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Scripps College Department of Dance to Showcase Work, Highlighting Themes of Activism and Healing

CLAREMONT, CA (8 October 2019)—The Scripps College Department of Dance will showcase work at Garrison Theater this fall. Assistant Professor of Dance Kevin Williamson will debut a sneak peek of his work-in-progress, *Safe and Sound*, before its world premiere in 2020. Suchi Branfman continues to explore the prison industrial complex in *Dancing through Prison Walls*, one segment of which was co-choreographed with Ernst Fenelon Jr., who was formerly incarcerated for 14 years.

Williamson's *Safe and Sound* raises questions about the creation of meaningful rituals of safety during times of violence and despair. The work is set to a rebellious mix of club music interspersed with film interludes. Williamson describes it as a meditation on self-preservation and queer solidarity, performed through an innovating choreographic language comprised of calisthenics, modern dance, yoga, and club dance.

"We are exploring through dance if there is a place where grief and pleasure can coexist," Williamson says. "It's a tricky thing to put into a theatrical space, so we are trying to show grieving and processing in a multitude of ways."

Branfman's *Dancing through Prison Walls* is inspired by her five-year choreographic residency at California Rehabilitation Center, a medium-security men's state prison in Norco, California. During her residency, Branfman worked with men incarcerated inside the prison to create and perform original choreography. "Angee's Journey," the piece co-choreographed with Fenelon Jr., centers on his mother's repeated 50-hour, 800-mile trek to visit him in prison. Branfman will also present "Janie," an intimate performance piece that draws on Branfman's interviews with MaryJane, also known as The Bird Lady, who rescues and raises birds while serving a life sentence inside a women's maximum-security prison in Southern California.

"Dance is a profoundly liberating act, even while basically living in a cage," says Branfman. "There is a profound connection between dancing and freedom."

Williamson will present *Safe and Sound* on Tuesday, October 15, at 7 p.m.; tickets are available [here](#). Branfman will present *Dancing through Prison Walls* on Friday, November 8, at 8 p.m.; tickets are available [here](#).

Scripps College was founded in 1926 by Ellen Browning Scripps, a pioneering philanthropist and influential figure in the worlds of education, publishing, and women's rights. Today, Scripps



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is a nationally top-ranked liberal arts college and women's college with approximately 980 students and is a member of The Claremont Colleges in Southern California. The mission of Scripps College is to educate women to develop their intellects and talents through active participation in a community of scholars, so that as graduates they may contribute to society through public and private lives of leadership, service, integrity, and creativity.