

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Difference Between **(2025 World Premiere)**

Choreography: Matthew Neenan

Music: Heather Christian

Costume Design: Karen Young

Lighting Design: Brandon Stirling Baker

For Difference Between, I was deeply inspired by the intricate orchestrations and powerful lyrics of acclaimed singer/songwriter Heather Christian. Her raw vocal power evoked—to me—an intricate world of strange tensions, potent griefs, and quiet loves.

*"Difference between. Deference, reverence, sever its shoots on the bean
Sanity, brevity, bravery, levity— these are the virtues
are any restored or recorded or
pored over once the romance of it leaves?"
-Heather Christian, "Tomorrow"*

Neenan's choreographic debut with Ailey, [*Difference Between*](#), features his signature wild abandon and gestural playfulness. Acclaimed singer and composer Heather Christian contributes her raw power to an intricate world of strange tensions, potent griefs, and quiet loves.



Matthew Neenan, described as “one of America’s best dance poets” by *The New York Times*, began his dance training at the Boston Ballet School and with noted teachers Nan C. Keating and Jacqueline Cronsberg. He later attended LaGuardia High School of Performing Arts and the School of American Ballet in New York. From 1994-2007, Neenan danced with the Pennsylvania Ballet (now Philadelphia Ballet) where he performed numerous principal roles in the classical, contemporary, and Balanchine repertoire. From 2007–2020, Neenan served as Choreographer in Residence, creating 20 original ballets.

Neenan's choreography has been performed by New York City Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, The Washington Ballet, Ballet West, Smuin Contemporary Ballet, Ballet Met, Colorado Ballet, Ballet Memphis, Milwaukee Ballet, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Tulsa Ballet, Kansas City Ballet, Nashville Ballet, Parsons Dance, BODYTRAFFIC, Juilliard Dance, and USC Kaufman School of Dance, among many others. He has received numerous awards and grants for his choreography from the National Endowment of the Arts, Dance Advance funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Choo San Goh Foundation, the Independence Foundation, and four fellowships from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. In 2006, Neenan received New York City Ballet's Choreographic Institute's Fellowship Initiative Award. In October 2009, he was the grand-prize winner of Sacramento Ballet's Capital Choreography Competition and was also the first recipient of the Jerome Robbins NEW Program Fellowship for his work *At the border* for Pennsylvania Ballet. In 2019, he directed the Contemporary Ballet Program at Jacob's Pillow.

In 2005, Neenan co-founded BalletX with fellow dancer Christine Cox. BalletX has toured and performed Neenan's choreography at The Joyce Theater, New York City Center, The Skirball Center, Symphony Space, SummerStage in Central Park, The Kennedy Center, Vail International Dance Festival (where he has created five world premieres), Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Laguna Dance Festival, Spring to Dance Festival in St. Louis, and several international internationally. His ballet *The Last Glass* was on *The New York Times* Top 10 list in 2013.



Heather Christian is a Drama Desk and a two-time Obie Award-winning composer/performer making music-centered shows and rituals. She is a 2021 Richard Rodgers Award winner, 2022 Stephen Schwartz Outstanding New Composer awardee, and Sundance Institute Time Warner Fellow. Recent composing/performing credits include her own work Oratorio for Living Things (Ars Nova), Animal Wisdom (The Bushwick Starr, now a motion picture) I Am Sending You the Sacred Face (Theater In Quarantine/ YouTube— Vulture’s Top Theater Experience of 2020), Prime: A Practical Breviary (Playwrights Horizons’ Soundstage—IndieWire’s #1 Podcast

Episode of 2020) in addition to being a lead artist on devised works Mission Drift (National Theater, London) and The World Is Round (BAM). She has released 11 records, teaches vocal-based music composition at NYU, owns and operates her own recording studio in Beacon, NY, and can be seen regularly in concert halls and dive bars as Heather Christian & the Arbornauts.

heatherchristian.bandcamp.com

Difference Between Music Credit Information

Music written and performed by Heather Christian & the Arbornauts

“Sip o Water”, “Machu Picchu”, “Tomorrow”, “The End (Whatever)”, “That’s the Truth”, “Holy Roller” (Unreleased), and “The Wicked” (all except “Holy Roller” from the album, Four. Four: 4/4)