

NOVEMBER 6, 2017

# Meet Genevieve Carson of Los Angeles Contemporary Dance Company in Chinatown



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Today we'd like to introduce you to Genevieve Carson.

### Genevieve, let's start with your story. We'd love to hear how you got started and how the journey has been so far.

I am originally from Juneau, Alaska. Juneau is a very small town with no roads out of it. From a very young age, I had an undeniable natural inclination toward dance and choreography, and I took advantage of the limited opportunities in dance training that were available to me. I was a competitive Scottish Highland dancer, a member and leader of the high school dance team, and I took and taught classes at the small local studio.

After high school, I attended Chapman University on dance and academic scholarships, and I quickly understood that my training would need to be on an accelerated path, simply because I had not received the same caliber of training as the other incoming students. I was relying heavily on my natural abilities, and those wouldn't last me long. In hindsight, I am grateful for the feelings of inadequacy I had early on in my training. It instilled in me a sense of urgency, an intense hunger, and an awareness of the value of time and money. While at Chapman, I was given the incredible opportunity to develop my voice as a choreographer, and I was named 'Outstanding Student Choreographer' two years in a row.

I graduated with honors and big dreams about making for myself as a choreographer in Los Angeles, and quickly discovered the hardships of starting 'from scratch' in a new, unforgiving city. I had no community to help guide me, no job, and no money. I started working a 9-5 office job and taking dance classes at night. Eventually, I was able to get a teaching job, and I my schedule opened up and enabled me to be more active in classes and attend auditions.

In 2009, my choreography was selected to be in the Los Angeles Dance Invitational, and I auditioned for and became a member of LA Contemporary Dance Company (LACDC). After dancing with LACDC for a few years, I had the opportunity to choreograph a piece for the company. That piece, entitled "Nana", was then selected to represent the company in the prestigious Celebrate Dance Festival at the Alex Theater. I continued to perform and choreograph for the company over the next several years while freelancing, developing my voice as an independent choreographer, and collaborating with other Los Angeles based companies and artists.

While concert work has and always will be my first love, I also love working in the fast-paced commercial world, and I have had the opportunity to whet my palate with many outside projects. My commercial credits as a dancer include the Emmys, Samsung, BENCH, Cotton On, TEDx and music videos for Blood Orange, Low, Justin Bieber and Saint Motel. My commercial choreographic collaborations include Foster the People, Earth Harp Collective (for Super Bowl XLIX), Adult Swim's The Eric Andre Show and Decker, Comedy Central's The Kroll Show and Jon Benjamin Has a Van. I've traveled to the Philippines, New Zealand, and Sweden through various dance jobs with fashion shows, ad campaigns, and installation performances.

I have always found my stable "home" in LACDC, though. In 2014, after 5 years of dancing and choreographing for the company, I was asked to take over as artistic director of LACDC, preceding a 10-year directorship by co-founder of LACDC, Kate Hutter. December will mark the end of my second year as Artistic Director.

Since taking over as AD, the company has toured domestically (New York, Las Vegas & San Francisco) and internationally (New Zealand & Argentina), collaborated on an international ad campaign, commissioned 7 new works by guest choreographers, shot an award-winning dance film, and hosted open company classes, winter and summer intensives for pre-professional dancers. I have had the honor of creating an evening length multi-media work on the company, as well as 4 mid-range length works. Needless to say, it has been an invigorating, exhausting, frustrating, inspiring, and enlightening two years. It has been extremely busy and I wear many hats, but it's good to look back and feel great about the work that is being made, and see that the company is continuously growing and supporting the Los Angeles dance community.

### Great, so let's dig a little deeper into the story – has it been an easy path overall and if not, what were the challenges you've had to overcome?

As artistic director of LA Contemporary Dance Company, I experience a myriad of emotions daily: fascination, frustration, deep appreciation, humility, capability, inadequacy, exhaustion and elation. All of these moments run the gamut from intense beauty to gut-wrenching failure. And while this can seem overwhelming, the fact that I am never bored or stagnant outweighs the weight of it all.

Dance and making dances are not something that can be mastered, and it requires a hunger for continuous exploration, curiosity, and honesty with oneself. Those who are drawn to dance and become captivated by the endless depths of possibility within the art form must possess a strong understanding of their weaknesses and strengths, a generous spirit, and an availability of body and mind.

It is not a career path for the fame-hungry or the faint of heart. On the contrary, it is humble and self-sacrificing. To me, dance artists are superhuman and filled with magic. These articulate, hyper-connected storytellers have a keen understanding of the possibilities within time, space, and energy, both inside and outside of their bodies, to bring to life what was previously unimagined.

To pursue a career in dance is to pursue a life of hardships financially, physically, and mentally. The road has never been smooth on my career path. Making ends meet has always been a struggle. I have always had to juggle multiple jobs at once, and this has taught me to manage time (hopefully) effectively. In my position as artistic director, I often times find myself wearing many unfamiliar hats at the same time, which can feel unsettling, but I'm learning how to feel at peace with this insecurity. There is no 'training manual' for the job– much of the work I have done has been on an extremely steep, rogue learning curve. I am still learning how to separate my emotions from the business side of things while letting my emotions run wild on the creative side. It's a bit of a roller coaster in that way, and it's easy to let it overcome one's entire being. I don't think I've quite figured out how to maintain a healthy personal life at the same time, and finding balance is something I am striving for inside of it all. It's a never-ending emotional and mental puzzle. Ultimately, I'm thankful for the constant challenge. It demands constant growth and humility.

### Los Angeles Contemporary Dance Company – what should we know? What do you guys do best? What sets you apart from the competition?

LACDC is made for L.A. by L.A. Serving as the resident contemporary dance company for over 12 years, we have consistently been the hub for Los Angeles based choreographers, dancers, and artists of all disciplines to collaborate and produce fresh, innovative work representative of L.A.'s vibrant culture. Working in downtown LA at the Brewery Arts Complex, we discover new ways to connect to people through movement and serve as a bold and forward-thinking reflection of the city we love.

We pride ourselves on the fact that we primarily hire Los Angeles based choreographers, collaborators, and dancers. It is important to us that we are actively supporting the LA dance community by providing a nurturing and supportive environment for dance artists to thrive, be bold, and create new work that helps push the artform into the future.

### What has been the proudest moment of your career so far?

It's hard to pinpoint a "proudest moment". There are so many moments that feel important–sometimes the smallest moments seem to hold the most weight.

I will say, though: the feeling I had after watching the beautiful dancers in the company perform my first evening-length work "FAM" to a sold-out house and standing ovation is hard to match.

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