



Kevin Iega Jeff

Legacy Award



P.C. Joe Mazza/Brove Lux Chicago

Kevin Iega Jeff, renowned for his multifaceted contributions as a dancer, choreographer, and artistic visionary, is celebrated among the Juilliard School's 100 Outstanding Alumni, a distinction he shares with luminaries such as Viola Davis and Aretha Franklin. In Chicago, his impact is acknowledged by Newcity magazine, and he contributes to the city's cultural landscape as a member of the Cultural Advisory Council, initially appointed by Mayor Lori Lightfoot and subsequently reappointed by Mayor Brandon Johnson.

Iega's illustrious career is marked by notable performances, including roles in Broadway's "The Wiz", a memorable appearance at the 1994 Academy Awards, and choreographic contributions to Spike Lee's "She's Gotta Have It". His extensive repertoire includes over fifty original works, making him a sought-after talent among premier dance companies globally.

Dedicated to community engagement, Iega has played significant roles in nationwide projects like Community Performance International's "Grit & Grace and Swamp Gravy", and has enriched educational programs at institutions such as Howard University, Purdue University, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa.

Originating from New York, Iega's dance journey commenced at The Bernice Johnson Cultural Arts Center. His passion led to the establishment of JUBILATION! Dance Company in Brooklyn, NY, in 1982, and subsequently, the founding of Chicago's Deeply Rooted Dance Theater in 1995. In 2022, after 24 years at the helm, he transitioned to an Artistic/Executive Consultant role, continuing to influence the arts through initiatives like the South Side Center for Black Dance and Creative Communities, and the development of GOSHEN, an innovative musical project inspired by the music of gospel and contemporary music icon Donald Lawrence.

Iega's artistic endeavors seek to uncover and articulate truths and narratives, challenging historical misrepresentations while fostering understanding and healing. His legacy is characterized by a commitment to combatting racism, celebrating cultural identity, and creating spaces for creativity and joy. Through his work, Iega aspires to leave an indelible mark on the world, highlighting the power of human connection and the transformative potential of artistic expression.

2025 GALA
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TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2025
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Julie Nakagawa

Distinguished Service Award



P.C. Cheryl Mann

From Evanston, Illinois, **Julie Nakagawa** was a featured dancer with Christopher D'Amboise's Off Center Ballet, Cleveland Ballet, and Twyla Tharp Dance. She has also performed in Ruth Page's "Nutcracker" and "Die Fledermaus". Returning to Chicago upon her retirement from dancing, she focused on the development of dance artists and their related artistic collaborators. At the invitation of Lou Conte, Julie joined the staff of Lou Conte Dance Studio in January 1994 and rose to the position of Associate Director. In addition, she led Hubbard Street 2 from its inception in 1997 through February 2007 as the artistic director of the second company of Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, nurturing young dancers and establishing the National Choreographic Competition to provide creative opportunities for emerging dance makers.

A sought-after teacher, Julie has taught classes for dance studios, university programs, and companies, locally, nationally, and internationally. She has served as a member and officer of the Board of Trustees of Dance/USA, has engaged as a mentor in multiple pairings through Dance/USA's Institute for Leadership Training, has been a panelist for peer review panels including the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, McKnight Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Princess Grace Foundation, and US Artists International. The Chicago Foundation for Women's Asian American Leadership Council honored Julie for her work in the creative arts.

She is grateful for the opportunity to lead DanceWorks Chicago, a creative incubator fostering a diverse next generation of movers and makers, empowering young artists to cultivate their unique voices in the dance community through skill acquisition and development; collaborations and relationship-building with a global perspective; intense and intentional mentorship; and performances that shine a light on dancers and dance.

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