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## **Levinson Arts Achievement Award Given to Gabe Stone Shayer**

*The New York Community Trust awards \$50,000 to rising dancer and choreographer.*

New York, NY (12/2/2020) - Rising ballet dancer and choreographer Gabe Stone Shayer has been selected by an independent committee to receive the Levinson Arts Achievement Award, a \$50,000 grant made possible by Robert A. Levinson and Patricia S. Levinson through their fund in The New York Community Trust.

Shayer, 26, was recently promoted to Soloist with American Ballet Theatre (ABT), and has danced to acclaim around the world. In recent years, Shayer has choreographed pieces, including a video for ABT in which he collaborated with 15-time Grammy-winning singer-songwriter Alicia Keys. In addition, he formed Creative Genesis, a nonprofit company that recently staged a ballet that worked within the restrictions of social distancing.

"The goal of the award is to give early recognition of emerging talent who need the spotlight to aid their path and to broaden awareness of the contributions they are making," said Robert Levinson, founder of the annual Levinson Awards.

"Gabe Stone Shayer is incredibly talented and the Levinson Arts Achievement Award is proud to honor his work and help support his future," said Bree Jeppson, chair of the selection committee. "In addition, given the current challenges facing the arts, and especially the performing arts, we felt it even more meaningful that this year's Award go to an emerging choreographer. Gabe Shayer is developing his practice with great purpose at a time when such efforts are most needed. We hope the financial commitment of the Levinson Art Award will provide opportunities for his choreographic development and will further his creative endeavors."

"I'm tremendously grateful and so surprised," said Shayer. "It's the reassurance that a young artist needs to keep pushing forward. It's a gesture that says 'we have your back and we support you,' and for that I'm so thankful."

Shayer said he has been expressing himself through movement practically from birth, recalling that he used to dance around his grandmother as a toddler, moving to the cadence of her voice as she spoke in the Ghanaian language of Ga. He grew up in Philadelphia, starting his formal ballet training there at 11 and touring nationally at the age of 13. In 2009, he attended the Bolshoi Ballet Academy in Moscow and won first place for best male dancer. He continued his studies at the Bolshoi Ballet Academy and is the first African-American male to graduate from the Academy.

He joined ABT Studio Company in 2011, the main company as an apprentice in April 2012, and the corps de ballet in November 2012. He was promoted to Soloist in September 2020.

Though the current pandemic has hobbled the performing arts season, Shayer has kept busy with several projects. Most recently, he served as creative director for “Pas de Deux,” a video series pairing ABT dancers with leading artists for interviews and artistic collaborations, sponsored by CHANEL. The series featured Shayer’s own collaboration with Keys, as he performed his choreography to her recently released song [“Love Looks Better.”](#) For Bloomingdale’s 2020 virtual holiday benefit, Shayer created unique choreography for an innovative motion-capture experience.

In September of this year, Shayer created a “bubble project” for Creative Genesis where dancers quarantined together so they could perform safely without masks. The piece for eight dancers, called “Good Moon,” was performed at a gallery of the Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts & Sciences in New Jersey, and was viewable online and by audience members looking through glass from outside the venue.

To give a new generation a start in dance, Shayer teaches ballet virtually to young dance students in two schools in Ghana and set up scholarships for staff there to study ABT’s National Training Curriculum.

“I found it important work for me to be able to bring my knowledge and experience to people who may not have been exposed to the possibility of a classical ballet career or the knowledge of the training,” said Shayer.

Robert Levinson, the Award’s funder, served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Brooklyn Museum from 1968 to 1994, and as Chairman from 1972 to 1984. He also served on the board of the National Academy of Design, the National Dance Institute, the Hood Museum of Art, and the Harlem School of the Arts.

“My late wife, Pat, and I have been keen supporters of the arts,” said Levinson. “We’ve been particularly interested in helping young, promising artists, whether visual or performing. With this award, I hope to assist artists to move from relative obscurity to a brighter platform from which they can improve their chances of self-supporting success.”

The Award, administered by The New York Community Trust, is one of five awards funded by the Levinsons. The others support outstanding achievement in international understanding, health policy, children with disabilities, and health careers for minorities.

**About The New York Community Trust**

The New York Community Trust connects past, present, and future generous New Yorkers with vital nonprofits working to make a healthy, equitable, and thriving community for all. It is a public grantmaking foundation dedicated to improving the lives of residents of New York City, Westchester, and Long Island. For more information, visit [nycommunitytrust.org](http://nycommunitytrust.org).

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