



# RUBBERBAND

## *Reckless Underdog*

**CHOREOGRAPHER** Victor Quijada

**PERFORMERS** Rion Taylor, Jovick Pavajeau-Orostegui, Wyeth Walker, Zao Dinel, Micah Sell, Jessica Muszynski, Cindy Mateus, Dareon Blowe, Emma-Lynn Mackay-Ronacher, Mackenzie Corrales, Anna Lopez, Éloïse Chénier

**ARTISTIC COORDINATION** Rion Taylor

**LIGHTING DESIGN** Jon Cleveland

**COSTUME DESIGN** Cloé Alain-Gendreau

**MUSICAL DIRECTION, CO-COMPOSER** Jasper Gahunia

**MUSICIAN** William Lamoureux

**COMPOSERS** Chilly Gonzales, Kid Koala (original creations), Vlooper & KenLo Craquques (original creations and repertoire tracks)

**DRAMATURGY** Mathieu Leroux

**TECHNICAL DIRECTION** Marcin Bunar

**HEAD MACHINIST** Philippe Lafrance

**SCENOGRAPHY CONSULTING** Pierre-Étienne Locas

**PRODUCTION AND TOUR MANAGER** Diana Catalina Cárdenas

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** Fannie Bellefeuille

**DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS** Salomé Boniface

**PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS** Arnaud Vaillancourt, Sasha Onyshchenko, Marie-Noële Pilon, Damian Siqueiros

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Zellerbach Theatre

Friday, February 14 @ 8 PM

Saturday, February 15 @ 2 PM

There will be no intermission.

### **INSIGHTS**

Stay after the performance on Friday evening for a chat with the choreographer and dancers moderated by Leslie Bush, Adjunct Professor of Dance at Rowan University.

## PROGRAM NOTES

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RUBBERBAND's new creation, *Reckless Underdog*, takes the company's work of the past twenty years further than ever before. Bigger than ever, the show features 12 dancers who come together in a three-act choreography. Each part offers a unique proposition: three distinct universes, in terms of stage space, aesthetic choices and music.

The first, inspired by classical ballet, takes place in a circumscribed and luminous environment where the rules of pas de deux are redefined. The second, more experimental, distorts certain theatrical codes within a colored space and confronts the bodies with an abstract and minimal approach to movement. The last one deconstructs the practice of the break cypher, in a dark, oppressive, but festive atmosphere.

For Victor Quijada, Artistic Director and Choreographer, a new era is opening for the company. *Reckless Underdog* promises a lyrical and figurative dissection of movement, boldly exploring the limits of time and space.

### **Music in *Reckless Underdog***

For the creation of the music, Victor Quijada called upon artists who have inspired him for years. All of them have a strong connection to Montreal. Vlooper and KenLo Craquques of Alaclair Ensemble and Kid Koala have created original pieces for *Reckless Underdog*, and Chilly Gonzales gave access to his repertoire, remixed by Jasper Gahunia, a long-time collaborator of RUBBERBAND.

Chilly Gonzales' repertoire music from the album *Solo Piano III* performed by Chilly Gonzales; Written by Jason "Chilly Gonzales" Beck (SACEM); Published by Gentle Threat Ltd (SACEM) Courtesy of Gentle Threat Ltd

## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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Founded in Montreal in 2002 by Victor Quijada, **RUBBERBAND** quickly captivated audiences and critics with three creations presented at Espace Tangente over two seasons. At the same time, the company participated in mixed programs and organized events in various venues in Montreal that highlight more confidential pieces. *Tender Loving Care* and *Hasta la Próxima* share a place in Le Devoir's top five dance productions, while *Elastic Perspective* began a series of over 100 performances in 2003 after winning the Prix RIDEAU at the Festival Vue sur la Relève. RUBBERBAND then obtained a residency at Usine C for the 2003-2004 season, where the piece *Slicing Static* was born. This creation was named Best Dance Production in 2004 by Hour (now Cult MTL).

In 2005, Anne Plamondon joined Victor Quijada as Artistic Director. A second residency at Usine C was granted to the company in 2006, followed by another four-year residency at Place des Arts. During this period, four new pieces were created with the support of multiple partners: *Punto Ciego* and *AV Input/Output* in 2008, *Loan Sharking* in 2009 and *Gravity of Center* in 2011.

In 2013, Quijada created *Empiric Quotient*, a show for six performers trained in the RUBBERBAND Method. In 2016, the company created *Vic's Mix*, a condensed version of the best moments of the choreographer's work. During the festivities for the 375th anniversary of Montreal in 2017, company members were joined by some thirty students from the École supérieure de ballet du Québec and the École de danse contemporaine de Montréal to take over the Esplanade of Place des Arts with the multidisciplinary performance, *City Thread*. In 2018, for the first time in RUBBERBAND history, Victor Quijada called upon a large ensemble by directing ten dancers on the huge stage of Théâtre Maisonneuve with *Ever So Slightly*, presented by Danse Danse. In 2019, RUBBERBAND was a finalist for the Grand Prix du Conseil des arts de Montréal for its production *Ever So Slightly*.

The year 2020 marked Victor Quijada's return to the stage as a dancer in *Trenzado*, a piece that addresses the theme of being everywhere and nowhere at the same time. Created in 2022, *Reckless Underdog*, takes the company's achievements of the last twenty years to new heights. Twelve dancers make up the cast of this larger-than-life three-act choreography with music by Jasper Gahunia, Kid Koala, Vlooper from Alaclair Ensemble, and Chilly Gonzales.

In RUBBERBAND's newest creation, *Second Chances*, Quijada invites the audience to delve deep inside themselves, reflecting on origin, belonging and displacement, between universal questions and intimate, personal thoughts.

RUBBERBAND has co-produced six films choreographed by Quijada, who also directed four of them: *Ever So Slightly*, *Gravity of Center*, *Secret Service* and *Small Explosions That Are Yours to Keep*. *Gravity of Center* won the 2012 Les Enfants and Air Canada/Spafax awards at the RVCQ/Festival Prends ça court. It also won Best Experimental Short Film and Best Cinematography in a Canadian Short Film at the CFC Worldwide Short Film Festival. *Hasta La Próxima*, shot in 2003, was a finalist in the short film category at the American Choreography Awards. Quijada participated in the creation of three music videos for the songs "Man I Used to Be" by k-os, "La Garde" by Alexandre Désilets and "Blue Wonderful" by Elton John.

Now well established, the company is the embodiment of Canadian artistic innovation in the United States, Europe, Mexico and Japan. RUBBERBAND is at the forefront of Montreal's contemporary dance community and is internationally recognized for its unique vision.

### **Victor Quijada** (Choreographer)

Since 2002, Quijada and RUBBERBAND have not only redefined the codes of breaking within an institutional context and enlivened the Quebec dance scene but have also opened the way for new creators fascinated by this dance form. He is armed with a technique he conceived for dancers, the RUBBERBAND Method, an electrifying vocabulary combining the energy of hip-hop, the refinement of classical ballet and the angular quality of contemporary dance. With some 40 creations and collaborations in Canada and abroad behind him, Quijada has continued to evolve and innovate throughout his prolific career.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, the child of Mexican parents, Quijada first danced in the b-boying circles and hip-hop clubs of his native city. He performed with Rudy Perez from 1994 to 1996, then moved to New York City to join THARPI!. After spending three years with that company and a stint with Ballets Tech, he went to Montreal to join Les Grands Ballets Canadiens in 2000.

In 2002, he founded RUBBERBAND, throwing himself into deconstructing the choreographic principles he had learned by blending them with the raw ideology of his street dance origins. His creations – numerous short works and 15 full-length productions – are distinguished by a powerful theatricality, the energy of improvisation, and certain codes of film language, the whole sculpted with an incomparable precision of movement.

For several years, Quijada has taught the RUBBERBAND Method throughout the world in workshops and internships for many dance companies, dance schools and universities, as well as on a yearly basis in RUBBERBAND's workshop for professional dancers, the Summer and Winter Intensive in Montreal. As guest choreographer, he has created new works for dance and circus companies, notably in return commissions for Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Pacific Northwest Ballet and Scottish Dance Theatre.

Besides his stage productions, Quijada has been involved in almost a dozen dance films, as director, choreographer or dramaturge. His short film, *Hasta La Próxima*, was a finalist at the American Choreography Awards in 2004. He also choreographed the music videos for "Man I Used to Be" by k-os, "La garde" by Alexandre Désilets and Elton John's "Blue Wonderful". His *Gravity of Center – The Movie* won Best Experimental Short at the CFC Worldwide Short Film Festival of 2012, among other awards, and was shown at several exhibitions and national and international festivals.

In the area of peer recognition, Quijada was artist-in-residence at Usine C (2004 and 2006) and at Place des Arts (2007-2011), and has won many awards, including Britain's National Dance Award for Outstanding Modern Repertory (2003), the Bonnie Bird North American Award (2003, UK), the Peter Darrell Choreography Award (2003, UK), the International Touring Award of the Canadian Dance Alliance (2012) and two awards from the Princess Grace Foundation-USA (Choreography Fellowship, 2010; Work in Progress Residency, 2016).

In December 2017, Quijada received the award for Cultural Diversity at the Prix de la danse de Montréal and in 2019, was one of the finalists for the 34th Grand Prix du Conseil des arts de Montréal as well as among the four finalists for the 2019 Charles-Biddle Prize, instigated by Culture pour tous and the Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation and Inclusion (MIFI). In 2024, Quijada was named Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for his choreographic work, a prestigious recognition for all his achievements.

### **Rion Taylor** (Performer, Artistic Coordination)

Taylor established his roots in dance through the hip-hop culture of Newcastle upon Tyne, England. Nurtured by Bad Taste Cru, he joined Battalions Crew in 2013 and competed throughout the UK and Europe. Training under Akram Khan with the National Youth Dance Company inspired him to continue his exploration at London Contemporary Dance School, where he worked with Hofesh Shechter, Dane Hurst and Punch Drunk, among other artists. At the 2017 Edinburgh Fringe Festival, he performed with the James Cousins Company in *Rosalind*, which won an award for Best Moments of the Festival. Moving to Montreal in 2018 to work with RUBBERBAND, he has continued to represent the company performing throughout Canada, USA and internationally, as well as recently taking on the role of Artistic Coordinator. Taylor has been working closely with Jessica Muszynski since 2020, establishing himself alongside the emerging choreographer as a dancer, performing in festivals within Québec.

**Jovick Pavajeau-Orostegui** (Performer)

Pavajeau-Orostegui was born in Miami, Florida, but was introduced to the performing arts while he was living in Bogotá, Colombia. His formal dance training began at the age of 15 under the direction of Jaime Otálora at Bogotá Capital Dance. Later, he attended George Mason University where he received the Kidd/Stearns Dance Talent Scholarship and graduated with a BFA in dance. During his studies, he was fortunate to dive into works by Yin Yue, Merce Cunningham, Lucinda Childs, Andonis Foniadakis, Rafael Bonachela, Micaela Taylor and Kyle Abraham. Additionally, he attended Springboard Danse Montreal where he performed work by Lior Lazarof and Johannes Wieland. Upon graduating, Pavajeau-Orostegui apprenticed for David Dorfman Dance while also collaborating and performing with various artists such as Jordan Demetrius Lloyd, Cameron McKinney and VIM VIGOR. Pavajeau-Orostegui joined RUBBERBAND in 2021.

**Wyeth Walker** (Performer)

Walker grew up in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where he began his training under Denise Wall. This led him to attend the USC Glorya Kaufman School of Dance, where he was able to study with and perform work by Peter Chu, Barak Marshall, Jermaine Spivey and William Forsythe, among others. After graduating in 2022, Walker attended Springboard Danse Montreal. He joined RUBBERBAND in 2022.

**Zao Diné** (Performer)

Born in Montreal, Diné grew up in a family of six that valued sports as well as art. In 2012, he began his professional training at the École Supérieure de Ballet du Québec and fell in love with dance. He is driven by three important passions - music, dance and film - and has a strong sense of collaboration. Thus, he finds pleasure in surrounding himself with artists from various disciplines for improvisations or creations. It was during the 2022 edition of Springboard Danse Montréal that Diné was exposed to the repertoire of RUBBERBAND, which he joined in 2022.

**Micah Sell** (Performer)

Sell was born and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he began his career in circus and gymnastics. He began dancing in 2009 at the Metropolitan Ballet Academy under the direction of Lisa Collins, mentored by Sarah Mettin. After graduating from high school, he studied at the SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance, where he performed works by Doug Varonè, Bret Easterling and Martha Graham, among others. Outside of school, he had the opportunity to perform works by Victor Quijada and Mark Caserta. In 2024, Sell received his BFA from SUNY Purchase with a concentration in composition. This is his first season with RUBBERBAND as an apprentice.

**Jessica Muszynski** (Performer)

Muszynski is a Canadian dancer and choreographer originally from Burnaby, B.C., where she trained in ballet at the Richmond Academy of Dance before moving to Calgary in 2012. In May 2019, she earned a BFA in dance from the University of Southern California, performing excerpts of works by William Forsythe, Crystal Pite and Victor Quijada. After graduation, Muszynski starred in a music video by the band half-alive, which received over two million views. She danced with Aszure Barton & Artists during the creation process of the company's work, *Where There's Form*. Muszynski moved to Montreal to dance with RUBBERBAND in 2019.

**Cindy Mateus** (Performer)

Mateus, from Montreal, trained in rhythmic gymnastics, hip-hop and contemporary dance, deciding on a dance career after her meeting with choreographer Amy Gardner. She specialized in classical ballet and contemporary dance at L'Académie du Ballet Métropolitain from 2012 to 2018. She stood out in several competitions, winning first prize in the Youth America Grand Prix (2019) and for two years, was invited to attend the Junior Training Program of the Broadway Dance Center in New York, concentrating on jazz and classical ballet. Among her television appearances, she was the winner of the second season of the Quebec TV dance program, *Révolution*. Mateus teaches dance and has choreographed works for numerous studios and events. She discovered RUBBERBAND during the intensive workshop at Domaine Forget and joined the company in 2021.

**Dareon Blowe** (Performer)

Blowe, a native to Norfolk, VA, is an emerging dancer and choreographer who is fascinated with space theory, disrupting hierarchies in the body, reorganizing architectures and tuning into impulses. He obtained his BFA from the George Mason School of Dance on a full scholarship, under the artistic direction of Susan Shields and Karen Reedy. Blowe has performed works by Kyle Abraham, Victor Quijada, Wayne McGregor, Rena Butler, Sidra Bell, Micaela Taylor, Doug Varone, Camille A. Brown, Rafael Bonachela, Robert Battle, Manuel Vignoulle, Shaun Boyle D'arcy and more. In 2021, he joined Motus the Company under the artistic direction of Diana Matos. As a choreographer, he created four works during his time in school. Most recently, he presented his work at the 42nd Annual Battery Dance Festival: Young Voices in Dance. He is going into his second season with RUBBERBAND.

**Emma-Lynn Mackay-Ronacher** (Performer)

Mackay-Ronacher resides from Kemptville, Ontario, where she started dancing at a local studio before moving to Montreal at the age of 14 to continue her training at L'École supérieure de ballet du Québec. She graduated at the age of 19, after five years in the professional program where she trained in classical and contemporary dance. Upon graduation, Mackay-Ronacher began freelancing for renowned choreographers and companies, such as Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, Anne Plamondon Productions, Gioconda Barbuto and Véronique Giasson, among others. Mackay-Ronacher joined RUBBERBAND in 2021.

**Mackenzie Corrales** (Performer)

Corrales resides from the town of Templeton, California. She started her dance training at a local studio before moving to San Jose, California at the age of 15 to train with Nor Cal Dance Arts under the direction of Tawnya Kuzia. After graduating high school in 2020, Corrales moved to Vancouver, British Columbia to dance with Arts Umbrella's prestigious graduate program under the direction of Artemis Gordon. During her studies, she had the opportunity to work with dance artists such as Eric Beauchesne, Francisco Martinez, Acacia Schachte, Cindy Selgado and Anna Herrmann, among others. She has performed pieces by world renowned artists such as Crystal Pite, Sidi Larbi, Anne Plamondon, Fernando Hernando Magadan and Nacho Duato. Corrales joined RUBBERBAND in 2022.

**Anna Lopez** (Performer)

Lopez is a dancer and choreographer from New York who seeks to construct a tangible and meaningful universe for all who view her work. She attended Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School for the Performing Arts and is a recent graduate of George Mason University School of Dance. Lopez is also an alumna of the MOVE |NYC| Young Professionals program. Most recently, she has performed works by Kyle Abraham, Rena Butler and Susan Shields, as well as Martha Graham's *Steps in the Street* with the Graham Company. In May 2024, Lopez performed the role of Anna II and choreographed Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins* for Wolf Trap Opera. She is thrilled to be embarking on her first year of apprenticeship with RUBBERBAND.

**Éloïse Chénier** (Performer)

Chénier, originally from Mascouche, Quebec, began dancing in a local studio at the age of three. In 2015, she began her professional training at the École Supérieure de Ballet du Québec. During her studies, she had the chance to perform pieces such as *The Nutcracker* with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, *Colossus* by Stephanie Lake, *Daphnis and Chloe* by Andrew Skeels and *Bolero X* with Ballet BC. Curious by nature, she enjoys exploring different dance styles to enrich her vocabulary. She particularly enjoys the physical and human aspects of dance. Chénier uses dance as a means of expressing herself, exploring the limits of the body and creating connections with others through movement. While completing her training at ESBQ, Chénier joined RUBBERBAND in 2024.

**Chilly Gonzales** (Composer)

Behind the name Chilly Gonzales is eclectic Canadian musician Jason Beck. He was born in Montreal in 1972 and lived successively in Berlin, Paris and Cologne. Pianist, singer and producer for various artists, his many projects span pop, musicals, rap and electro. The albums *Solo Piano I*, *Solo Piano II* and *Solo Piano III* were occasions to re-center on his first love, the piano. The list of notable collaborations with artists such as Feist, Peaches, Daft Punk, Drake and Jarvis Cocker continues to grow. Chilly Gonzales holds the Guinness Record for the longest solo concert, playing for 27 hours between May 16 and 18, 2009.

**Vlooper & KenLo Craquques, Alaclair Ensemble** (Composers)

Formed in 2010, Alaclair Ensemble, a "post-rigodon" band hailing from a fantasized Lower Canada, is currently made up of Eman, KNLO, Robert Nelson, Claude Bégin and Vlooper. After releasing its first album, *4,99* (2010), the group won Revelation of the Year and Best Hip-Hop Album at the GAMIQ Awards with *Les maigres blancs d'Amérique du Noir* (2013) and *Toute est impossible* (2014). In 2017, the album *Les Frères Cueilleurs* received three Félix awards at the ADISQ Gala in addition to five Lucien prizes at the GAMIQ Awards. These successes led to tours in Quebec and Europe. Alaclair Ensemble released *Le sens des paroles* in 2018 and *America, Vol. 2.* in 2019, among others.

## Kid Koala (Composer)

Eric San, also known as Kid Koala, was born in Vancouver in 1975 and discovered turntablism in his adolescence. By age 15, he was rated one of the world's most gifted DJs and technicians and has since become a reference on the Canadian music scene. Training relentlessly and gaining fame among scratch DJs, in 1997, he was the first North American musician to sign with the British label, Ninja Tune. His first album, *Carpal Tunnel Syndrome* (2000), is considered a classic of the genre. He began working with Dan the Automator and Gorillaz, releasing *Some of My Best Friends Are DJs* in 2003 and *Your Mom's Favourite DJ* in 2006. In 2012, the album *12 bit Blues* revisited the blues using hip-hop instruments and effects. Montreal has been Kid Koala's home for many years.

## Jasper Gahunia (Music Direction, Co-composer)

Gahunia is a DJ, producer, songwriter, musician and teacher. He began his ground-breaking musical career as a specialized DJ, competing in Toronto-area DMC competitions in the mid-1990s, winning the competition title three times, and becoming the Canadian DMC Champion in 1998. During this competitive run, he also shared the International Turntablist Federation (ITF) Western Hemisphere Team title with his crew, Turnstylez, and became ITF World Beat Juggling Champ a year later. Gahunia has graced stages worldwide as a DJ and keyboardist with Nelly Furtado and k-os. He taught the first-ever Scratch from Scratch: DJ Fundamentals course at Toronto's Royal Conservatory of Music, the institution from which he obtained his classical music degree in piano. He has created the musical scores for many of RUBBERBAND's stage productions and commissions over the years.

## Acknowledgements

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