

# BLAKE ZIDELL & ASSOCIATES



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## MISNOMER DANCE THEATER GARNERS MAJOR GRANTS AS COMPANY'S NEW YORK SEASON PREMIERE APPROACHES

**AWARD FROM ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION'S  
NYC CULTURAL INNOVATION FUND  
FOLLOWS LEADING FOR THE FUTURE GRANT FROM  
NONPROFIT FINANCE FUND AND DORIS DUKE CHARITABLE FOUNDATION**

**Misnomer's New Evening-Length Program, *Being Together*,  
To Be Presented in Association with Joyce SoHo December 4–14,  
Providing NYC Audiences an Opportunity to See the Company Live  
After Innovative Collaborations and Appearances in Other Media**

This fall, **Misnomer Dance Theater** is earning major support that will help the company build upon the innovative initiatives and choreography that have distinguished it as one of the most accomplished and acclaimed young organizations in its field—and one that is significant in other fields (music, business, etc.) as well. Misnomer has just received an award from the **Rockefeller Foundation's NYC Cultural Innovation Fund**. The grant comes immediately on the heels of Misnomer being selected to take part in **Leading for the Future: Innovative Support for Artistic Excellence**, a groundbreaking and prestigious new arts initiative created by **Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF)** and funded by the **Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**.

*The NYC Cultural Innovation Fund* recognizes the bold, visionary creativity of some of the city's most vibrant arts organizations. The award, which for Misnomer provides \$150,000 over two years, celebrates the diversity, imagination, and energy that make the city a global cultural leader.

Misnomer's other major recent award, *Leading for the Future* is a five-year, \$15.125 million dollar initiative. Funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the program will provide Misnomer with significant capital resources—\$1,075,000 over five years—and technical assistance from Nonprofit Finance Fund. The goal of this national initiative is to enable a group of artistically outstanding organizations to strengthen their business in a changing environment, while providing instructive examples and models for other arts organizations to learn from and possibly replicate.

Misnomer and the nine other performing arts organizations selected for *Leading for the Future* will address sector-wide challenges such as shifting audiences, decreased funding sources and new technologies. The other grant recipients include Alvin Ailey Dance Foundation, Center Theatre Group, Cunningham Dance Foundation, Jacob's Pillow Dance, National Black Arts Festival, Ping Chong & Company, the SITI Company, Steppenwolf Theatre Company and The Wooster Group.

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Misnomer is currently readying for the world premiere of *Being Together*, whose three-part, evening-length program they will perform eight times at **Joyce SoHo**, Thursdays through Sundays, **December 4–14**, at 8:00 P.M. *Being Together* is Misnomer's first New York premiere since it presented *future perfect* in April 2007 at NYU's Skirball Center. Tickets for *Being Together* are available at [www.joyce.org](http://www.joyce.org) or by calling 212.352.3101.

Ten years into its existence, Misnomer Dance Theater, led by **Chris Elam**, has earned a wealth of critical praise for highly original and moving dances. *The New York Times* has said, “Elam’s dances burst with distinctiveness...Elam is well on his way to establishing himself as an important voice in dance.” Just as innovative and noteworthy as Misnomer’s dances is the work the company does to collaborate across disciplines—for example, choreographing the video for **Björk**’s recent single “Wanderlust”—and to develop methods to engage audiences in the processes of choreographing and rehearsing new work. Elam is invited regularly to address the nation’s most successful thinkers and leaders about **Misnomer’s Audience Engagement Platform (AEP)**, a website and software system comprised of a suite of web tools designed to help performing artists and companies use the web to mobilize audiences and deepen their connection with the art. The *Leading for the Future* grant will further, among other Misnomer initiatives, the development of AEP. For more information on AEP, please visit <http://www.misnomer.org/aep>.

## More about Misnomer Dance Theater

Founded in 1998 by Chris Elam, Misnomer Dance Theater is a six-person modern dance company celebrating the nuances of human communication, including the tenderness, humor, and absurdity that characterize our day-to-day interactions.

The company’s work has been hailed by top critics in New York and abroad. Misnomer’s production *Throw People/Land Flat* was named by *The New York Times* “one of the top ten dance performances in NYC” for 2006 and earned Misnomer a position as one of “25 to Watch” for 2007 in *Dance Magazine*. In New York, Misnomer has appeared at New York University’s Skirball Center, Symphony Space, Danspace, P.S. 122, DTW, Joyce SoHo, and The River-to-River Festival, and Elam’s choreography has been performed in over 250 theaters in the USA, Indonesia, Turkey, Denmark, Ireland, Brazil, France and the Ukraine.

Misnomer has won commissions from The New York State Council for the Arts and the Jerome Foundation sub-granted through P.S. 122; five Lower Manhattan Cultural Council Commissions; The Joyce Theater Foundation residency program; The Skirball Center for the Performing Arts; the Bates Dance Festival Fellowship; and the Portland Center for New Dance Development, among others. Misnomer has received the Live Music for Dance grant and Meet the Composer from the American Music Center in all years spanning ’03–’07.

In addition to its acclaimed work for the stage, Misnomer is a leader in the dance field in internet outreach. Rather than using the web as a traditional static storefront, Misnomer has worked to transform its web platform into a dynamic hub of two-way communication between artist and audience. Misnomer’s online strategies have been central to the company’s development, providing a host of effective and low-cost ways to reach, engage and mobilize audiences. Misnomer is now developing the Audience Engagement Platform, a package of advanced tools that have the potential to dramatically increase visibility, exposure, and financial support for

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participating arts organizations and to introduce the performing arts to a wide range of new audiences.

In December 2007, Misnomer won Advanta credit card's Ideablob.com contest, an online entrepreneurship contest in which hundreds of individuals and small businesses put forth ideas and the idea with the most votes wins each month. Misnomer put forth the concept for their Audience Engagement Platform, and with over 1,000 votes, won the prize for the month, attracting much attention from the social entrepreneurship movement.

Misnomer's technological innovations have also attracted print features in major business publications as well as documentaries by Apple Computers and the Sundance Channel. These programs have also placed Misnomer in high demand to share its expertise and train other artists. Misnomer was invited to conduct a workshop for the executive staff of 50 dance and theater companies at Dance/USA's January 2008 winter forum, and was asked to conduct similar workshops for artists at The Field and SoundStreams.

For more information about Misnomer—blogs, videos and much more—please visit [www.misnomer.org](http://www.misnomer.org).

## About Chris Elam

"A true original, Mr. Elam is one of the most individualistic of modern dance voices today."  
—Jennifer Dunning, *The New York Times*

Chris Elam has developed Misnomer's innovative movement language by combining extensive improvisation and studio work with international research and exchange in countries ranging from Brazil to Indonesia. This cross-cultural and international perspective allows Elam to approach his work from the unique viewpoint of an ethnographer as well as a choreographer. In 1999, Elam spent seven months training with a Topeng dance master in Indonesia in his most extensive period of foreign immersion. This comprehensive study of traditional Balinese dance has deeply informed both the technical and conceptual complexity of Elam's work. *The Village Voice* has said, "Fusion doesn't begin to describe what's going on here; Elam is annealing his influences, creating a taut, intense movement language."

In addition to choreographing for his own company, Elam continually pursues unique and fertile collaborations with extremely diverse artists working in various media. In 2006, Elam worked with the interactive technology group Blue Noise Dept of Holland on the development of a new multimedia work. Also, in 2006, Misnomer collaborated with Tronic Studios on motion-capture technology for the development of a trailer for the Res Film Festival. In August 2007, Elam and his dancers worked closely with **Björk** to choreograph her newest music video, "Wanderlust." And most recently, Elam was invited to contribute choreography to a complex installation piece for the Danish Dance Theatre, in collaboration with their artistic director. Housed in an 8,000 square foot labyrinth, the audience walked through the maze to view performances occurring simultaneously on four separate stages. This ambitious work received a four-week premiere in Copenhagen in May 2008. A consistently active dance-maker, Elam has been choreographing with no more than a six-month hiatus for 18 years.

In addition to his primary role as choreographer, Elam is also active as an educator, writer, and advocate in the performing arts. He has served as guest faculty at Brown University and at The

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State Conservatory for the Arts in Istanbul, been invited as a guest choreographer at 16 universities, and taught workshops at a wide range of institutions. Elam is also rapidly becoming a leader in the dance field in online web development, and is widely in demand as a guest speaker. Most recently, Elam has given talks at the conference held by Dance/USA and Carnegie Mellon's Technology in the Arts conference as well as at Fortune's Brainstrom:Tech conference, and the Arts and Business Council of NYC.

Elam graduated magna cum laude from Brown University in 1998, and in 2001 received his MFA in Dance from NYU Tisch School of the Arts. Elam has received the American Dance Festival Martha Myers Award and a Rockefeller Foundation Performing Arts award. Elam is one of twenty dance artists nationwide to be nominated for this year's Alpert Award for the Arts.

## **About the Rockefeller Foundation**

The Rockefeller Foundation was established in 1913 by John D. Rockefeller, Sr. With assets of more than \$4 billion, the Foundation attempts to harness the creative forces of globalization by supporting breakthrough solutions to 21st century challenges. This helps ensure that the tools and technologies that have significantly improved the human condition in many locations over the past half-century are accessible to more people, more fully, in more places—and that poor and vulnerable people are equipped to seize them. Please visit [www.rockfound.org](http://www.rockfound.org) for more information.

## **About Nonprofit Finance Fund**

Nonprofit Finance Fund (NFF) is a national leader in nonprofit, philanthropic and social enterprise finance. Founded in 1980, NFF (<http://www.nonprofitfinancefund.org>) provides loan financing, access to capital and direct advisory services that build the capacity and the financial health of nonprofits. A leading community development financial institution with over \$80 million in assets, NFF has provided over \$175 million in loans and access to additional financing via grants, tax credits and capital in support of over \$1 billion in projects for thousands of nonprofit clients nationwide. NFF has a staff of more than 75 serving nonprofits nationally from offices in Philadelphia, New York City, Newark, New Jersey, Boston, Detroit, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco.

## **About the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation**

The mission of the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation ([www.ddcf.org](http://www.ddcf.org)) is to improve the quality of people's lives through grants supporting the performing arts, environmental conservation, medical research and the prevention of child maltreatment, and through preservation of the cultural and environmental legacy of Doris Duke's properties.

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