

# KRISTEN SMIAROWSKI

## *Creative Dance Workshops*

### MEET THE ARTIST:

**Kristen Smiarowski** has extensive experience as a choreographer, dancer and educator. Her theater-based and site-specific choreography has been presented nationally and internationally as well as throughout Southern California at numerous venues, including Saint Joseph Ballet Studio Theatre, REDCAT, 24<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre and Highways Performance Space, among others. Smiarowski has dedicated the majority of her choreographic projects to investigating the relationship between literalism and abstraction in contemporary dance with a specific focus on how dances politically engage with world events through movement metaphors. Her current project is a series of dances that respond to Polish Holocaust survivor Ida Fink's fictional short story, *The Key Game*. In this project, Ms. Smiarowski considers how art mediates memory and how we "remember" events and time periods at which we were not present. The first instantiation of this project, also titled *The Key Game*, premiered at the Choreographing Coalitions Festival in Chicago in 2008. The second dance, titled *Indexical Permutations (After The Key Game)*, was commissioned by Saint Joseph Ballet's New Dance program and premiered in March 2009. Ms. Smiarowski has performed extensively in her own work as well as in the work of other dance and dance-theater artists, including Victoria Marks, Arianne Hoffmann and Mira Kingsley. She is also currently collaborating as a dramaturge with seminal dance artist Simone Forti.

Ms. Smiarowski has taught creative dance, choreography, improvisation and folk dance at schools, institutions and universities throughout Southern California. She is currently on faculty in the Dance Program at Loyola Marymount University and is a Master Teaching Artist at the Music Center. She has taught dance at Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences in Santa Monica, the Center for Movement Education and Research, The HeArt Project, Skirball Cultural Center and UCLA. While earning an M.F.A. degree in Dance from UCLA's Department of World Arts and Cultures, she received the Gloria Kaufman Award for Excellence in Choreography, the Elaine Krown Klein Fine Arts Scholarship, and the Alma Hawkins Choreographic Award.



### ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS:

Choreographer and dance-theater artist Kristen Smiarowski helps students and teachers learn the basic elements of dance - body, space, time and energy - and how to use these elements to explore, improvise and create original dances. With each lesson, participants improve their coordination and technical skills as well as expand their knowledge of improvisation and choreography while using creativity and self-expression. Ms. Smiarowski's workshops emphasize cooperation and teamwork, taking risks, problem-solving, physical well-being and engagement in the creative process.

All lessons are carefully crafted to be grade-appropriate and to correspond to the California Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) Standards. Ms. Smiarowski can also make interdisciplinary connections to standards in other subject areas, with a particular focus on how students' understanding of concepts learned in Language Arts and Science can be deepened through the arts. Ms. Smiarowski works with teachers to create custom dance experiences for students.



Photo: Derrick Bruce

### **BEFORE THE WORKSHOP:**

- Please have the students wear nametags for the workshop. It saves time if they are made beforehand!
- Review the importance of listening and observing. Ask the students what it means to be a good listener. What does it mean to be a good observer? Why is it important in daily life? Why is it important when the artist is here?
- Review students' knowledge and ideas about dance, underscoring the idea that it is both personal and universal. Discuss that everyone's ideas will be both different and related. Discuss the importance of being able to express oneself through dance and to enjoy many different dance styles.
- Ask students what dance styles they know about or have seen or experienced from other cultures. The workshops will focus on creative dance and expressive movement. It would be helpful to assess the students' prior knowledge about this approach to dance.

### **AFTER THE WORKSHOP:**

- Review the major points presented in the workshops. What were the most important ideas? What parts of the workshop did the students like best? What did they learn? What did they learn about themselves?
- Practice the activities and skills they learned with the artist so students can attain more ability and enjoyment with dance.
- Practice the warm-ups, skills and guided explorations done in class so students can attain more comfort, ability and involvement in movement and dance.
- Apply the techniques and strategies for making dances, presented by the artist, to other topics such as language arts, math and science.