

## Experience World-Class Dance in North Denver

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By Jacqui Somen

You don't have to leave the neighborhood to see some of the best modern dance in the country. On one stage, bodies undulated and flowed seamlessly across the space, telling stories of immigration and resistance. On another, a soloist performed precise serpentine movements against a backdrop of surrealist animation and sounds. Were these elevated dance performance experiences? Yes. Did audiences have to travel downtown—or to New York City—to view them? No. These world-class performances were on display right here in North Denver.

Kim Robards is a renowned choreographer who has been a mainstay in the Denver dance scene since the 1990s. She has performed and set her work across the world, from New York to France, Beijing and beyond. Robards' company, Kim Robards Dance, performed "Emanate," a showing of both new and legacy works, at their venue and performance space on West 48th Avenue and Pecos Street. Robards' pieces feature athletic, continual motion performed by dancers who maintain elegance and ease.

"The movement is a combination of great physicality, technical expertise, and usually involves momentum through space. Those three things combined will give the audience a visceral feeling," Robards said.



**"Emanate" featured Kim Robards Dance company members in the piece "Inmigración," choreographed by Robards. Photo by Stan Obert**

The company has occupied this Chaffee Park venue since February 2023, giving North Denver residents ready access to modern dance performance and classes. The space is a performer's dream and offers audience members a rare opportunity for intimate observation. When attending a Kim Robards Dance performance, you're not watching the dancers from afar, you are immersed in the motion. When choreographing, Robards does not follow what she calls "trends or gimmicks." She draws inspiration from her experiences in Colorado, and she lets the process lead the way.

"The best work reveals to me what it is about," Robards continued. Attending a Kim Robards Dance performance is experiencing the art of movement at its best.

On April 25, the world premiere of interdisciplinary performance "Two Books" played at The Holiday Theater in the Highlands, hosted by the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver. This surreal piece was a collaboration between artist Alexis Gideon and dancer Robin Cantrell, a creative duo from New York City/Brooklyn. The piece explored subconscious topics and is based on Jung's "The Red Book: Liber Novus," which Gideon likened to a "fever dream" in the post-show commentary. Cantrell's thoughtful, fluid movements complemented Gideon's strange, ethereal music and animation. Futuristic dancers with angular upper-body motions choreographed by Cantrell appeared on screen as well. The entire piece came together as an enjoyable, otherworldly display of artistic expression.

Both shows were as much about building community as they were about performance. After each show, attendees were invited for drinks and conversation with the performers, a benefit that is hard to come by in a traditional performance setting.

North Denver residents can be excited by the possibility of seeing more high-caliber dance performances right in our own backyard. Kim Robards Dance performs in their space several times a year and hosts special events, such as an upcoming Mother's Day performance that will help community members celebrate moms with a family dance event featuring performances by both students and company members. MCA Denver presents various performances at The Holiday Theater throughout the year.

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