

## BFA in Dance alumna earns Fulbright Fellowship to Israel

Thorne is the Founder and Artistic Director of Inside Out Contemporary Ballet (IOCB), a professional dance company in Marin County. IOCB's most recent project, [\*If I Were You\*](#), is a long-term international outreach project that enlists the personal experiences and voices of world citizens to illuminate how dance can connect us to our shared humanity.

In 2014, Thorne was in Israel on a Fulbright Student Fellowship in order to complete the second iteration of this project, *If I Were You - Project Israel*. That new work premiered in 2016 as collaboration with set designer and Dominican alumna Lisa Boling Holloway.

This scholastic adventure has been fueled by Thorne's experience in [Dominican's BFA in Dance program](#) and backed by Dr. Gay Lynch, Assistant Professor of [Religion and Philosophy](#) in the [School of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences](#).

"Gay has always been an angel of light and wisdom for me, and a big supporter of me staying true to my path not only as a dancer, but as a dance scholar as well," said Thorne, who has continued to serve as Lynch's teaching assistant for the past four years since graduating from Dominican. "I love observing how available she makes herself to her students. She teaches from her heart while simultaneously challenging us with the best in dance scholarship."

Lynch and Thorne's class, "Dance and Spiritual Expression: Rhythmic Bodily Movement and the Religious Life," was a course Lynch designed after she was cornered by Thorne and fellow BFA students on campus during Thorne's junior year. They were inspired by Lynch's "The Rhetoric of Belief" class and were looking for a senior elective class. They asked Lynch to create one. She then communicated with Kimerer LaMothe, dancer and philosopher of dance, and a former Harvard colleague, to help her create the course. Lynch maintains that the beauty and density of the course is grounded in LaMothe's insightful scholarship and in the voices of her students.

"It changed all of our lives," Thorne said. "It was a platform for all of us to discuss our deepest most inner selves. It was a place where we could be vulnerable with each other and talk about dance, using words to bring these unspoken feelings out into the open. It was a very heartfelt experience. We laughed together. We cried together. We bonded within this bubble of intellect."

They bonded with Lynch as well, particularly Thorne.

"Casey did exceptional work in each of these classes. Her participation, her wisdom, her sensibilities, her attendance, her listening skills, and her sensitivity to others: all of these were, and continue to be, noteworthy," Lynch said. "Casey is nothing less than invaluable to this course. I offer erudite scholarship on dance in the world's religions and on dance philosophy. As a scholar and a dancer, Casey brings the course material fully alive."

That was Thorne's plan when she left her home in New Jersey to join Dominican's cohort class in the BFA in Dance program. It has empowered her mission to have an impact on dance worldwide.

"It's like a diamond. This program helped me cut my rock open in order to see the beauty that has always been inside. I've got to share that," Thorne said. "You are prepped to be able to dance professionally at any company around the world, but they also teach you that you are an artist and your ideas matter. They ask you to be a choreographer your senior year. These are opportunities that a typical classically trained dancer doesn't get ... After going through the program it felt inevitable that I would start to create my own work. I honed my unique artistic voice so clearly through this program that it felt like a natural progression."

That has led her to Tel Aviv and the Batsheva Dance Company, Thorne's favorite dance company. Its Artistic Director, Ohad Naharin, created a movement language he calls Gaga. Thorne wants to study Gaga and incorporate it into her teaching methods and choreography.

"Like Gay's class and how she brought scholarship to dance, this movement language Gaga has allowed me to refresh and reinvigorate my love for Ballet," Thorne said. "When I apply Gaga to Ballet, it's like I'm doing something for the very first time. It feels like a healing discovery when I work in that way. I'm going to absorb as

much of that philosophy as possible and see how it influences what I want and how I teach. And the best part is I will have *If I Were You* to show for it and share when I come home.”

*Casey Lee Thorne photos courtesy of Robin Jackson (front page), Narinder Dogra and Leonardo Ferri.*