



ASCEND

Presented by

**PITTSBURGH
PLAYHOUSE**

POINT PARK UNIVERSITY

Welcome to the ultimate dance party.

Get ready to immerse yourself in a breathtaking production that explores the four elements of earth, air, water and fire through stunning projections, evocative music, mesmerizing dance, and the gravity defying artistry of aerialists.

This universal themed event features STEM and art, offering a unique interactive experience that invites diverse audiences to connect, reflect, and celebrate our shared humanity.

Audiences will experience 360-degree entertainment while standing in the center of this joyous journey. As the performers interact with the audience, you will be awestruck and uplifted!

Director/Choreographer: Kiesha Lalama

Co-Creators & Co-Writers: Kiesha Lalama, Jacob John White, Jaxon White

Music Composition: Ryan McMasters

Scenic Design: Christian Fleming

Costume Design: Michael Montgomery

Lighting Design: Keith A. Truax

Sound Design: Travis Wright

Digital Media Design: Daniel Fine

Props Design: Katie Mikula-Wineman

Stage Management: Angie Monahan & Evan Smedley

Production Manager: Danielle Paccione

Technical Director: Jordan Edkins



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CAST A ELEMENTS

Emma Armstrong: Performer

Kayla Beardslee: Performer

Etta Partridge: Performer

Kira Phillips: Performer

Kirsten Rossi: Performer

Carson Russo: Performer

CAST B ELEMENTS

Ava Alston: Performer

Bailey Cheung: Performer

Ben Jacobs: Performer

Morgan Ryder: Performer

Rachel Sulek: Performer

Kamea Wilson: Performer

*Artists perform *TIME* when not in the role of the *ELEMENTS*

Olivia Ajayi: Understudy

Gabrielle Davis: Understudy

Jordan Wanuck: Swing

Crew

Olivia Ajayi, Madeline Bedford, Stella Frazer, Tia Knight, Emily Walker, Allie Carter, Carter Gray

Jordan Wanuck, Izabella Wolfe, Dermot Hannon, Jaclyn Vandiver, Lauren Baldwin

Maya Adams, Megan Lundstrom, Primo Brodt-Jenkins, Sam Crowe, Thomas Smith



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Conchetta Aronowitz: Sound Supervisor

Emily Berkheimer: Associate Digital Designer & Programmer

Lori Lynn Bollinger: Scenic Charge Artist

Ari Cobb: Mask Construction

Cathleen Crocker-Perry: Earth Headpiece Construction

Natalie Flango: Fire Headpiece Construction/Wardrobe Supervisor

Justin Fortunato: Creative Consultant

Patrick Geraci: Costumes Lead Cutter

William Gleeson: Video Content Creator/Editor

Charles Hall: Earth Percussion



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Sierra Hughes: Costumes First Hand

Ed Larkin: Lighting Supervisor

Joan Markert: Air Bodysuit Construction

Michael Palumbo: Assistant Lighting Designer/Assistant Lighting Supervisor

Katie Phalen Mayfield: Associate Digital Designer

Buzz Miller: Video Supervisor

Clara Rimes: Scenic Artist

PJ Roduta: Stilt Coach

Braydon Turner: Assistant Lighting Designer

Jim Utz: Assistant Prop Manager

Jessica Walz: Aerial Coach and Coordinator



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Pittsburgh Playhouse Staff

Kiesha Lalama: Executive Producer

Kim Martin: General Manager/Producer

Barbara Houston: Playhouse Administrator

Lindsay Lehman: Events Manager

John Van Heest: Marketing Director

Khanh Tran: Marketing Coordinator

Olivia Curti: Graphic Designer

Haleigh Hatfield: Box Office Manager

Brittany Martin: Box Office Assistant

Liz McGrath: Patron Services Manager

Mady Thetard: Community Engagement Coordinator



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Pittsburgh Playhouse Staff

Danielle Paccione: Production Manager
Ryan McMasters: Dance Production Manager
Michael Montgomery: Costume Studio Supervisor
Aimee J. Coleman*: Dance Costume Supervisor
Patrick Geraci*: Cutter/Draper
Sierra Hughes*: First Hand/Stitcher
Natalie Flango*: Wardrobe Supervisor
Ivy Mackinson: Overhire Stitcher
Jordan Edkins: Technical Director
Nick Smith*: Scene Shop Supervisor
Austin Jenkins*: Scene Shop Carpenter/Welder
Maggie Crockarell*: Scene Shop Carpenter/Welder
Jarrold DiGiorgi*: Part-Time Carpenter/Welder
Lori Bollinger: Scenic Charge
Clara Rimes*: Scenic Artist
Katie Mikula-Wineman*: Properties Shop Manager
Jim Utz*: Asst. Props Manager
Edward Larkin*: Lighting Supervisor
Michael Palumbo*: Asst. Lighting Supervisor
Conchetta Aronowitz*: Sound Supervisor
Mallory Walsh*: Lighting and Sound Technician
William "Buzz" Miller*: Theatrical AV/IT Supervisor

*EMPLOYEES AT THE PITTSBURGH PLAYHOUSE ARE REPRESENTED BY THE INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF THEATRICAL STAGEEMPLOYEES (IAITSE).



ASCEND



MOMs
clean air
FORCE

**Fighting for CLEAN AIR
to protect
our children's health**





AS THE OFFICIAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDER OF THE
PITTSBURGH PLAYHOUSE

THE CAST AND CREW ARE ALWAYS CLOSE TO OUR HEARTS.

UPMC
LIFE CHANGING MEDICINE

We asked the ASCEND
artists:

*Which element do you
best associate with?*



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I am best described by water as I value emotional depth, and strive to flow gracefully through life's challenges.

Etta Partridge



Earth best describes me because I'm grounded, reliable, and deeply connected to the things and people I love.

Jessica Walz



I resonate most with water, as my adaptability enables me to navigate challenges in a timely fashion.

Ed Larkin



I relate most to the element fire because it focuses on passion and transformative energy, as well as it symbolizes embracing challenges, that is something I have found within myself through dance.

Bailey Cheung



Water is the element I connect with most, as growing up in Michigan near beautiful lakes instilled in me a sense of peace, reflection, adaptability, and resilience, making its calming presence feel like home.

Morgan Ryder



I feel the element of water describes me best as its fluidity, adaptability and emotional association all resonate with me deeply as the individual I have once been, and have become.

Olivia Ajayi



I feel I am represented by the Earth element because it signifies stability, reality, growth, and power, all of which I embody and believe to be foundational building blocks and forces to be reckoned with in life.

Kayla Beardslee



**I am fundamentally lead by a
curiosity best resembled through
air--permeating all spaces,
investigating at every
opportunity.**

Emma Armstrong



I resonate with air. To me, it represents the freedom to explore new ideas and concepts.

Braydon Turner



The element that best represents me is water due to my adaptability, articulate nature, and versatility as water is resilient, and comes in many graceful yet strong forms.

Kirsten Rossi



I embody the element of earth—steady, disciplined, and resilient—staying grounded in my routines while pushing myself to grow, whether in fitness, dance, or my personal goals.

Ava Alston



I best resonate with Air because
of its freedom to be present.

Kamea Wilson



The element of fire best describes me because I am warm, fiery and like fire my core convictions fuel my spark and flame.

Jordan Wanuck



I most resonate with earth, like the earth we are products of who and what we surround ourselves with and that really resonates with me.

Carson Russo



Renew me, refresh me, and
release me; deep or shallow,
stillness or waves, a vast
biosphere lives inside me, and I
see my reflection in the water.

Allie Carter



I feel Water describes me best because the fluidity water brings as it constantly moves gives this sense of control and power through every crashing wave.

Rachel Sulek



**“Consider what the spirit is: air,
and never the same Air, but spat
out and gulped in again every
instant” -Marcus Aurelius**

Benjamin Jacobs



**I thrive on structure and consistency,
the harsh yet calm element of Earth
resonates with me most.**

Evan Smedley



Earth resonates with me as it reflects my deep appreciation for nature, grounding me with its calm energy and encouraging me to grow through life's challenges.

Angie Monahan



I identify the most with air
because I have asthma.

Emily Berkheimer



**As a Leo, I'm definitely fiery as
can be!**

Katie Phelan Mayfield

Which element do *you*
best associate with?



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FIRST ALERT WEATHER



WATCH LIVE ON

KDKA

 CBS NEWS
PITTSBURGH

KDKA+

KDKA.com

BEHIND THE SCENES

The Pittsburgh Playhouse Performers and Production Team make ASCEND possible.



BEHIND THE SCENES

The ASCEND creative team includes acclaimed digital designer Daniel Fine who worked with the cast on motion capture avatar building.



BEHIND THE SCENES

A video team captured the rehearsal and creation process of ASCEND. Follow along with these special behind-the-scenes videos.

EDUCATIONAL PARTNER

CARNEGIE 
SCIENCE
CENTER

Participate in elemental science experiments in our lobby
provided by the Carnegie Science Center!

carnegiesciencecenter.org

ASCEND IS SUPPORTED BY

The Charity Randall Foundation

American Eagle Foundation

The Grable Foundation

Elizabeth Shiras Charitable Trust



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FOR FRANKIE “CHOPS” LALAMA

You continue to show us the way. We love you!

SPECIAL THANKS

Dr. David Schmidt

Dr. Chris Brussalis

Ted Black

Kim Martin

John Van Heest

Barbara Houston

Justin Delecki

Wrecking Crew Media

Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center

3 Rivers Studios

Mod Scenes



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COMING IN EARLY MAY!

Stay tuned for the 2025/2026 Announcement!

Visit PittsburghPlayhouse.com on how you may one of the first to know (and get tickets) for our most exciting season yet.

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