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IN WAKE OF COMPANY LAY-OFF, DANCE THEATRE OF HARLEM PRINCIPAL DANCER FORMS NEW CONTEMPORARY BALLET COMPANY

COMPANY TO DEBUT FIRST PROGRAM IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, FEBRUARY 3-4, 2007

Collage dance Collective, in partnership with Gritty Cherries, Inc., a non-profit arts and dance production company is proud to present *Abandon•Salvation•Grace: An Evening of American Dance* to debut in Kansas City, Missouri. Under the artistic direction of Kevin T. Thomas, acclaimed dancer, choreographer and teacher, this program will premiere at the Kansas City Lyric Theatre February 3, 2007 @ 8:00 p.m. and February 4, 2007 @ 2:00 p.m. Mr. Thomas, a former principal dancer with Dance Theatre of Harlem, Cleveland/San Jose Ballet and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, has also guested with London's Royal Ballet and has appeared on Broadway in the *Phantom of the Opera*.

Collage dance Collective is an emerging contemporary ballet company that is dedicated to presenting choreography that explores the interface between modern, contemporary and classical dance by integrating movement, theatre and spoken word. Their mission includes showcasing choreography which illuminates the experiences of cultures evolving from the African Diaspora and broadening the reach of first-rate classically-based dance to underserved communities. Collage's development and success will help to fill the vacancy left by the recent closure of Dance Theatre of Harlem, formerly the world's leading African-American classically-based dance company.

The fourteen-member company includes Kansas City native, Alyson Ashley, who began her training at the Kansas City Ballet School at the age of seven. She was later invited by Artistic Director Todd Bolender to join the Kansas City Ballet as a student apprentice and has also danced professionally with Dance Theatre of Harlem and Ballet NY.

Collage is launching its 2007 season in Kansas City, MO with a very special program. *Abandon•Salvation•Grace: An Evening of American Dance* explores themes of pain, love, healing and forgiveness; focusing primarily on the ideologies of transforming poison into medicine and embracing obstacles as a vehicle for growth and self-discovery. The program includes choreography by Billy Wilson, Sandra Holloway, Iyun Harrison, Robert Battle and Thaddeus Davis.

Tickets can be purchased on-line at www.ticketweb.com or www.grittycherries.org or by phone at 1-866-468-7619. Don't miss an exciting opportunity to witness this inaugural program and history in the making, as this dynamic, emerging company officially launches its campaign for international prominence.