#### BY KRIS VAGNER

## DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DANCE FALL DANCE FESTIVAL

Choreography by faculty Eve Allen Garza Nate Hodges

Student choreographers Richard Jelani Best Ashley Bumgardner Emily Dunn Ariel Graves Fabian Kaiwi Mackenzie Kennedy Hanna Walkinshaw

### **NOVEMBER 2019** 21, 22, 23 AT 8 P.M. 23 AT 2 P.M.

REDFIELD PROSCENIUM THEATRE CHURCH FINE ARTS

#### TICKETS

\$15 Adults | \$12 Seniors | \$10 Students & University Faculty/Staff \$5 University Students with ID (limited quantity) Advance tickets available at Lawlor Box Office (775) 784-4444, mynevadatickets.com, or one hour prior to show at the theatre Tyu regime a managed according or the same day every plane content





# Underworld

OF THE STATE

Dia de los Muertos mural

#### Bobby Allen, who works at Rita Cannan

Elementary School, stood on a low plywood scaffold under the I-395 overpass on Wedekind Road, a short walk from the school. He held a narrow paintbrush. He took a 5-by-7-inch color photograph from his pocket, inspected it carefully, and copied a man's smiling, mustached face onto a concrete wall in grayscale. The man was his late father-in-law, and Allen is a volunteer on an unnamed mural project depicting *Dia de los Muertos* imagery.

Near Allen's feet, a head was sketched on the plywood scaffold. That's where the project's lead artist, Asa Kennedy, had given Allen a tutorial on how to get the proportions right.

On the north side of the street, Kennedy worked on painting oversized skeletons who dance and play mariachi music. On the south side, where Allen was, there's a cheerful depiction of an *ofrenda*, an altar traditionally built during the holiday to honor deceased friends and family members. This *ofrenda* contains sugar skulls, rows of marigolds, and candles to light the departed souls' way home. It also has plenty of space for pictures of loved ones.

"The idea was to leave the ofrenda pretty wide open, so anyone in the community could come down and put their own offerings on this," said Kennedy. "This could give them connection to this mural that's going to be here for years and years and years."

Another main player in the mural project is Kyle Chandler-Isacksen, director of a small neighborhood nonprofit called Be the Change, which he and his wife, Katy, run from their nearby home. The Chandler-Isacksens are former Montessori Local artists recievied municipal permission and funding to paint this mural at Wedekind road. PHOTO/KRIS VAGNER

teachers whose organization prioritizes "sustainability, service and community building." This includes initiatives such as launching the Reno Garlic Festival and partnering with groups like Sierra Arts and the Potentialist Workshop to work with teens—some of who've been arrested for tagging—on neighborhood art projects.

Chandler-Isacksen—who avoids using fossil fuels and champions bike transportation—walks in the neighborhood a lot, and has passed under the overpass countless times. He said it reminds him of an underworld, which is how he got the idea that it would be a good place for *Dia de los Muertos* imagery. "There's a very high Latino population in the area," he added. "It seemed perfect to honor the diverse cultures that live here."

He and Kennedy began planning a couple of years ago, and Kennedy signed on as lead artist. Chandler-Isacksen secured permission from the walls' owner, the Nevada Department of Transportation, to paint them. And the team received the City of Reno's new Art Belongs Here Grant to fund the project. While public art funds are traditionally awarded to individual artists for pieces in or near downtown, this one works a bit differently. Among the goals of this grant are to "transform spaces, nurture community identity, promote our vibrant neighborhoods and demonstrate cultural diversity and inclusiveness." The projects it funds are often in neighborhoods other than downtown. Artists are expected to work in collaboration with non-profits or businesses.

The Wedekind mural doesn't have a firm completion date, and members of the public are still invited to add their loved ones to the ofrenda.

As for Allen, the depiction of his fatherin-law is coming into focus. "If I can figure out how to blend, it'll come out better," he said. Kennedy, who says that anyone can learn to draw—it's just a matter of putting in the effort—will be there for Allen's next painting lesson.