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Dana Lawton Dances presents

The Farallonites

Saturday, February 4 at 3 PM and 7 PM

Santa Barbara, January 3, 2023 — Berkeley-based Dana Lawton Dances has scheduled two performances of *The Farallonites* at the Lobero Theatre in Santa Barbara, on Saturday, February 4 at 3 PM and 7 PM. This follows its near sold-out run in San Francisco in September and subsequent tour in Thailand that followed in October. Originally scheduled to debut in San Francisco in March of 2020, only to be shut down by the pandemic lockdown, this multi-disciplinary enterprise was inspired by a poem from Jennifer Kulbeck that told the story of the children of lighthouse keepers on the Farallones being tethered to boulders as they played hide and seek in the dense fog in order to not accidentally fall into the ocean. It features an original musical score, ambient sounds, spoken word, and other stagecraft to palpably transport the audience to a place and time much different from our own.

"If you've never considered the human spirit of lighthouse keepers and their loved ones, this performance is sure to make you think the next time you hear San Francisco's fog horns."

— **Justin Ebrahemi, KQED Public Radio & Television (NPR)**

The dancing recalls a golden age of choreographic exuberance. The kind that Agnes De Mille brought so sensitively to the fore in her work on such classic musicals as *Oklahoma* and *Brigadoon*. In other words, while the cast may not sing, their dancing does. As Justin Ebrahemi of San Francisco's KQED Public Radio & Television San Francisco noted, "If you've never considered the human spirit of lighthouse keepers and their loved ones, this performance is sure to make you think the next time you hear San Francisco's fog horns."

When *The Farallonites* finally debuted in SF after the delay of two years due to the pandemic, the piece felt more personal to Lawton and the dancers than ever. When asked if the pandemic that has made conceptions of isolation very much more real to everyone or had changed her ideas about life on the Farallons, she responded: "No, it has confirmed them. Especially of the importance of ritual in everyday tasks, the fragility of life and the utter importance of tenacity." The length of the postponement was much longer than Lawton and her crew anticipated. "Some might use the word 'interminable,'" says Lawton. "But we loved dancing outside, especially at the beach, recreating water and waves, two distinct sections originally choreographed in the studio. Working with the element of water informed the movement in new ways, as did dancing in strong winds and the rain."

A major part of the piece is about the dancers exploring the harsh physical conditions, repetitive labor, and isolation that the families, who lived on the Farallons and took care of the Lighthouse, endured. "Tasks, such as collecting water and the arduous journey on a daily basis to climb the steep hill in order to get to the lighthouse, will define the dance," says Lawton. "Not to mention the labor involved with carrying heavy whale oil to keep the lamp itself lit, all while dealing with the elements, the water, the waves, birds and stars. Also, the toll taken on their emotions by the isolation, the duty, and the boredom will come into play."

Lawton describes herself as "obsessed" with the Farallons and the lives that those who chose to live there led – and who in a way have become a muse. "What drew them to such inhospitable place as the Farallons? I think it was about practicality," she says. "It was a job and a chance to have stability when the Bay Area was going crazy with the gold rush. And perhaps some thought of it as a higher duty to serve others as a way of meeting a need, but in Victorian times things were not very

romanticized, so there's a good chance that it may well have been a 'just what people do' situation, all of which I find to be very compelling tells about tenacity, resilience and human nature."

Ultimately, *The Farallonites* is about the lighthouse and living in close quarters cut off from the rest of world on an otherworldly landscape surrounded by fog, water, diving birds and sharks. Collaborators include set designer Jon Altemus, whose research about the island has been key, and poet Jennifer Kulbeck, whose extensive research resulted in her poems becoming a primary creative source for the production.

Production Credits:

Choreography: Dana Lawton

Poetry: Jennifer Kulbeck

Lighting Design: Walter Holden

Composer: Thomas Edler

Visual Artist & Exhibit Designer: Jon Altemus

Dancers: The cast features Olutola Afolayan, Michael Armstrong, Leah Curran, Garth Grimbball, Colin McDowell, Robin Nasatir, Vera Schwegler, Jennifer Smith, Katie Lawson-Gill, Leah Hendrix-Smith, Eduardo Garcia, and John McConville.

Music featured in *The Farallonites* is taken from the Library of Congress and will feature the most popular sheet music from the late 1850's (nothing was recorded at that time), which is being recomposed for the dance. Inspiration for the costumes comes from newspaper photographs of the era.

About Dana Lawton Dances

Dana Lawton Dances (DLD) was founded in 2008 by Bay Area choreographer Dana Lawton in order to make dance that celebrates social diversity through meaningful collaborations with other artists. DLD is committed to providing access to the art of dance to all members of the general public, creating a wide range of accessible works that resonate with people's personal experiences, touch their hearts, and inspire them to tap into their own creative spirit at any age or phase of life. The company is currently made up of twelve dancers ranging in age from 23-75.

Since its founding, DLD has produced and toured two evening length works and created a repertory that includes over 25 individual dances - all made in collaboration with musicians and visual artists. Home seasons have included: DLD's *10th Anniversary* (2018), *HOME* (2015), *Silence Of* (2014) and *Beyond This Moment* (2013). DLD presents performance excerpts multiple times per year at venues throughout the Bay Area, has performed as part of SF International Arts Festival, toured to Southern California, and internationally to France, Northern Ireland, and Thailand. DLD was an Artist in Residence at the Flight Deck (Oakland) in 2014-2015 and in 2018 is one of the two permanent companies in residence at Shawl-Anderson Dance Center, a distinction coveted by many local companies given the center's well-earned reputation.

Dana Lawton Dances is committed to dance education and providing access to the art of dance to the general public and students. In addition to ticketed performances open to the general public, DLD frequently offers open rehearsals and participates in salons – offering a deeper insight into the choreographic process and art form. This not only cultivates deeper audience engagement, but sparks dialogue between the artists and the patrons.

Ms. Lawton is a tenured Professor of Dance at Saint Mary's College and serves the Bay Area dance community with open classes for adult beginners through advanced dancers at Shawl-Anderson Dance Center. DLD Company members also teach throughout the Bay Area and offer Master Classes when on tour.

Dana is a founding member of Janice Garrett & Dancers and was awarded Outstanding Performer in the 2000 Vision Series, for her solo choreographic performance, and nominated for an Izzy Award for her performance in Garrett's *Wayfarers* in 2002. Lawton holds an MFA in Choreography from Mills College and a BFA in Dance from California Institute of the Arts. More information at danalawtondances.org.

Tickets for *The Farallonites* are on sale now at Lobero.org and at the Lobero Box Office 805.963.0761. \$100 DLD Angel, \$75 DLD Advocate, \$50 DLD Artist Supporter, \$30 General Admission, \$25 Seniors/Students w/ID or when you buy a 4-pack bundle. (Ticket prices include a per ticket Lobero Facility Fee; other fees may also apply.)

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Lobero LIVE is funded in part by the Events and Festivals Program using funds provided by the City of Santa Barbara in partnership with the Santa Barbara County Arts Commission.

Calendar Editors, please note:

Saturday, February 4 at 3 PM and 7 PM

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The Farallonites

The Farallonites is a theatrical dance performance that evokes the lives of lighthouse keepers on the Farallon Islands off the coast of San Francisco in the 1860s. Audiences will find themselves immersed in another time and place complete with music adapted from popular songs of the era and the familiar sounds that come with living by the ocean.

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Lobero Box Office: www.Lobero.org, 805.963.0761, 33 East Canon Perdido Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101