



**Maria Gillespie, choreographer**

For immediate release

Media Contact: Brechin Flournoy

[neqa52520@yahoo.com](mailto:neqa52520@yahoo.com)

new #: 415-533-1865

Announcing the Bay Area debut of "one of LA's most respected artists"

*Quote from a story about the Los Angeles dance community by Laura Bleighberg, New York Times*

## **Maria Gillespie and her 10-member company, Oni Dance**



June 25-26 @ 8:00pm

CounterPULSE (1310 Mission Street @ 9<sup>th</sup> Street, San Francisco)

*Full calendar listing on page 2 this release*

(June 1, 2010 – San Francisco, CA)

**Maria Gillespie**, Artistic Director/choreographer for **Oni Dance**, and one of Dance Magazine's "25 to Watch" (2005) is a prominent Los Angeles based artist known as a "*charismatic, mighty performer with a distinct vision*" (LA Times).

Ms. Gillespie is a four-time Lester Horton Award winner, as well as the honored recipient of grants from The Durfee Foundation and the prestigious James Irvine Foundation Grant, Dance: Creation to Performance. Critics from The LA Times, The New York Times, The Village Voice, and Dance Magazine have universally lauded Ms. Gillespie's growing repertory for its "*fearless approach*" and "*unpredictability (both emotional and physical) as it trades on the dramatic implications of kinetic extremes. Gillespie's investigation of the expressive potential of pure movement is at heart resolutely modern.*" (LA Times).

On the last weekend of June, Bay Area audiences and the critical community are invited to discover Oni Dance in their San Francisco debut at CounterPULSE. Ms. Gillespie and her 10-member company, Oni Dance, will premiere two enthralling works – "Exquisite.Corpse" and "Wasteland (arrival)". These works exemplify Ms. Gillespie's approach to conceptual choreography. She muses that "*Aesthetically ranging from poignant and tender to raw and far-flung, the work of Oni Dance is centered in creating intricate theatrical environments, which expose and represent the multi-faceted layers of the human psyche.*"

"Exquisite.Corpse" (world premiere) is a riveting, tense investigation about bodies and boundaries that considers: What is a dangerous body? Does the grotesque elicit disgust or a compulsion to look closer?

more



**Maria Gillespie, choreographer**

---

“Wasteland (arrival)” is a virtuosic and highly nuanced dance set in the aftermath of dystopian ruin. While the players grapple with unfamiliar borders they discover - through collaboration - the humor and pathos that glue them together. Originally set in the round, “Wasteland (arrival)” is being reworked for CounterPULSE.

Oni Dance will perform at CounterPULSE on Friday and Saturday, June 25-26 at 8pm. Tickets are \$20 general/\$16 students; available through [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com).

#### CALENDAR LISTING

WHAT: Oni Dance presents “Exquisite.Corpse” and “Wasteland (arrival)”  
WHERE: CounterPULSE (1310 Mission Street @ 9<sup>th</sup> Street, San Francisco)  
WHEN: Friday-Saturday, June 25-26 @ 8:00pm both days  
TICKETS: \$20 general/\$16 students, seniors  
BOX OFFICE: [brownpapertickets.com](http://brownpapertickets.com); 415-626-6060  
INFORMATION and CLIPS: [onidance.org](http://onidance.org)

---

#### Background information about Oni Dance

##### **What does *Oni* Dance mean?**

The dancers in Ms. Gillespie’s company first came together for a tour to a dance festival in Tokyo, Japan. Because the dancers worked so well with each other, Ms. Gillespie formally created the company Oni Dance. In honor of the inspirational trip to Japan, she named the company *Oni* after a goblin character from Japanese mythology, which is a symbol of transforming human weaknesses into beauty and courage.

##### **The Company Story**

Oni Dance is a dance ensemble led by the choreographer and artistic director Maria Gillespie. Oni Dance is a pick-up company of LA’s finest contemporary performers that seeks to investigate movement concepts and human experience that elevates dance into a physical world ripe with kinetic volume and wit. With idiosyncratic movement and poetic punch, Oni Dance transfixes the eye on complex and sublime movement puzzles that seethe with intense physical skill and kinetic extremes.

2005 marked Oni Dance’s first season and included the premiere of works at The Getty Center and The Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater (REDCAT). Oni Dance thrives on collaborating with dance artists, photographers, film makers, composers, musicians, costume designers, writers, lighting designers, and anyone with imagination and curiosity in order to generate new ideas or deconstruct old ones.

As a choreographer, Gillespie is intent on stripping conventional movement of its comforts and making idiosyncratic movement feel like a first language. She is at once seduced and wary of the body’s expressive potential, enjoying the blurry state before creativity becomes a complete product.

The movement language of Oni Dance is fueled by the imagined futures and remembered histories whose alchemy fuels our lives, on stage and off. These dances unfold to reveal the inevitable kinetic underpinnings and responses of the heart and mind.

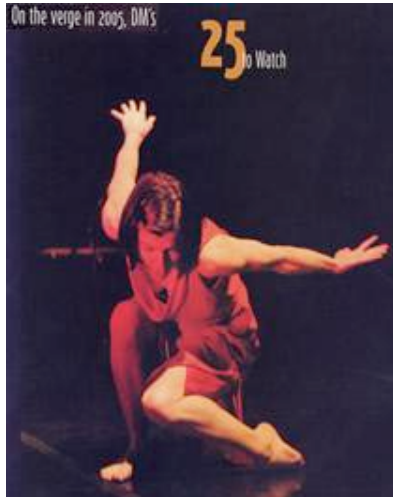
more

# Oni Dance

Maria Gillespie, choreographer

---

## Please meet Maria Gillespie:



Maria Gillespie is the choreographer and artistic director of the Los Angeles-based contemporary dance company, Oni Dance. She founded Oni Dance in 2005 and was selected as one of Dance Magazine's "Top 25 to Watch" (2005). Soon after she was awarded the 2005 Lester Horton Award for best female performance in her evening length dance *Bandits* at The Getty Center. Gillespie's dances... *"ricochet between vulnerability and strength with razor-sharp shifts in intensity and intent"* (LA Times). An artist who thrives on improvising, developing, accumulating and interpreting movement, Gillespie's choreography is a seamless blend of classicism and supple, grounded quirkiness. Originally from Nashville, TN, she studied at the School of Nashville Ballet and performed with the company. She received her BFA in dance from SUNY Purchase in 1993. At Purchase, she studied under Neil Greenberg, Kevin Wynn, and Sarah Stackhouse. As a member of the Purchase Dance Corps, Gillespie performed choreography by Charles Weidman and Lin Hwai-min of Cloud Gate Dance Theater. Upon graduating in 1993, she formed 86 NYLON, a collaborative trio whose

choreography was presented (93-95) by Dixon Place, Movement Research, Gowanus Arts Exchange, and Next Stage Company.

Since moving to LA in 1996, Ms. Gillespie's choreography has been presented at The Ford Amphitheater, The Getty Museum, the Roy and Edna Disney/CalArts Theater (REDCAT), UCLA's Department of World Arts & Cultures, The Fowler Museum, Highways Performance Space, The Electric Lodge, Cal State Long Beach, The Brand Library & Arts Center, The Fountain Theater, The Met Theater, LA Dance Invitational, SOLA Dance Festival, and the Dance Moving Forward Festival, as well as in New York City at Joyce SoHo (2007 & 2008), International Dance Festival, Colorado and Tokyo, Japan (2004). Her choreography has been commissioned by The Getty Center, and she has been commissioned for choreographic residencies at Scripps College, Pomona College, Santa Monica College, and Cal State Long Beach dance departments. Her dance film, *Saliendo*, shot on Super 8, was selected for the Local Makers Screening in Dance Camera West.

Locally, she has enjoyed and been inspired by working and performing extensively with Victoria Marks and Helios Dance Theater and additionally with David Rousseve, Holly Johnston, Joe Goode's "As Beauty Subsides" Project, and String Theory Ensemble. Noted as a *"charismatic, mighty performer with a distinct vision"* (Victoria Looseleaf, LA Times), she is a four time Lester Horton Award winner (2002, 2003, 2005). She is the honored recipient of grants from The Durfee Foundation (2002, 2007) and The James Irvine Foundation Grant, Dance: Creation to Performance (2004). Ms. Gillespie has received critical acclaim in several publications including, The LA Times, The New York Times, The Village Voice, and Dance Magazine. A recent review describes: *"Gillespie's growing repertory demonstrates a capacious gift for idiosyncratic movement invention that showcases unpredictability as it trades on the dramatic implications of kinetic extremes"* (LA Times).

An adjunct professor at UCLA's Department of World Arts & Cultures from 2001-2008, Gillespie has also been a guest instructor at CalArts, Loyola Marymount University as well as at other universities and for dance companies throughout Southern California. An esteemed teacher of contemporary modern technique, she regularly offers master classes publicly and has been a guest artist teacher at NYC's Dance New Amsterdam. She led and hosted a weekly community modern class in Venice, CA for the past 11 years and hopes to start that again soon.

Currently she is an MFA candidate in choreography at UCLA, where she continues to teach and is the recipient of The Forti Family Fellowship, The Mo Austin Scholarship, and The Graduate Diversity Scholarship.

###