

# 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



ASCEND

#### 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

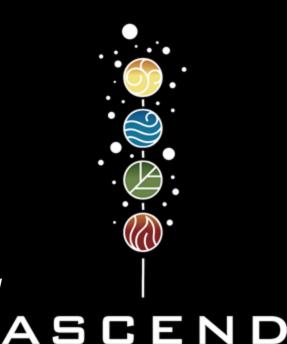
Olivia Ajayi: Understudy

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



<sup>\*</sup>Artists perform *TIME* when not in the role of the *ELEMENTS* 

**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



#### ASCEND

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



#### ASCEND

#### **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



#### **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
Jarrod DiGiorgi\*: Part-Time Carpenter/Welder

Lori Bollinger: Scenic Charge Clara Rimes\*: Scenic Artist

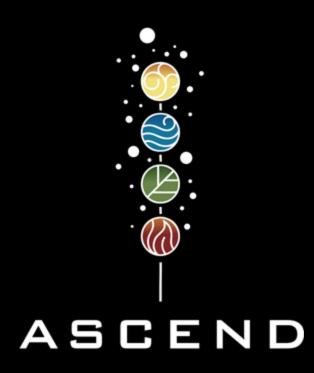
Katie Mikula-Wineman\*: Properties Shop Manager

Jim Utz\*: Asst. Props Manager

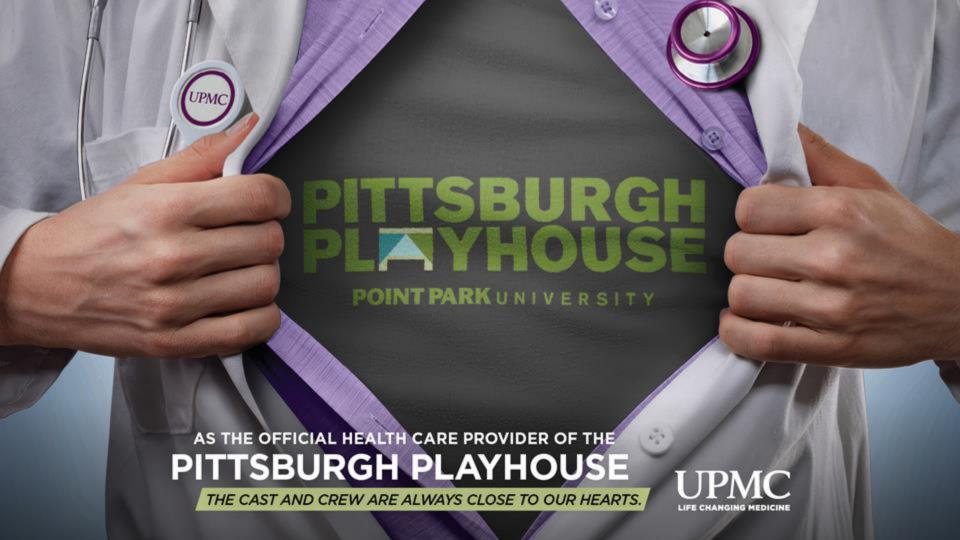
Edward Larkin\*: Lighting Supervisor

Michael Palumbo\*: Asst. Lighting Supervisor Conchetta Aronowitz\*: Sound Supervisor Mallory Walsh\*: Lighting and Sound Technician

William "Buzz" Miller\*: Theatrical AV/IT Supervisor







# We asked the ASCEND artists:

Which element do you best associate with?



ASCEND



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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#### **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.



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

carnegiesciencecenter.org

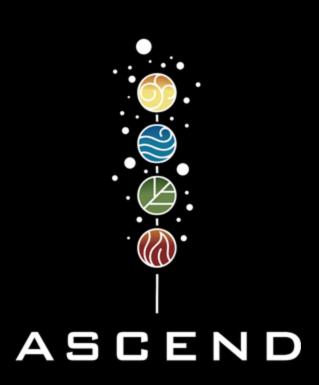
#### **ASCEND IS SUPPORTED BY**

The Charity Randall Foundation

American Eagle Foundation

The Grable Foundation

Elizabeth Shiras Charitable Trust



#### 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

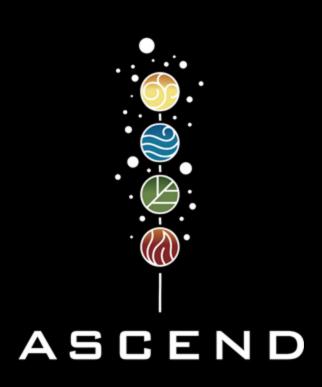
Justin Delecki

Wrecking Crew Media

Lincoln Park Performing Arts Center

3 Rivers Studios

Mod Scenes



#### **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.

