

For Immediate Release

On DTW's Guest Artist Series

**SAN FRANCISCO'S DYNAMIC DANCE BRIGADE RETURNS TO NEW YORK
FOR JULY 7-9 SEASON AT DTW**

New York Premiere of *"The Great Liberation Upon Hearing"*

A dance/drama based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead

Thursday-Saturday, July 7-9 (Thursday & Friday at 7:30pm; Saturday at 2pm and 7:30pm)

Dance Theater Workshop, 219 West 19th Street

Tickets: \$20 general; \$15 seniors

Box Office: [212-924-0077](tel:212-924-0077) or www.dancetheaterworkshop.org

Conceived, Written and Directed by: Krissy Keefer

Additional Choreographic Contributions: Sarah Shelton Mann in collaboration with the performers

Video and Set Design: Matthew De Gumbia

Music: Floor Van Herreweghe

Film: Ellen Bruno

"This amazing take on the Tibetan Book of the Dead is a stunning theatrical venture."

ballet.co.uk, 2009

"Choreographer Krissy Keefer is a rabble-rouser...at the helm of issue-oriented

performance for the past two decades." San Francisco Weekly, 2009

San Francisco's cutting-edge DANCE BRIGADE returns to New York with its highly acclaimed "The Great Liberation Upon Hearing," a multi-media dance/drama that explores death and dying based on the Bardo Experience as depicted in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. Artistic Director Krissy Keefer follows the journey as laid out in the book Bardo Thodol, which is read to the dead while they are in the state between death and reincarnation. By providing a verbal guide to the deceased, this tradition shows how to use the moment of death to attain liberation and help the departed with reincarnation into the next life. The unique work, which combines contemporary dance, theater, Taiko drumming, and video, will receive its New York Premiere July 7-9 at Dance Theater Workshop, as part of the Guest Artist Series.

Krissy Keefer in collaboration with Sarah Shelton Mann and the dancers has created original choreography fueled with intense style and structure. The stage set and video are by longtime Dance Brigade collaborator Matthew De Gumbia. He and esteemed lighting designer and installation artist Elaine Buckholtz have created a translucent visual component depicting luminous images that transform the scenes from a fiery hell to a pure celestial land.

Premiered in 2009 in San Francisco, the work won critical acclaim, summed up by the writer for Culture Vulture, who raved: "Krissy Keefer created a multi-media ecstatic revel. The dancers are exuberant and remarkable, taking many roles, performing with high energy and acrobatic skill."

The Tibetan Book of the Dead, whose actual title is "The Great Liberation upon Hearing in the Intermediate State" or "Bardo Thodol," is traditionally believed to be the work of the legendary Padma Sambhava in the 8th century A.D, considered to be one of the first persons to bring Buddhism to Tibet. The book acts as a guide for the dead during the state that intervenes death and the next rebirth. It is a guide that is read aloud to the dead while they are in the state between death and reincarnation in order for them to recognize the nature of their mind and attain liberation from the cycle of rebirth.

The Bardo Thodol teaches that once awareness is freed from the body, it creates its own reality, as one would experience in a dream. This dream occurs in various phases (bardos) in ways both wonderful and terrifying. Overwhelming peaceful and wrathful visions and deities appear. Since the deceased's awareness is in confusion from no longer being connected to the physical body, it needs help and guidance in order that enlightenment and liberation occur. The Bardo Thodol teaches how we can attain Nirvana by recognizing the heavenly realms.

Company director Krissy Keefer has indeed has personal experience with the Bardo Thodol. "I had the good fortune and responsibility," she noted, "to read the Great Liberation to two of my closest friends after they passed away within a year of each other. Reading the book every day to them was very helpful for my own recovery around their passing. I hoped that it helped them. In this time when death is around every corner both on the personal level and on the grand scale of major eco systems collapsing, I find this material critical to my own mental health."

Founded in 1984 by Nina Fichter and Krissy Keefer, Dance Brigade's mission is to engage diverse communities and artists in the exploration of contemporary social issues by creating, producing, and teaching feminist and multicultural dance/theatre. To implement their mission, Dance Brigade operates the 135-seat Dance Mission Theater, supports a six-member women's dance company, produces a series of annual events showcasing established and emerging Bay Area choreographers, and conducts an instructional dance program for both adults and youth.

www.dancemission.com

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