

Content description:

A four-minute dance chain letter. Text on screen: "Dear Dancer. From If Cities Could Dance. Spoken word by Chinaka Hodge." In videos all made outdoors, each dancer has placed a camera low to the ground to capture a moment of dance in 16 different cities. Each 10–20 second shot centers one to two dancers dancing in a park, on a front stoop, on the sidewalk, by a lake, on a basketball court, or on a rooftop. Each dancer begins in the last pose of the dancer before, passing movements across time and space. Dancers appear in the following order as Chinaka's voice recites the words. Personal descriptions are worded to reflect how each dancer identifies.

Brooklyn, NY: An African American man on a white-painted city rooftop wears a striped t-shirt, black cap, jeans and high-top sneakers, dancing in a street dance style called flexing. Thick clouds above mirror the texture of the painted surface behind him. Arms flex and fold in and out from his body. With one arm up and one behind, one foot crosses in front of the other to propel him; he passes the dance mid-spin.

Harlem, NY: A black man with kinky high top hair and a mustache wearing a black sweat outfit and shoes with a tuft of blue shirt peeking out, continues the spin against a low, thick stone wall and trees with new spring growth behind. One hand is held still by his chest as he dances modern style, undulating and swooping. Balanced on the ball of one foot, the other raised and kicked back behind him, one arm long, head tilted back, he passes the dance, back arched.

Miami, FL: A multiracial femme woman in shorts and a tank top, hair in a high bun, moves in contemporary, modern dance on a stone patio with potted plants. "A dream within a dream" is written on a muralled wall. She rounds in, and lengthens. Perched on one foot and leaning down into two hands, she passes the dance with one leg extended back and toward the sun.

Detroit, MI: A black womyn dressed for cool weather in a knit hat and all black, with "Michigan" in yellow lettering on the front of her sweatshirt, moves in contemporary, modern dance across the length of a small cement stoop at a tan stone house. Feet and torso face one direction as she looks back over her right shoulder, left arm raised in the air. She is on the balls of her feet, eyes closed, and as she plants her feet firm, she passes the dance.

Albuquerque, NM: A Jicarilla Apache woman hip hop and freestyle dances in front of a red adobe house with a front yard of stones and low plants. She wears flowing blue pants, a copper shirt and long beaded earrings. She travels the full front walk in her dance; she leaps, kicks, slices through space. In a deep lunge, arms raised, she looks over her left hip and pulls her right hand back toward her face to pass the dance.

San Jose, CA: A Chicano man is poppin in a black shirt with an orange embroidered letter "B," tan pants and a black cap. He's on a small stone front stoop to a light stucco house, slowly traveling from one end to the other. Calla lilies tower up from the ground by the house. His body

leans to the right, his right knee bends in toward the left, his right elbow raised in the air, he pops into position to pass the dance.

Oakland, CA: An African American contemporary dancer is on an apartment complex basketball court. He has a full ebony beard and long hair beneath a black cap. He wears a T-shirt and jeans with a shirt tied around his waist. He incorporates sign language into his dance, translated onscreen: "My heart, our heart, we dream together America. Express." Leaning his weight into one hip, he extends both arms in front of him, hands rounded as if holding his heart, and he offers it to pass the dance.

Minneapolis, MN: Two Native American (Seneca and Muscogee Creek) men and brothers dance on a trim lawn by tan brick buildings and weeping willows, branches still nearly bare. They wear T-shirts and have long hair pulled back. They practice a traditional dance called hoop dancing and are dancing in sync. One dancer with earrings and a beaded necklace sinks low to the ground on his right foot and left hand. Hoop held up in his right hand, he kicks his left leg straight out, passes the hoop over his foot to pass the dance.

Seattle, WA: A nonbinary Filipinx femme similarly extends their left leg straight out on the banks of a lake with park and city stretching out in the distance. There is a carpet of cherry blossoms below their feet. They wear a frilly-sleeved mint top that shows their midriff, track pants, and a homemade colorful mask covering their mouth and nose as they move in street style dance. Their white socks have black text embroidered on them that reads, "Venmo me." They lean into their right hip, weight on both feet, their left arm stretched in front to pass the dance.

Atlanta, GA: A young black female in a sweatshirt with wide stripes, black jeans with tears, hot pink sneakers and long braids styled into a high bun picks up the dance on a pebble trail that winds past a pond. Behind her are lush green trees and brick buildings. She is a hip hop dancer, her shadow sharp and directly beneath her. In profile to the camera, she wraps her right arm up and around her head, takes a deep step backward and pushes her arm forward to pass the dance.

San Francisco, CA: A queer black man is dressed in all black, at the edge of grass and a paved park path. Behind him is a row of ornate houses, the downtown cityscape just beyond. His head is shaved on the underside, long braids wrapped into a bun atop his head. As he vogues, his braids come loose and swing and flow. He dips, right leg bent beneath him, left extended to the sky, arms out, back arched and head on the ground to pass the dance.

Silicon Valley, CA: A multiracial woman with light brown skin and short curly hair wears a hot pink sweatshirt in her manual wheelchair on a thick, nearly horizontal branch of an oak tree. She curves her arms and upper body in contemporary dance moves. Balanced on her chair and with her left hand extended behind her, she sweeps her right arm up and around her head to pass the dance.

San Juan, PR: An Afro-Puerto Rican woman dances bomba and is dressed in a long white dress and leggings with a white scarf tying back her hair. She is on a stone platform by banana trees and lobster claw flowers, and two tall wooden barrel drums stand beside her. She swiftly steps and turns in profile to the camera, right leg straight, left bent deeply, arms raised with her right elbow forward and left hand behind and above her head to pass the dance.

Memphis, TN: An African American man on a backyard patio surrounded by trees wears a red, black and white track suit, black cap and dark red sneakers. He is jookin near a small area of shrubs in red bark dust. He glides and hops to his body in profile, his face forward. He balances weight on his left heel and right toes, arms raised at sharp angles, elbows bent, hands pointing down to pass the dance.

Washington, D.C.: An African American man dancing in the beat ya feet style wears tan pants and a gray shirt. His hair in long, full twists, he is in a parking lot at a salmon-colored brick building. His shadow reaches long on the asphalt to his side. Eyes cast down, he steps and twists his feet and legs wide and narrow, wide and narrow to pass the dance.

Chicago, IL: A black queen with short curly black, blonde and pale blue hair wears an open red and black letter jacket with "Creation Global" on the back, a black sports bra underneath. She dances Chicago footwork on the rain-darkened sidewalk in front of a house, a purple-leaved tree behind her. She makes a final turn, crosses one foot in front of the other, raises her hands to her forehead and bows to end the dance.

The film ends with all 16 dancers on screen, each in their own tile, four rows of four stacked atop each other.

Credits On Screen: Featured Dancers In Order of Appearance: Drew Dollaz, Brooklyn, New York; Jerron Herman, Harlem, New York; Marissa Alma Nick, Miami; Erika Stowall, Detroit; Anne Pesata, Albuquerque; Alex "Prince Ali" Flores, San Jose; Antoine Hunter, Oakland; Samsoshe Sampson and Lumhe Sampson, Minneapolis; Angel "Moonyeka" Alviar-Langley,

Seattle; Jalaiah Harmon, Atlanta; Jocquese "Sir Joq" Whitfield, San Francisco; Alice Sheppard, Silicon Valley; Mar Cruz, San Juan; Terrance "G-Nerd" Smith, Memphis; John "Crazy Legs" Pearson; Washington, D.C.; and Donnetta Jackson; Chicago

Producer, Editor: Kelly Whalen; Additional Producer: Charlotte Khadra, Elie Khadra; Associate Producer: Vivian Morales, Masha Pershay; Production Assistant: Chinwe Oniah; Special Thanks: Amy Miller, Mariclare Hulbert, Melissa Higgins, Ichun Yen; Support is provided by the Osher Production Fund. Support of KQED Arts is provided by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. Support is also provided by the members of KQED. A production of KQED Arts © 2020 KQED - Content description written by Cheryl Green