

David Dorfman Dance



Press Kit 2016-2018

**Mission: To get the whole world
dancing!**

daviddorfmandance.org

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Since its founding in 1987, David Dorfman Dance (DDD) has performed extensively throughout North and South America, Great Britain, Europe and Central Asia. DDD has regularly performed in New York City at major venues, including The Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Joyce Theater, The Kitchen, Danspace Project/St. Mark's Church, La Mama Theater, The Duke on 42nd Street, The Met Breuer, and the 92nd St. "Y"/Harkness Dance Festival. David Dorfman, the company's dancers, and DDD's artistic collaborators have been honored with eight New York Dance and Performance (Bessie) Awards.

DDD promotes the appreciation and critical understanding of dance by realizing the creation of new works by choreographer David Dorfman and his artistic collaborators. In advocating his mission "to get the whole world dancing," Dorfman's work has enjoyed broad and diverse audiences nationally and internationally. DDD creates dance that seeks to de-stigmatize the notion of accessibility and interaction in post-modern dance by embracing audiences with visceral, meaningful dance, music and text. By sustaining a vision to create innovative, inclusive, movement-based performance that is radically humanistic, DDD maintains a core commitment to examine and unearth issues and ideas that enliven, incite, and excite audiences in dialogue and debate about social change and a myriad of other topics.

DDD's creative projects include: *Aroundtown* (2017); *Come, and Back Again* (2013); *Prophets of Funk* (set to the music of Sly and the Family Stone); *Disavowal* (inspired by radical abolitionist John Brown); *underground* (inspired by The Weather Underground); *Older Testaments* (2005, set to music by composer/trumpeter Frank London of The Klezmatics); *Lightbulb Theory* (2004, original commissioned score by Michael Wall); *Impending Joy* (2004, original commissioned score by Chris Peck); and *See Level* (2003, original commissioned score by Chris Peck and visual design by Samuel Topiary).

For thirty years, DDD has effectively engaged audiences worldwide, with community-based projects playing an important role, particularly in the 1990's. In *Out of Season (The Athletes Project)* and *Familiar Movements (The Family Project)*, the members of the company rehearsed and performed with groups of volunteer athletes or family members selected in the communities to which the company toured. In *No Roles Barred*, DDD examined the personal roles assumed, formed and interwoven in our modern social construct, engaging groups ranging from corporate executives and "at-risk" youths to college administrators, doctors, carpenters and social dance enthusiasts. The company's three community projects have been presented over 30 times in 18 states and two foreign countries.

In March 2016, DDD performed at the opening day of the Met Breuer Museum in New York City, dancing to an original live score by Ken Thomson throughout the day in the Sunken Garden. The company embarked on a landmark tour to Athens, Greece in the summer of 2016, working with community athletes, dancers, and mixed ability movers to animate the new Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center for their Metamorphosis Festival. DDD's newest evening length work, *Aroundtown* had its World Premiere at Bates Dance Festival in July 2017, and its NY Premiere at BAM's Next Wave Festival in November 2017. In May, 2018 DDD partnered with USAID El Salvador to bring dance to youth in El Salvador. Together they pledged to use their bodies for peace rather than gang warfare. All of these efforts help DDD promote its mission of Kinetic Diplomacy: if you're dancing, you're not hurting another human being.

DAVID DORFMAN (CC MFA '81),

Artistic Director of David Dorfman Dance since 1985, has been Professor of Dance and was the Department Chair at Connecticut College from 2004-2017. Dorfman is the 2007 recipient of The Martha Hill Fund for Dance's Mid-Career Award and a 2005 Guggenheim Foundation fellowship to continue his research and choreography in the topics of power and powerlessness, including activism, dissidence, and underground movements. This research culminated in *underground*, performed by David Dorfman Dance and 25-50 additional dancers around the world. He appeared on several episodes of A Chance to Dance, a reality show on OvationTV starring Dorfman's pals, the BalletBoyz who invited David Dorfman Dance to make a three minute video for RandomAct/Channel 4UK. *We Don't Own a Dog* came out of that invitation—an excerpt can be seen at <https://youtu.be/QN7N-s0xcsM>.

Dorfman has been honored with four fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, three New York Foundation for the Arts fellowships, an American Choreographer's Award, the first Paul Taylor Fellowship from The Yard, and a New York Dance & Performance Award ("Bessie") for David Dorfman Dance's community-based project *Familiar Movements (The Family Project)*. Dorfman's choreography has been produced in New York City at venues ranging from the Brooklyn Academy of Music, The Joyce Theater, The Kitchen, Dance Theater Workshop, The Duke on 42nd Street, Danspace Project/St. Mark's Church, P.S. 122, and Dancing in the Streets. His work has been commissioned widely in the U.S. and in Europe by Bedlam Dance Company (London), d9 Dance Collective (Seattle), Eisenhower Dance Theatre (Detroit), and the Prince Music Theater in Philadelphia for the musical *Green Violin*, for which he won a 2003 Barrymore Award for best choreography. Dorfman toured an evening of solos and duets, *Live Sax Acts*, with friend and collaborator Dan Froot, most recently in New York City and at the Harare International Festival of the Arts in Zimbabwe, and a half-evening duet, *Menne Awn Frauen*, created with Stuart Pimsler.

Dorfman has been a guest artist at numerous institutions across the country and abroad. As a performer, he toured internationally with Kei Takei's Moving Earth and Susan Marshall & Co. Dorfman holds a BS in business administration from Washington University in St. Louis. With love, David thanks long-time mentors Martha Myers and the late Daniel Nagrin, his late folks Jeanette and Oscar, and his in-house family project Lisa Race and Samson Race Dorfman.

AROUNDTOWN

DATES AVAILABLE FOR TOURING

Summer 2018-Fall 2020

TOURING PERSONNEL

Performers: 8 dancers, 3 musicians

Production/Technical: 2

RESIDENCY & OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Master Classes Schooltime Performance

Pre and Post-Performance Discussion

VIDEO LINKS:

Aroundtown Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/230226072>

Excerpts: <https://vimeo.com/230976821>



Photo by Adam Campos

Aroundtown is a kinetic poem that examines the varied, unique and sometimes divided notions of LOVE- it's meaning, purpose, and platform. With original music, text, and visuals, the work explores commitment, community, and intimacy in times of violence and strife. DDD's trademark empathy, sly humor, and bombastic physicality are harnessed to examine LOVE as both sociopolitical and intimate weather systems.

Artistic Director: David Dorfman

Aroundtown Company: Lily Gelfand, Jasmine Hearn, Jordan Lloyd, Kellie Ann Lynch, Nik Owens, and Simon Thomas-Train

Guest Performers: David Dorfman and Lisa Race

Musical Director: Sam Crawford

Musicians: Sam Crawford, Liz de Lise, Zeb Gould, Jeff Hudgins

Dramaturg: Anne Davison

Costume Designer: Ásta Hostetter (Bates Dance Festival World Premiere)

Costume Designer: Oana Botez (BAM New York Premiere)

Video Design: Shawn Hove

Production Manager: Sarah Lurie

Lighting Designer: Tuce Yasak

Creative Consultant/Scholar in Residence: David Kyuman Kim

Aroundtown was made possible by support from the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, the National Endowment for the Arts, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Harkness Foundation for Dance. *Aroundtown* was created in part during residencies at The Tisch Dance Residency Festival, Gibney Dance, Dancer's Workshop in Jackson, WY, and as Company-in-Residence at Connecticut College. *Aroundtown* received production development support from LUMBERYARD Contemporary Performing Arts (formerly ADI), hosted through a Creative Development Residency at Jacob's Pillow.

DANCE
magazine

Aroundtown by David Dorfman Dance. Photo by Adam Campos

What Wendy's Watching: David Dorfman Portrays Hope & Tenderness

Wendy Perron

Nov. 04, 2017 09:21AM EST

David Dorfman's choreography asks, How can we all get along? In his new piece, [*Aroundtown* at the BAM Harvey Theater](#), he shows how hostility within a community can turn to tenderness. He and his wife, Lisa Race, have a long embrace in the corner of the stage. It's almost like saying that enduring love doesn't always happen center stage.

In my [2013 "Choreography in Focus"](#) with Dorfman, he says he likes his work to reflect "the mess of life." And you will see some of that mess in this piece, captured with compassion, craft and humor.

[What Wendy's Watching: David Dorfman](#)

[*Aroundtown*](#), which is part of the Next Wave Festival at Brooklyn Academy of Music, is at the BAM Harvey Theater from Nov. 8 to 11,

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Portland Press Herald

‘Aroundtown’ plays like musical theater at Bates Dance Festival

The new work by David Dorfman portrays the importance of pursuing connections.

Posted July 14, 2017

By Steve Feeney



Aroundtown by David Dorfman Dance. Photo by Adam Campos

Fresh from working on the Broadway show “Indecent,” veteran choreographer David Dorfman returned to the Bates Dance Festival stage Thursday night to premiere a new work that plays a lot like musical theater.

“Aroundtown” is an hourlong, widespread multimedia and interdisciplinary work that seeks to portray the struggles and joys of contemporary individuals and communities during difficult times. Its level of abstraction, as these sorts of works go, is fairly modest, and despite a bit of distancing self-consciousness, the piece is effective in suggesting some of the costs and benefits to humans in continuing to pursue connection.

Live onstage original music, under the direction of Sam Crawford, guides the audience through various segments, some very active with six dancers in colorful, loose-fitting “street” costumes

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filling the space. The push, pull, hop, swirl, entanglement and recoil of vigorous modern-dance movement, familiar to fans of Dorfman's past work, demand attention. The characters seem restless but resilient as they suffer and celebrate.

Edgy, thumping musical riffs power some of the segments while other, more gently lyrical moments are framed by haunting drones and arpeggiated electric guitar surges. Vocals, mostly delivered in an alt-folk vein, tell of states of distress, longing, reminiscence and commitment as dramatic vignettes play out at center stage.

Videos, consisting of childlike paintings and settings for toy animals and soldiers, play behind the dancers who are mostly side and back lit. Monologues, spanning a range of emotions from angry to playful, give several performers a chance to verbally embody the visual action.

"I see you ... we match ... I hate you," recited by Jasmine Hearn, and "I want to be around heaven," delivered by Simon Thomas-Train (a standout actor/dancer), are lines around which an often nearly sculptural tableau of performers form and reform.

A variety of emotive pairings and solos by dancers add to the drama.

Some overt jokes and bits of verbalized direction do seem, at times, oddly placed.

"I will wait for you forever," a lovely vocal by Liz de Lise, comes near the close as the action settles down. Fans of David Dorfman need not wait longer for this new work which, particularly in its quieter, lyrical moments, delivers on its most heartfelt ambition.

Steve Feeney is a freelance writer who lives in Portland.

El Salvador Tour May 2018



New London's Adam Schmidt and David Dorfman bring dance program to at-risk youths in El Salvador



At least 50 Salvadoran youths showcased their talent in a May 26 dance festival in San Salvador supported by USAID. Some of these children live in municipalities with the highest crime rates in El Salvador.

Published June 08, 2018 11:41AM | Updated June 08,

2018 12:03PM

By Kristina Dorsey

A group of dancers traveled to violence-plagued El Salvador in late May to lead a weeklong dance program for at-risk youth. It was a journey initiated by two men with New London ties.

Adam Schmidt, who grew up in Sterling, Connecticut, and has a home in New London, has been working in El Salvador for four years with the United States Agency for International Development, or USAID. The organization works with local government and civilian counterparts to

support the growth of safer and more prosperous Salvadoran communities. Schmidt is deputy mission director of USAID/El Salvador.

Schmidt invited David Dorfman, who lives in New London and is head of the Connecticut College Dance Department, to bring his acclaimed modern-dance company to El Salvador to work with at-risk youths.

El Salvador is a country that has been struggling with gang-related violence within its borders. Two gangs — MS-13 and 18th Street — control a good deal of this Central American country, Dorfman notes.

“At the same time, it’s a robust, super-active country with a lot of great people and great art,” he says.

USAID has been striving to give kids safer places to gather and take part in healthy activities away from gang intimidation. Toward that end, the organization, with assistance from municipalities and community organizations, has established youth outreach centers to provide extracurricular options including music, dance and sports. And USAID supports efforts led by Glasswing International to offer after-school activities in schools.

Schmidt started in El Salvador when the child migrant crisis was surging, and he notes that, with new opportunities and safer communities, Salvadorans will also be less inclined to migrate out of the country.

The programming already seems to be helping kids.

“What we find from it now is this network of youths are doing some pretty spectacular things,” Schmidt says.

Fifty youngsters — some coming out of the youth outreach centers and some coming out of schools where USAID and Glasswing support after-school activities — worked with members of David Dorfman Dance for a week in May. The DDD folks served as coaches, choreographers and facilitators.

The culmination was a May 26 outdoor performance in Plaza Libertad in downtown San Salvador, and it was attended by about 500 people.

The park is in a key area where gangs operate, Dorfman notes. There are a lot of small businesses operating out of stalls around the park, and “a lot of extortion occurs via gangs,” he says. A lot of city residents who attended the show said they hadn’t visited this park in a long time. There was armed security at event.

“In a place like El Salvador, where the gangs control territory, it’s really a challenge to ensure that you can retake public space, secure it and put on a presentation like this,” Schmidt says in a phone interview from El Salvador. “I think that was an important message that was sent ... It’s terrific that David Dorfman Dance and others would take part in that — be pioneers, to a degree, in working with us.”

Schmidt says everything went very well, with “lots of positive energy. It was a pretty phenomenal opportunity to have the company here and working with our at-risk youth beneficiaries.”

The kids are self-taught as dancers, but they created some fairly advanced choreography, he notes. The talent exists, but, he says, “the question is how you find a way to expose that, and so working with local governments and the national government here, we’ve been able to do a lot as USAID ... investing in crime-prevention programming that supports positive opportunities for at-risk youth.”

Schmidt says they are collaborating with their government counterparts to ensure these crime-prevention efforts are sustained.

A show of talent

The show, which was titled “Dilo Con Movimiento” (“Say It with Movement”), featured the 50 youngsters whose dances mixed urban styles, including hip-hop forms, with movements from cultural dances in El Salvador. Numbers were performed to music ranging from Brahms’ Hungarian Dance No. 5 to “All You Need Is Love” to “Que Rico el Mambo.”

A youth orchestra consisting of 45 musicians played, and several rappers performed. David Dorfman Dance did a 15-minute piece based on their works “Aroundtown” and “Lightbulb Theory.”

The finale encouraged audience members to dance the mambo together, and a great many of them did.

Dorfman says of the event and the reaction, “I keep thinking of the term heartwarming, but it just really was.”

“Adam was just so encouraging. He said, ‘You have no idea what this means for this population, for this city, for this country,’” Dorfman says.

While Dorfman leads the dance department at Connecticut College, there were other Conn College connections with this project as well. David Dorfman Dance is company-in-residence at Conn College. The 14 people who went on the trip (eight were dancers) included Dorfman’s wife, Lisa Race, associate professor of dance at Conn College; Conn College assistant professor of dance Shawn Hove; Chris Considine, an intern from Conn, who helped with video and sound; and Conn College alum Liz de Lise, a singer/songwriter who works with David Dorfman Dance.

Dorfman notes that Connecticut College’s mission is putting the liberal arts into action, and that’s just what this trip was about.

“For me, it was very fulfilling to have David join us,” Schmidt says. “He’s one of the preeminent modern dance artists in the country.”

Schmidt said it was wonderful for the Dorfman dancers to share their talent and knowledge with some professional dancers in El Salvador but, more importantly, with kids who are looking to express themselves through dance.

“You’re a youth who maybe doesn’t have a lot of opportunity or confidence, but having interface with the Dorfman dancers and El Salvador professional dancers, you see a possibility,” Schmidt says.

In addition to working with the youngsters, David Dorfman Dance performed on their own, doing “Aroundtown” on May 22 at a San Salvador theater; they had previously staged “Aroundtown” at Connecticut College and the Brooklyn Academy of Music’s Next Wave Festival.

Meeting in New London

Schmidt and Dorfman have known each other for years. Dorfman recalls that they met when their children were both in a preschool program at Mitchell College (those kids are now in their late teens).

Schmidt and his wife, Kelly, have children Phineas, Eleanora and Owen.

The Schmidts decided to buy a house in New London because of what the city offers.

“It’s a great little city with a lot of artistic and cultural diversity, and great beaches. It’s been our home base for the past 14 years, and it’s a great place to return to every summer or during holidays to reconnect after being abroad in the Foreign Service. We’re proud to be New Londoners!” he says.



Members of David Dorfman Dance greet the audience after their performance during the May 26 festival in downtown San Salvador. David Dorfman (second from left) and his team worked with Salvadoran dancers during the week leading up to the festival. Daniel Valencia / USAID

He adds, “There is nothing like a good meal at Captain Scott’s or the Yolk Café.”

Schmidt had long spoken to Dorfman about the possibility of Dorfman bringing his dance expertise to USAID programming. USAID workers do four-year stints in a given country, and Schmidt is about to move on from El Salvador to the country of Georgia.

He got David Dorfman Dance to come El Salvador before he and his family made the transition to Georgia. David Dorfman Dance took part in a similar humanitarian trip as part of the DanceMotion USA program in 2015 to Turkey, Armenia and Tajikistan.

“What we’re doing is we’re providing activities that might fill a void and create interest and create understanding through the body. I call it kinetic diplomacy,” Dorfman says. “... We’re just trying to achieve peace, caring, empathy, non-sexualized intimacy through our dance.”

On an advance trip, Dorfman and DDD managing director Erin Roy visited a USAID center where young dancers performed, and Dorfman and Roy were the first people to see their choreography, which was mostly hip-hop-infected but was also influenced by El Salvadoran dances.

“They were just incredible,” Dorfman says. The leader who choreographed most of it “was so present and responsible and assertive, and some of the dances were really, really great.”

When Dorfman and Roy made that initial visit to El Salvador, Dorfman recalls,

“The countryside is just beautiful. As soon as we arrived, they whisked us off to this place overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It’s just a gorgeous country that has so much to offer and also has a lot of strife due to complicated politics. But the young people shouldn’t be denied unbelievable opportunities and shouldn’t suffer due to some poor choices by adults. We’re trying to encourage good choices by young people.”

He adds, “The amount of forward motion and momentum that I think is gaining in El Salvador ... is pretty amazing.”

Greece Tour June 2016



DDD performed a customized version of our “Athletes Project”, a dance DDD has created many times over the years. This was unique in that the cast was a lovely mix of Greek Special Olympians, Greek Dancer/Athletes (including an award-winning couple who dazzled with an amazing Salsa routine) and DDD.

DDD also collaborated with Cerebral Palsy Greece.

All performances were outdoors and part of Metamorphosis, a four-day free festival attended by 115,000 people at the new Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center – park and buildings designed by Renzo Piano.

Additionally, the company performed in the spectacular Lighthouse Terrace, at the top of the park, overlooking the Aegean and the Acropolis.

THE DANCE ENTHUSIAST

A Postcard from David Dorfman Dance

By Trina Mannino

Published on August 2, 2016

Summer Dancing in Greece, Connecticut and Jackson Hole, Wyoming

David Dorfman Dance has had a busy summer!

In June, they performed in Athens, Greece in the Metamorphosis Festival joining artists from around the world. There they performed three different projects and taught classes to community members "The time in Greece reminded me of what it is we do best at DDD. And that is to say yes," says company member Simon Thomas-Train. "Yes to anything and anyone who wants to share in the joy of dance. Whether it be building a dance with Special Olympians or dancing on the roof of an opera house overlooking the Aegean. We were given so many fantastic opportunities to say yes to dance and yes to the human connection it inspires."

David shares his impressions of the company's time in Athens:

We performed three main dances/projects in Athens and were guests in another project for a brief moment.

All performances were outdoors and part of Metamorphosis, a four day free festival attended by 115,000 people at the new Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center – park and buildings designed by Renzo Piano.

First we performed a customized version of our Athletes Project, a dance DDD has created many times over the years. This was unique in that the cast was a lovely mix of Greek Special Olympians, Greek Dancer/Athletes (including an award winning couple who dazzled with an amazing Salsa routine) and DDD. (I had led a workshop with all participants in my advance visit in the spring.)



Rehearsing in the studio in Athens, Greece

The dance climaxed with an incredible solo by one of the Special Olympians to Michael Jackson's Billie Jean, in which we brought many audience members up to dance with us.

Next, was our brief guest role. We came out of the audience and danced about 16 counts of Hip Hop with a super talented double group from Athens, Funky Habits and Waveomatics, in a mini arena equipped with water jets. Wet and wild it was. Fun was had by all ages.

Our last two dances were in the spectacular Lighthouse Terrace, at the top of the park, overlooking the Aegean and the Acropolis.



Cerebral Palsy Greece was our collaborator for an afternoon show, which brought a large crowd and most of them to tears of joy. I had met with one of their directors on my earlier visit, and via video and emails and upon their invitation, we decided that DDD would take part in one of their existing dances. With only two rehearsals we bonded fully and immediately with this incredible group. Even I couldn't resist the call to perform and threw myself in at the last moment. It was one of my most memorable experiences to date!

DDD and guest dancers during the Metamorphosis Festival. Photo by Maria Toultsa

Lastly, we were lucky to be able to perform a new version of a dance we created for the opening of The Met Breuer Museum in March in NYC, this time along with superstar Greek dancers. The curator for The Met project, Limor Tomer, also curated Metamorphosis and invited us to collaborate with her Greek counterpart, Mily Paschali to dream up all our activities in Athens. The dance has an original and ecstatic musical score by NYC composer/saxophonist Ken Thomson that was adored by several hundred happy audience members on the Terrace witnessing this international collaboration. The cast included DDD, special guests (my family) Lisa Race and Samson Race Dorfman, a young Greek dancer who performed a feisty duet with Samson, seven Greek dancers from Quasi Stellar, and its choreographer, the wonderful Apostolia Papadamaki.

I couldn't have been happier about the way all activities turned out. It was a pleasure and privilege to work with such generous, talented and eager Greek artists of all ages and abilities. I look forward to more!

-DD



David Dorfman at the Metamorphosis Festival. Photo by Maria Toultsa

P.S: And I almost forgot! One early morning, we became the last stop on a family health adventure which was comprised of running, boating and other physical activities more like a fun relay race. At the end, we taught all participants a brief dance before they crossed the finish line. It was a blast, and was emblematic of the family feel of the festival and its concentration on health and wellness of all types.

Met Breuer Opening March 2016



Photo by Stephanie Berger

David Dorfman Dance performed at the grand opening of the Met Breuer on March 18, 2016.

The Met invited the public to celebrate the opening of The Met Breuer with three days of special programs and extended hours for the public to experience the Museum's new space dedicated to modern and contemporary art at all three of its locations. The 15-minute site-specific featured performance by David Dorfman Dance took place five times throughout the day. It also featured an original score by Ken Thomson performed live by musicians from Asphalt Orchestra and Dither.

THE MET

Getting Site-Specific at The Met

March 25, 2016

Meryl Cates, Press Officer, MetLiveArts



Members of David Dorfman Dance perform in the Sunken Garden at The Met Breuer as part of the new location's opening-day celebration. Photo by Stephanie Berger

The Met Breuer has been open just one week, and already several site-specific works have animated the iconic building on Madison Avenue at 75th Street. On the opening day, March 18, David Dorfman Dance led the way with an inspired performance created for the outdoor Sunken Garden. A buoyant work, the dancers commanded the space with arresting lifts that were creatively crafted using the building itself as support. Dorfman's choreography and the music by Ken Thomson and Friends was completely captivating, and offered a satisfying and unexpected intimacy—no small feat for such a large opening-day celebration. Audiences lined the Garden, windows, sidewalks—wherever there was a view—for each of the day's six performances.

It is easy to romanticize The Met Breuer as an ideal location for site-specific live arts. The building boasts subtle details that continue to unfold and further reveal themselves, visit after visit. To see live arts staged with such beauty and nuance is an exciting sign of what's to come in future seasons.

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Photo by Stephanie Berger

Through these performances, MetLiveArts is exploring the connection between the three buildings, The Met's galleries and collection in dialogue with live performance art, and the impressive diversity of one single composition.