



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **A NEW DEFINITION OF DANCE BRINGS WORLD-ACCLAIMED DANCERS WITH DISABILITIES TO MIAMI: OCTOBER 25 & 26, 2016**

*Public workshops and masterclasses at Miami-Dade County Auditorium demonstrating and teaching integrative dance and inclusive creative movement to local dancers, choreographers, dance educators and students*

**(MIAMI, September 26, 2016)**—VSA Florida's *A New Definition of Dance* is coming to Miami on Tuesday, October 25 and Wednesday, October 26, 2016. Presented by the **Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs** at Miami-Dade County Auditorium through the **All Kids Included** and **Culture Shock Miami** programs, the schedule includes free dance workshops over the two days for professional dancers, dance educators and choreographers, and masterclasses for students, ages 13-22.

Now in its second year, **VSA Florida's A New Definition of Dance** features internationally renowned dancers of exceptional merit, who also have disabilities. The workshops and masterclasses are being led by: West African musician and dancer [Sidiki Conde](#); [Hai Cohen and Tali Wertheim](#) from Israel's Vertigo Dance Company; U.S. Navy veteran [Dwayne Scheuneman](#), founder of the Tampa-based REVolutions Dance group; Chinese classical dancer [Liu Yan](#); and [Merry Lynn Morris](#) from the University of South Florida's School of Theatre and Dance.

Watch video about Dwayne Scheuneman, teaching dance workshop to children. [Click here.](#) <https://youtu.be/S07VPu6UMUY>

Participants must register in advance for admission to the free workshops and master classes, as space is extremely limited. Registration forms may be found online at <http://www.miamidadearts.org/education/vsa-floridas-new-definition-dance-miami> or call (305) 375-5024.

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**MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS**

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The workshop and masterclass schedule at Miami-Dade County Auditorium is:

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Who Should Attend</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Featured Artists</b>
Tuesday Oct. 25, 2016	Workshop #1	Professional Dancers, Choreographers, and Dance Educators	6:00 - 7:15 pm	<b>Hai Cohen &amp; Tali Wertheim</b> , Vertigo Dance Company (Israel)
Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2016	Workshop #2	Professional Dancers, Choreographers, and Dance Educators	7:45 - 9:00 pm	<b>Liu Yan</b> , Classical Dancer (China) <b>Merry Lynn Morris</b> , University of South Florida School of Theatre & Dance (Tampa) <b>Dwayne Scheuneman</b> , REVolutions Dance Group (Tampa)
Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2016	Masterclass #1	Dance Students Ages 13-22	6:00 - 7:15 pm	<b>Sidiki Conde</b> , African Musician and Dancer (Guinea)
Wednesday, Oct. 26, 2016	Masterclass #2	Dance Students Ages 13-22	7:45 - 9:00 pm	<b>Hai Cohen &amp; Tali Wertheim</b> , Vertigo Dance Company (Israel)

***A New Definition of Dance*** is funded in part by a grant from South Arts in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs; with the support of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners; and with support from the Hillsborough Arts Council, the Lightning Foundation, Confucius Institute, and USF World.

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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**Hai Cohen and Tali Wertheim** After becoming paralyzed from the chest down following a sharp jump into the shallow water of a swimming pool and damaging his spine, Hai Cohen became involved in mixed ability dance workshops in Israel with the Vertigo Dance Company. Since 2002, Hai and Tali Wertheim, who began studying Classical Ballet, Flamenco and Jazz at the age of nine and has taught dance for more than 20 years — has taught mixed ability workshops, classes and other projects for adults, youth and children in Israel and abroad. Hai and Tali are both well known for their choreography and dancing in multiple performances across the world.

**Liu Yan** is a classical Chinese dancer who has performed in many dance dramas and won many dance competitions in and outside China. She was chosen to be the lead dancer in the “Silk Road” segment at the Beijing 2008 Olympics opening ceremony, but 12 days before the actual performance, Ms. Liu fell from a malfunctioning moving platform during an evening rehearsal at the Beijing National Stadium and was rushed to a local military hospital to undergo six hours of surgery. Her accident resulted in nerve and spinal damage, paralyzing her lower body. In March 2010, Ms. Liu established the “Liu Yan Arts Special Fund” to help children in poverty-stricken areas, orphans, and migrant workers’ children through art education. She has a doctorate degree in Dance Theory from the Beijing Dance Academy.

**Merry Lynn Morris** holds a Masters of Fine Arts degree in dance performance and choreography from Florida State University and is a PhD candidate at Texas Woman’s University. She has been on the faculty of the USF dance program since 1998. Ms. Morris seeks out interdisciplinary opportunities in which her movement background and expertise can be utilized and expanded. Her collaborative work crosses multiple disciplines including: Engineering, Physical Therapy, Architecture, Music, and Visual Art. She enjoys opportunities to utilize dance in diverse, integrative, and therapeutic ways. She began exploring the venue of mixed ability dance in 2002, and as caregiver to a disabled father over a 21 year period, her interest and awareness in disability needs has been ever-present. Ms. Morris serves on the board for VSA of Florida, the statewide arts and disability organization, and in the Tampa community, Ms. Morris teaches ballet and integrated dance for young children and adults (REVolutions Dance [www.revdance.org](http://www.revdance.org)) and choreographs regularly.

**Dwayne Scheuneman** was an accomplished wheelchair Track and Field athlete when in 2002 he sought out dance as a means of cross training. The physicality and the creativity of dance quickly leaped to the forefront of Dwayne’s interest and he began taking dance classes and performing with Asher Dance Eclectic in Tampa FL. It was also at this time when he began taking workshops and attending dance festivals with internationally recognized "Physically Integrated" dance companies such as AXIS Dance Company, CANDOCO and others. In August of 2005, Dwayne started REVolutions dance in Tampa

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Florida, an inclusive dance company that creates professional performance and training opportunities for both adults and children with disabilities. Since that time, Dwayne has collaborated with choreographers and dancers around the US to create and perform in numerous dance performances. Dwayne has worked in several international collaborations as a guest teacher and performer in Russia, Palestine and Israel. In 2014, Dwayne moved to Oakland to join AXIS Dance Company with whom he continues to teach and perform.

**Sidiki Conde** At the age of 14, Sidiki Conde lost the use of his legs as the result of polio. In his village in Guinea, West Africa, disabled people commonly were banished from their homes in order not to bring shame or bad luck upon their family, so he was sent to his grandfather's village deep in the forest. Knowing that he would not be able to participate in the coming-of-age ceremony if he could not dance, Sidiki reconstructed the traditional steps using his hands instead of his feet. He became so adept that he was able to travel to the capital city, Conakry, and form "Message de Espair," an orchestra of artists with disabilities he recruited from the city's streets. In 1988, Sidiki came to America and formed the "Tokounou All-Abilities Dance and Music Ensemble," a program that teaches children in public schools. Sidiki received a National Heritage Fellow Lifetime Honors from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2007 for his work.

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## **ABOUT VSA FLORIDA**

A private not-for-profit organization, **VSA FLORIDA** (VSAFL) conducts art education programs in schools, Department of Juvenile Justice facilities, and community centers; promotes the accomplishments of artists with disabilities through our artist registry, exhibitions, and performances; and increases access to the arts through professional development workshops. VSA Florida is a member of the VSA Affiliate Network (a program of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C.) and is headquartered at the David C. Anchin Center in the College of Education at the University of South Florida.

## **ABOUT ALL KIDS INCLUDED**

**ALL KIDS INCLUDED** promotes inclusive arts and cultural programs in school settings and throughout the community enabling kids of all abilities and their families to participate fully in the arts. All Kids Included continually raises the bar with excellence in programming that demonstrates and promotes the benefit and importance of inclusionary arts and cultural programs for children and youth. All Kids Included is an initiative of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, made possible with the support of the Miami-Dade County Cultural Affairs Council, the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners, and funded in part through a grant provided by The Children's Trust. The Children's Trust is a dedicated source of revenue established by voter referendum to improve the lives of children and families in Miami-Dade County by making strategic investments in their future. For more information about AKI and its programs, visit [www.AllKidsIncludedMiami.org](http://www.AllKidsIncludedMiami.org).

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## **ABOUT CULTURE SHOCK MIAMI**

**CULTURE SHOCK MIAMI** (found at [www.CultureShockMiami.com](http://www.CultureShockMiami.com)) offers students ages 13-22 years old, \$5 tickets to performances provided by more than 90 cultural organizations, including top music, theater, dance, and performing arts presenters in Miami-Dade County. Culture Shock Miami, a program of the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs, is designed to introduce the next generation of audience members to live arts and cultural experiences as affordable, accessible and fulfilling entertainment options. With each student ticket purchased at \$5, students may buy a second ticket for \$5 for an accompanying guest of any age. Admission to many South Florida museums, landmarks, and cultural destinations purchased through Culture Shock Miami is two-for-\$5. For more information about this exciting program, please call 305/375-1949 or contact Christina Tassy-Beauvoir at [cmt@miamidade.gov](mailto:cmt@miamidade.gov) or Mary-Margaret Dale at [marymar@miamidade.gov](mailto:marymar@miamidade.gov).

The Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Council develop cultural excellence, diversity and participation throughout Miami-Dade County by strategically creating and promoting opportunities for artists and cultural organizations, and our residents and visitors who are their audiences. The Department directs the Art in Public Places program and serves its board, the Art in Public Places Trust, commissioning, curating, maintaining and promoting the County's art collection. The Department also manages, programs and operates the South Miami-Dade Cultural Arts Center, a campus of state-of-the-art cultural facilities in Cutler Bay, as well as Miami-Dade County Auditorium, Joseph Caleb Auditorium and the African Heritage Cultural Arts Center, all dedicated to presenting and supporting excellence in the arts for the entire community. Through staff, board and programmatic resources, the Department, the Council and the Trust promote, coordinate and support Miami-Dade County's more than 1,000 not-for-profit cultural organizations as well as thousands of resident artists through grants, technical assistance, public information and interactive community planning. The Department receives funding through the Miami-Dade County Mayor and Board of County Commissioners, The Children's Trust, the National Endowment for the Arts, the State of Florida through the Florida Department of State, Division of Cultural Affairs and the Florida Council on Arts and Culture, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Other support and services are provided by TicketWeb for the Culture Shock Miami program, the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau, the South Florida Cultural Consortium and the Tourist Development Council.

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It is the policy of Miami-Dade County to comply with all of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. To request materials in accessible format, sign language interpreters, and/or any accommodation to participate in any Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs program or meeting, please contact Francine Andersen at 305-375-4634 [culture@miamidade.gov](mailto:culture@miamidade.gov) at least five days in advance to initiate your request. TTY users may also call 711 (Florida Relay Service).

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