



Courtesy

SALT Contemporary Dance presents "Surge II" Saturday at Prospector Square Theater in Park City. Pictured, Eldon L. Johnson.

# SALT Contemporary Dance: More substance than spice

**Dance** » The new company, based in Draper, is taking its act to Park City this week.

By KATHY ADAMS

Special to The Tribune

The new SALT Contemporary Dance is shaking up perceptions about dance in Salt Lake County. The 12-member Draper-based company, now in its second season, hopes to reach an untapped audience at its performance in Park City on Saturday.

SALT artistic director Michelle Nielsen is looking to add more substance than spice to the company she and Alisa Gillespie co-founded in 2013, after the two dance teachers decided the highly trained students graduating from Utah's colleges and universities needed a place to dance with quality choreography to perform. SALT's first performance last April, "Surge," sold out both nights at the Rose Wagner's Black Box theater, and Nielsen said tickets are going fast for "Surge II," the 90-minute, one-night show at Prospector Theater.

"We wanted to create a company that was appealing to dancers and audiences," Nielsen said. "So our goal is to bring in choreographers who challenge the dancers through their processes, but also when the work transitions to the stage it is engaging and entertaining to audiences of every background."

Choreographer Gabriel Lamb was in Utah last month creating a premiere at SALT's studio in Draper. Lamb has danced with the upper echelon of

## SALT Contemporary Dance's 'Surge II'

**When** » Saturday, 6:30 p.m.

**Where** » Prospector Square Theater, 2200 Sidewinder Drive, Park City  
**Tickets** » \$20, \$50 VIP package includes reception immediately following at Riverhorse on Main; [arttix.org](http://arttix.org), 801-355-ARTS or [tickets@saltdance.com](mailto:tickets@saltdance.com)

**More information** » [www.saltdance.com](http://www.saltdance.com); rehearsal excerpts at [www.facebook.com/saltcontemporarydance](http://www.facebook.com/saltcontemporarydance)

choreographers and companies, including Morphoses, Christopher Wheeldon's 2007 concept that set the dance world on fire. She was previously a soloist with Les Grands Ballet de Canadiens de Montreal where she worked closely with Ohad Naharin, Mats Ek and Shen Wei. All the while, Lamb was learning more than choreography from these greats; she was absorbing their processes in the art of dancemaking.

"Wheeldon works in more traditional ballet language than I do," Lamb said. "But from him I understood how to work with dancers in layers. We clarify as we go. In the beginning when creating movement phrases, we just work on coordination. Then when we start to combine the phrases we talk more about focus and shaping and musicality — it's an organic process."

From Ohad Naharin, one of this generation's greatest innovators, Lamb said she learned "experiencing the moment

internally, rather than looking at your body as if in a mirror." She took special notice of Naharin's unique ability to "create really ingenious transitions that make the unexpected seem inevitable."

In her own work, Lamb said she likes to "ride the body's coordination — there can still be a lot of athleticism and virtuosity but you can get more if you give a burst of energy and then coast on that."

Fellow choreographer and SALT guest dancer Garrett Smith persuaded Lamb to come to Draper to work with the company when the two were working on another project last year. Smith, a Utah native whose recent commissions include a premiere on Ballet West's 2015 Innovations program, has a piece in the upcoming SALT show and also will be dancing.

After rehearsal in Draper, Smith was leaving for Oslo, Norway, where he is a company member in the Norwegian National Ballet and was recently commissioned to create two new works.

In addition to Smith and Lamb, SALT contracted emerging-choreographer Lauren Edson, whose background includes North Carolina School of the Arts, The Juilliard School, and the School at Jacob's Pillow. She also danced with the Boise-based phenomenon Trey McIntyre Project before McIntyre surprised the dance world and folded his very successful company.

"I think this is a very balanced program," Nielsen said. "Our second company SALT II will also be performing, which is a wonderful way to give them stage experience and to let people know we are a company that has a present and a very bright future."