

D12 FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2014 /// THE ENQUIRER

# ENTER ROUSSÈVE'S WORLD

By David Lyman  
Enquirer contributor

David Roussève doesn't mind admitting it. He's 54, old enough to remember a time when communicating meant talking to someone face-to-face. Or writing a letter. Or possibly even making a phone call. Not on a mobile phone. We're talking rotary dials here.

The disconnect between that era – “slow communication,” let's call it – and the lickety-split communication-lite era we live in today is what provided the initial nudge for him to create “Stardust,” the 85-minute work his Los Angeles-based dance/theater company will perform at the Aronoff Center on Friday and Saturday.

“We took three years to develop it,” Roussève said, speaking by phone from his office at UCLA, where he is a professor of choreography in the Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance. Now that the piece is fully formed, his company will tour it much of this year and next.

Roussève's website says the piece “explores the evolving nature of intimacy in our technology-driven, furiously-paced world.”

But what really makes “Stardust” such an intriguing and visually sumptuous work is its multidisciplinary nature. For one thing, the music roams all over the spectrum, from hip-hop to Nat King Cole standards. The stage is dominated by massive projected images.



Contemporary Dance Theater's Guest Artist Series brings in “Stardust” by David Roussève this weekend.

PROVIDED/  
VALERIE OLIVEIRO

And then there is Roussève's choreography itself. It's jazzy. But it's informed by a career inspired by the likes of modern dance masters like Twyla Tharp and Martha Graham and Pina Bausch.

“And there was ballet,” says Roussève. “When I was starting out, so many modern dancers studied ballet with Alfredo Corvino, I decided that I needed to do that, too.”

Corvino was renowned for his attentive and meticulous teaching. But for Roussève, Corvino also provided a link to the world of German Expressionism, where dance, theater, music and the visual arts blended in a

way that delivered works with profound dramatic impact.

It proved to be something that Roussève had been searching for, even though he probably couldn't articulate it at the time.

Raised in Houston, he went to Princeton University to study pre-law.

“I had always loved theater and dance, but I wasn't convinced that I could find the intellectual satisfaction with them that I knew I needed,” he says. “I was committed to doing something positive for the world, but I didn't know how I could do that with dance.”

## IF YOU GO

**What:** “Stardust,” by David Roussève  
**When:** 8:30 p.m. Friday-Saturday  
**Where:** Jarson-Kaplan Theatre, Aronoff Center, 650 Walnut St., Downtown  
**Tickets:** \$22-\$32  
**Information:** 513-621-2787, [www.cincinnatiarts.org](http://www.cincinnatiarts.org)

At Princeton, he discovered modern dance.

“It completely changed my understanding of dance,” says Roussève. “I discovered it was possible to make work that was socially driven or humanistic, dance that had commentary.”

Even more important, he discovered how to make dance that was both entertaining *and* had something important to say.

“That was it,” says Roussève. “That was when the world exploded for me.”

Nearby New York City was in the midst of a huge dance boom, much of it from independent-minded modern dance choreographers.

“The very next year, I saw Pina Bausch's ‘Bluebeard’ at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. That was the cat's pajamas. Theater and dance and opera and wit and charm. And cutting-edge experimentalism. It had everything I wanted to do. I've never looked back.” ■