

A Note From *Bill's Desk*

McCarter

Get a behind-the-scenes glimpse via Bill Lockwood, Director of Special Programming at McCarter, about how and why he brings phenomenal artists to our McCarter stages. This week, he spotlights two artists that will be on stage this weekend: Dorrance Dance and Chris Thile.

October 18, 2021

When we think of the art of tap dancing, a uniquely American dance form, our minds probably run first to Fred Astaire and the legendary Bill “Bojangles” Robinson, or more recently, Gregory Hines and Savion Glover, who almost singlehandedly established tap as an art form. However, a new generation of artists have taken tapping even farther, and no one has been more prominent in this movement than **Michelle Dorrance**, who brings her company [Dorrance Dance](#) to McCarter for the first time this **Friday, October 22nd**. As the most influential choreographer in tap today, and a winner of a MacArthur “Genius” Grant, she is a virtuoso dancer and rare artist who can make dance as innovative as it is engaging. For a decade, she and her “hoofers” have helped audiences view the old jazz form of “tap dance” in a more modern context while simultaneously paying tribute to its roots. The surprises in her work (like *SOUNDspace*) make her dances seem both timeless and experimental, making full use of tone, timbre, volume, tempo – and of course, rhythm. Her message? Tap dancing is more than just about those shoes – it’s about movement as music.

P.S. Looking Ahead: For another chapter in the ever-evolving world of tap, don’t miss the incredible solo dancer **Ayodele Casel**, appearing with [Arturo O’Farrill and The Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra](#), at McCarter on **February 19, 2022**.

Chris Thile qualifies as one of music’s true “shape-shifters:” mandolin virtuoso, composer, vocalist, radio show host, and producer. A child prodigy in the early 90’s, his charismatic career transcends traditional genres. Much has transpired since he first came to McCarter in 2002 with his bluegrass-and-beyond band **Nickel Creek**, which won a Grammy and sold 2 million records (we all still have them). Grammy-history repeated itself a few years later with **The Punch Brothers**, and he received a MacArthur “Genius” Grant in 2012. In 2016, Thile took over the host duties on the APM syndicated variety show *Live From Here*, the successor to Garrison Keillor’s *Prairie Home Companion*. Carnegie Hall also named him one of its resident artists in

2018. But one thing has remained constant: his reputation as the leading mandolin virtuoso of his generation; as Bela Fleck is to the banjo, Thile is to the mandolin. Most recently, he has focused his attention on yet another role, that of singer/songwriter. His first solo album, *Laysongs* – just him and his mandolin – was released this spring, and it reflects his belief that in these pandemic days especially, it's even more important that we *listen* to each other: "I would love to think that – fool us once – we're not going to take being able to listen to one another for granted ever again." For starters, McCarter hopes you will join us this **Saturday, October 23rd** in listening to Chris.

—William L. Lockwood, Jr.
Director of Special Programming

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Will Lockwood Jr.", written in a cursive style.