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Four Philadelphia Households Open Their Doors for Performances in Headlong Dance Theater's *This Town Is a Mystery*

PHILADELPHIA (July 26, 2012) – This September, the residents of four Philadelphia households will open their homes to audiences and perform in the premiere of **Headlong Dance Theater's *This Town Is A Mystery***. Headlong has selected a diverse group of households, chosen from over forty applications in a citywide open call for participants, for this unprecedented performance project that will transform each home into a theater and its residents into performers. The pieces will be presented from **September 7 through 22** as part of the 16th annual [Philadelphia Live Arts Festival](#).

"I'm curious about who lives in this city, and how little we know about each other," says **Andrew Simonet**, a Headlong co-founder and co-director. "What mysteries reside in these households, and what conversations might happen if we open the doors a little? We're looking forward to sharing the incredible work of these households with audience members who are excited to take on the adventure of a one-of-a-kind cultural experience."

This Town Is A Mystery uses "citizen dancers": enthusiastic movers and shakers with no professional training. The groups are working with Headlong's co-artistic directors, Simonet, **David Brick** and **Amy Smith**, throughout the summer. Each household's members – of all ages, backgrounds and abilities – will perform a piece unique to their family, blending stories of the neighborhood, the household and their lives.

- A young African-American mom recounts seven months in the neonatal intensive care unit with her baby.
- A middle-aged Iranian-American father recalls war in Iran, street fighting in London and how reggae changed his life – and then does a tender duet with his 9-year-old daughter.
- A six-year-old boy merges his two loves: karate and break-dancing.
- An African-American father recalls a financial windfall that led him to modeling on the beach in Santa Monica, and then led him back home to Philadelphia to help out his mother.
- A Jewish woman who lives alone recalls how walking out of a bad dance performance led her to meet her future husband.

In South Philadelphia, audiences will meet the **Aryadareis**: Zahed and Shannon with their children Sulaimon (11), Sydney (9) and Shaheen (6), who enjoy performing for their parents at home. Driven by powerful cultural stories, this Iranian/Italian family is also serious about their study of Karate.

In the Northwest lives **Tobie Hoffman**, who is creating a solo performance from her row home on what she describes as “one of those sweet blocks in West Mt. Airy.” Tobie is a blogger who enjoys playing piano and loves having guests over to eat.

The **McQueens** and the **Bosticks** represent Northeast Philadelphia. The McQueen household includes dad Calvin, mom Kendra, grandmother Celestine and son Kassean (11). Both Calvin and Kendra work with families and youth services, and Kassean is a Hip Hop dancer with Pointe Flex.

Tacony’s Bostick family includes mom Lea, son Adam and daughter Princess, and they recently celebrated the homecoming of Princess’s seven month-old son Preston, who had spent his life so far in the neo-natal intensive care unit. When the Bosticks applied to the project, they wrote, “Pick us – you will be very glad you did.” And they were right.

Audiences will bring a dish to share in a potluck dinner in the home following each performance. The public can get to know more about these households on the project website at thistownisamystery.com.

Performances will take place September 7–22 at 7 p.m., 2 shows per evening for audiences of 10 per performance. Tickets are \$28–\$35 and will be available online soon through the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival at livearts-fringe.org. Each performance is 30 minutes long with an 80-minute post-show dinner. All audience members are required to bring food to share and cannot select their venue in advance. The performances are appropriate for all ages; children are welcome to attend. All households have pets, including at least one cat.

Headlong is also offering a **Do-It-Yourself workbook** for any households interested in making works in their homes on their own. Full of rehearsal ideas, assignments and principles for making a show, the workbook is available on the project website.

This Town Is a Mystery has been supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage through Dance Advance, The MAP Fund, a program of Creative Capital supported by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation, The National Endowment for the Arts, and The Stockton Rush Bartol Foundation.

About Headlong Dance Theater

Co-Directors David Brick, Andrew Simonet and Amy Smith founded Headlong Dance Theater in 1993. Over the years, Headlong has created over forty dances, many of which are known for their witty take on contemporary culture. Recent projects include *CELL*, a performance journey for one audience member at a time guided by a cell phone, and *Hotel Pool*, a dance theater piece performed in and around a hotel swimming pool. The Co-Directors’ eclectic movement backgrounds include modern, ballet, jazz, tap, contact improvisation, releasing techniques, theater, sports, sign language, Bharata Natyam, and Ghanaian dance. Drawing on these and many other sources, Headlong creates movement that both reflects and comments on the subject matter they are exploring.

Headlong has performed nationally and internationally to a range of audiences, and their work – informed by a deep commitment to collaboration, humor, and formal experimentation – has won many fans and much acclaim including a Bessie Award and a Pew Fellowship. Hailed as “fiendishly inventive” (*The New Yorker*) and “bright and brash” (*The New York Times*), Headlong’s work has been presented at the Philadelphia Live Arts Festival, The Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Wilma Theater, Dance Theater Workshop (NYC), P.S. 122 (NYC), Central Park Summerstage, The Jade Festival (Tokyo), The Kyoto Arts Center, The International Contemporary Dance Conference (Bytom, Poland), The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art. Headlong’s work has been funded by the New England Foundation for the Arts’ National Dance Project, The Creative Capital Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation MAP Fund, The Japan Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, and The National Endowment for the Arts.

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