Morgan's 2012 evening length work *Limited Visibility*, as well as other mixed repertoire performances that can be programmed to best suit the needs and audience of each presenter.

Teaching and Residency Work

Morgan and the company can be engaged for an assortment of master classes, residencies and commissioned choreography. Morgan and his company are talented educators capable of teaching various techniques: contemporary modern, ballet, restoration, improvisation, and jazz to round out the residency experience. A gifted artist/educator capable of teaching many genres of dance, Morgan's technique classes refine students' movement skills while developing artistry in a rigorous, yet supportive manner. Possessing extensive experience as a facilitator, he is also an articulate speaker on dance to experts and novices alike.

For booking inquiries, contact us at
info@christopherkmorgan.com

Press and Reviews

"Only the most gifted choreographers can create such surprise and beauty that you sigh, feel satisfied, and are left longing to see the dance again. Morgan is this kind of dance master."

Carmel Morgan, Critical Dance

"A vast range of conceptual beauty...that inspires conversation long after you leave the room."

Breena Seigel, DC Metro Theater Arts

"Morgan displays choreographic intellect... resulting in full-bodied artistic works that interplay narrative, movement ideas and a not insignificant trace of humanity."

Lisa Traiger, Dance View Times

"His work strikes a personal chord with audiences... yet his abstractions leave plenty of room for imagination."

Emily Macel Theys, Dance Magazine

"A forward thinking choreographer, who is willing and able to move beyond the traditional."

Heather Desaulniers, Ballet-Dance Magazine

"Morgan incorporates the architecture of formal dance, which establishes both rigor and line, but without empty posing. He displays a keen intellectual curiosity."

Susan K. Galbraith, The Washington Post

"Christopher K. Morgan is a gift to DC, and his gift extends beyond just his choreographic abilities."

Carmel Morgan, Ballet-Dance.com



*In the Cold Room at American Dance Institute, May 2014
Photo by Brianne Bland*

The Washington Post

‘By the Inch’ at the American Dance Institute is direct, transcendent and entrancing

By Sarah Kaufman, Published: May 31, 2014



Tiffanie Carson, photo by Brianne Bland

The directness of Christopher K. Morgan’s work hooks you from the first move. The transcendence of it keeps you hooked, even after the last moves are over.

It’s an unusual thing in dance to experience a fast-paced kinetic charge that has emotional content, too. This was the power of Morgan’s “By the Inch,” a program of four extraordinary works at American Dance Institute this weekend. The performances flew by — the program lasted scarcely longer than an hour, including an intermission — and left you rather breathless. That’s a tribute to the excellent dancers, all of whom (Morgan included) have a rolling, luxurious and large-scale quality of movement. But it was Morgan’s talent for combining moves into great waves of corporeal expression at once primal and poetic that made you forget about less significant things like exhaling.

The roller-coaster ride launched without delay in the first work, “In the Cold Room,” a world premiere featuring Giselle Alvarez (fondly remembered from the Washington Ballet’s Studio Company), Tiffanie Carson and Amanda Engelhardt. Morgan didn’t waste them on the mundane. A circling, spiraling current spun through them, like some mystical cyclone; they arced and swooped as if something unseen were in control, whipping them off-axis, pushing them to the very edge of their ability to stay upright. Their unease was nameless and big, and it held the imagination.

Over in the corner, a musician named Wytold was whipping up his own windstorm on an electric cello. Live music was a classy touch, and a mark of Morgan’s attention to detail, which also was clear in the sensitive lighting by Jason Wells. Wytold brought shifting emotional tones into the second world premiere, “Bruised,” a testosterone-fueled duet for Washington Ballet members Corey Landolt and Andile Ndlovu. Tenderness crept in near the end — each man tried to lay his head on the other’s shoulder — but was abruptly cut short. Here, as in “In the Cold Room” and in a solo for Carson, “Selling Out,” the dancers often seemed at war with themselves. Established rhythms were interrupted by sudden impulses that wrenched their bodies into jagged, off-kilter shapes.

Morgan doesn’t seem interested in folks with seamless personalities and no drama. His autobiographical 2004 solo, “The Measure of a Man,” which capped the evening, provided a clue as to why. There are so many stories inside a fractured person — one who is scarred, with the pain still fresh, and who is tough enough to revisit it. Morgan’s exploration of varieties of manhood — the cheesy pickup artist (“Do you believe in love at first sight, or should I walk by again?”), the office drone, the ballet prince and the majestic queen in pleather hot pants — was a hilarious suite of spot-on impressions. It was also a searing portrait of someone on the outside looking in. But as his other works showed, belonging to a group is overrated. Conformity is boring. Messy individuality is so much more interesting.

Christopher K. Morgan & Artists
By The Inch
An Evening of Mixed Repertoire

American Dance Institute, Rockville, Maryland; May 30, 2014

Carmel Morgan

Christopher K. Morgan (no relation to this reviewer), artistic director of Christopher K. Morgan & Artists (“CKM&A”), may have just hit his choreographic stride. Since moving to Washington, DC, in August 2007, I’ve enjoyed being introduced to local choreographers and being able to watch them grow. While it isn’t nice to play favorites, maybe, Morgan has certainly earned a place at the top of my list of young choreographers with promise. After seeing his most recent show, “By the Inch,” I can confidently call him among the best, if not the best, of the Washington area’s choreographers. In particular, his trio “In the Cold Room,” is the most sophisticated and accomplished of his works I’ve seen to date. If I headed a dance company, I’d be beating down Morgan’s door to acquire “In the Cold Room,” or another new work by Morgan, for my dancers.

“In the Cold Room,” is a spectacularly challenging and achingly pretty piece that any company would be proud to produce. That this work comes from Morgan and premiered in the DC area should be a huge point of pride for the nation’s capital. Actually, it’s the American Dance Institute, in Rockville, Maryland, and the Arts & Humanities Council of Montgomery County, Maryland, among others, who get to boast about their support of Morgan. I’m incredibly thankful that Morgan continues to get funding for his choreography, and it’s great to see that in the fall of 2014 he will become the Dance Artist in Residence at the University of Maryland. I’m positive there are more fantastic things to come from him.

Anyway, “In the Cold Room,” struck me as near perfection. The lighting design was spectacularly executed by Jason Wells. The costumes, simple pale slip dresses with high cut side slits by Dorothy and Amanda Engelhardt, moved elegantly and showed off the dancers’ muscular thighs, which the lighting design, replete with shadows, also emphasized. Wytold’s original score for electric cello, performed live, filled the theater with a hard-to-describe ambience, which made the dancing all the more mesmerizing. Everything came together to make a remarkable whole.

Among these impressive elements, Morgan’s choreography remained the standout. The program gave the performers (Giselle Alvarez, Tiffanie Carson, and Amanda Engelhardt) choreographic credit as well. I sensed a tremendous amount of hard work and vision behind “In the Cold Room,” and all the hours put into creating this piece undoubtedly paid off. As a dance critic, I’m usually happiest when I see movement that’s truly new. I especially love quirky gestures that travel from awkward to sublime, and “In the Cold Room” delivered these in spades. A palm faced outward right in front of a dancer’s nose seemed at once odd and exquisite. A chin rested on the shoulder of another dancer, intimately and innocently like a child. Dancers crawled backward in a bent-legged squat. One dancer’s hand atop another’s head pushing it down brought images



of a gentle dunk under water. Hands and feet twisted and shook like seedlings striving for the sun. A wayward foot wiggled in the grasp of a dancer, as if reaching for sustenance above. From a wide sunken second position, dancers shifted weight evenly as if gliding on silk. They gracefully curved arms above their heads, arched back toward the ground, or flexed a single foot skyward without disturbing their balance. The movement, while mostly abstract, felt timeless and life affirming. So much caught my eye, and Morgan knew what to repeat and why.

In the few moments I feared Morgan's choreography might have taken a misstep, I was quickly proved wrong. Wait, oh no, I thought, when the gorgeous music ceased, and one of the three dancers, acting alone, strode over to a beam of light that stretched from ceiling to floor and began, in silence, to run various parts of her body through the narrow column – foot, nose, shoulder, face – searing them with golden color. The change seemed abrupt and disconnected at first, but soon enough the other dancers, and even Wytold, the musician, smoothed the transition and led the work to an even deeper place. Only the most gifted choreographers can create such surprise and beauty that you sigh, feel satisfied, and are left longing to see the dance again. Morgan is this kind of dance master.

Following "In the Cold Room," was "Bruised," a sensitive duet by two male dancers on loan from the Washington Ballet, Corey Landolt and Andile Ndlovu. Original live music by Wytold also accompanied this work. Although these male dancers adeptly performed "Bruised," "In the Cold Room" was a hard act to follow. As trained ballet dancers, there was something rather restrained about the ways in which Landolt and Ndlovu, wearing all black, moved. I'm aware that some of this was probably due to choreographic intent. Indeed, the men seemed to be in a relationship in which neither was able to fully express his love. A voice in the beginning whispered about crashing into each other, and the dancers literally did this; however, this bumping into one another seemed less accidental than a tactic motivated by desire and the inability to express feelings. There were a lot of lifts and a lot of wrapping around each other, but more moments of passing by each other than actually sharing passion. At one point a dancer's hands made a round cage through which his head charged. This pair felt trapped in a love that was doomed to fail from the start, and although at the end the couple grew closer, that they walked away in opposite directions was not a shock.

Speaking of artistic growth, not only did I get to witness Morgan's ascendance as a choreographer, but I was able to see Tiffanie Carson bloom, too. Each female performer in "In the Cold Room," gave an outstanding performance, but Carson, who was recently named Assistant Director of CKM&A, eclipsed all I've seen her do in "Selling Out," a 2011 solo originally choreographed by Morgan for himself. It was intensely interesting to see "Selling Out," a very personal work which has an abundance of masculine sorts of movement (flexed arm muscles, for example), performed by a woman. Carson shone as a someone conflicted about how to please others while maintaining one's integrity. While she struggled with the selling it/selling out problem, she absolutely ripped the solo to shreds. What a joy it was to see Carson powerfully tackle this piece. Honestly, I preferred the solo set on her, rather than on Morgan.

Morgan is a fine dancer, but I do feel his biggest strength is as a choreographer. He closed "By the Inch," with his 2004 solo "The Measure of a Man," a brave look at finding peace as a man, a man who happens to be gay, and who happens to be forging a career in dance. "The Measure of a Man" might be fairly referred to as a theater piece more than a dance (Morgan does plenty of speaking, trying on clothes, injecting humor), but the distinction isn't terribly relevant. The punch-in-the-gut response to "The Measure of a Man" comes from Morgan's vulnerability as a performer. His skill is at its height when he's able to hit upon global truths – like real men do cry, and hopefully they get to a better spot when they're allowed to do so. One couldn't help but be moved by Morgan's raw emotion. In the journey he presented, being chastised about his pursuit of manhood and trying out different identities (the audience is treated to Morgan as a ladies man, a guy with attitude, a renaissance man, and a queen with pull-on platform boots, among others) ultimately culminated in rebirth and self-acceptance. It was difficult to watch Morgan, nearly naked and sweating profusely, slap and pinch himself and shout "Shut Up!" to the demons that plagued him, but the stripping down of himself (he took off every clothing item at the end and, walked, in the dark, toward a bright light) made it possible for him to be built up again.

For some Northern Virginia's artists, making art has become intertwined with spreading cultural awareness and expressing a passion for the betterment of society. —*Shelby Robinson*



Photo by Brianne Bland. Courtesy of Christopher K. Morgan and Artists.

Christopher Morgan Christopher Morgan is a cultural diplomat. He has performed and worked with dancers and choreographers in **Hong Kong, Lithuania, Ireland and Palestine**, to name a few.

In 2002, Morgan was commissioned to choreograph a dance in Lithuania called “**Ties that Bind,**” which used visual metaphors to explore themes of restriction. A particularly moving experience for him because when he choreographed the piece and was working in Lithuania, “They were not so far out of their time as a communist country and being under the **Soviet Union**. So a lot of the dancers in the company had a perspective on restriction that I couldn’t have personally. ... That kind of restriction was something that was new to me.”

From this point on Morgan went on to choreograph dances such as “**Rice,**” “**The Measure of a Man**” and “**Dissolving,**” about racial identity, gender identity and environmentalism, respectively. Morgan remembers “Rice,” which explored his feelings about growing up as an Asian in a predominantly white community through the systematic washing of rice, as being particularly moving to audiences, specifically when weeks after a performance a 12-year old asked him if he had really wished to have lighter skin as a kid. Morgan told the 12 year old that although he felt that way as a kid, he has since learned the value of cultural diversity, specifically in his own background.

Morgan uses his role as a cultural diplomat to open dialogue about pressing issues because he strongly believes that art with deeper motives has the power to move people in a positive direction and that “art informs diplomacy through culture.”

Morgan teaches choreography at **American University** and his dance company **Christopher K. Morgan & Artists** frequently performs at the **Alden Theatre** in **McLean**. Check for his upcoming shows on his website christopherkmorgan.com.

The Washington Post

At Dance Place, choreographers show gifts for improvisation, spiritual movement

Susan K. Galbraith, The Washington Post, 5/20/13



Photo by Brianne Bland

Touch is the major communication tool of Christopher K. Morgan & Artists. As men and women lean, lift, lower, tumble and roll each other around, they rarely depend on visual cues but instead communicate through a language stemming from contact improvisation. This practice grounds the ensemble in its confident placement of weight and balance, lending a stylistic cohesion that is deeply satisfying. Clearly, the dancers trust one another and their material.

Morgan incorporates the architecture of formal dance, which establishes both rigor and line, but without empty posing. He also displays a keen intellectual curiosity, exploring everyday relationship gestures, repeating them and changing tempos, to show how intent and content can seem to change. The touch of a hand on a cheek moves from being a caress to a (jealous) redirecting of another's focus, and then to a (furious) controlling impulse that changes another's (life) arc in "Halcyon."

Morgan also builds in pauses between movements, allowing for meditation; they are like sherbet breaks between courses of rich wine and food that freshen and sharpen the senses.

His choreography is highly accessible, often simultaneously amusing and chilling. In "Selling Out," he has tapped the fresh and talented dancer Lauren Christie who, to the throbbing pulse of Monstah Black, incorporates popular "street" gestures to show us the not-so-subliminal message of "push 'til you drop."

Skybetter and Associates contributed greatly to the evening at Dance Place, particularly in young choreographer Sydney Skybetter's Arvo Pärt piece, "Near Abroad," and the newly commissioned "Eveningland." The dances share a spiritual aesthetic and restrained formality. Dancers Kristen Arnold and Junichi Fukuda led a very fine ensemble indeed.

Galbraith is a freelance writer.



April, 2011

Taking Off

How Six Breakout Choreographers Began Their Journeys

However you define “emerging,” it takes longer to get there than you’d think. The six dance artists here have made ripples in certain circles. They are now on the cusp of making waves in the larger dance world.

Christopher K. Morgan
Washington, DC

Christopher K. Morgan is a storyteller on the page and stage. For Morgan, 35, writing and choreographing go hand in hand. His choreography ranges from his bold, embodied, and deeply personal solos like *The Measure of a Man* to his elaborate group work like +1/-1, where dancers create visual labyrinths for the audience to follow and get lost in. His work strikes a personal chord with audiences through his memoir-style of choreography, and yet his abstractions leave plenty of room for imagination.



Morgan was drawn to choreography while studying creative writing at UC Irvine. “Because of my writing, I was looking at dance from a narrative aspect, and that



lent itself to me wanting to create work of my own,” he says.

In two companies that Morgan worked with early on in his career— Malashock Dance in San Diego, and the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in the greater Washington, DC, area—

Morgan was encouraged to contribute to the choreographic vision. “I was able to explore in environments that were low-key and safe.” Morgan also danced with David Gordon in New York. “My sense of process is influenced by him in the way he would often ask the dancers to manipulate his material.” During his time working with Michael Keegan-Dolan of Fabulous Beast Dance Theatre, Morgan learned about risk taking, and “to take a lot of time to investigate an idea.” Performing as a dancer with the Washington National, Houston Grand, and New York City Operas added to his eye for theatricality.

Morgan keeps journals about travels, memories, and conversations, then turns those musings into theatrical expositions. Sometimes his own writing ends up in the piece. In *Thirst* (2009), his work about greed, overconsumption, and global climate change, a parable is told in multiple languages throughout the evening.

Although Morgan has created more than two dozen works during his choreographic career, it wasn't until he became a resident choreographer of CityDance Ensemble in Washington, DC, in 2007 that his name began to be known. His position at CityDance gives him the support to create on a cadre of dancers, to put his work forward, and to not be pinned down by labels. “Part of the allure in coming to DC was that I didn't know where I fit in New York, whether I was uptown or downtown.” But it hasn't been easy to make his voice heard, even to himself. By working in a less dance-centric community and one so focused on politics, Morgan feels pressure to consider presenters, the diplomatic community, and his board while building new audiences. “All of those things make me want to edit myself. I think the hardest thing is to make sure I follow my dream.”

Next project: *Currency Exchange* is a new work partially inspired by Morgan's recent travels (see “Dance Matters,” page 18), to premiere at American University April 8 and 9. —*Emily Macel Theys*