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**THE SCHOOL AT JACOB'S PILLOW ANNOUNCES
THE 2011 RECIPIENT OF THE
LORNA STRASSLER AWARD FOR STUDENT EXCELLENCE**

JUILLIARD GRADUATE CRAIG BLACK JR.

August 3, 2011 – (Becket, MA) The School at Jacob's Pillow announces Contemporary Program participant Craig Black Jr. as the eighth recipient of its major annual scholarship, the Lorna Strassler Award for Student Excellence. The award enables one student each year to attend one of the professional advancement programs of The School on a full scholarship, giving them the opportunity to excel in their area of study. Recipients also receive a \$2,500 cash stipend. The award will be presented to Black at *A Jazz Happening*, a special benefit performance for The School at Jacob's Pillow on August 21 in the Ted Shawn Theatre.

Craig Black Jr., 21, was a participant in the 2011 Contemporary Program under the direction of eminent master teacher Milton Myers. Program faculty included Francisco Martinez, ballet instructor of The Ailey School, Marymount Manhattan College, and The Juilliard School; Artistic Director of Seattle-based Lingo Dance KT Niehoff; former Complexions Contemporary Ballet Company teacher Pamela Pribisco; Director of The Juilliard School Dance Division Lawrence Rhodes; celebrated rehearsal director for multiple Canadian dance companies Ami Shulman; and Music Director John Levis. Students of The School's Contemporary Program also worked with renowned Guest Artist Choreographers, performing their work as part of the Inside/Out performance series, including Stijn Celis (international choreographer), Tony Fabre (former Artistic Director of Compañía Nacional de Danza 2), and Andrea Miller (2009 Princess Grace Award Winner and Artistic Director of Gallim Dance).

"J.R." Glover, Jacob's Pillow Director of Education, states, "There were several outstanding dancers vying for the award this year, yet Craig's level of intensity and commitment to each

moment of movement was exceptional. His personable demeanor, passion to excel, and professionalism are characteristics that will help him flourish and succeed as a professional dancer.”

About his experience at Jacob’s Pillow, Black comments, “Jacob's Pillow is and always will be a haven for dancers and anything dance related. Being here...has proved to be an educational experience worthy of a college/conservatory. I have been lucky to work with leading teachers and choreographers from across the world. On top of that, being at the Pillow has given me the chance to see performances by fifteen different professional companies within three weeks time.”

Black graduated from a performing arts high school in San Francisco and is an alumnus of The Juilliard School. With The Juilliard School, he danced throughout France and Germany and performed the work of Italian choreographer Luca Veggetti, in collaboration with the International Contemporary Ensemble, as part of the Guggenheim’s Works and Process Series. His dance scholarship awards include Tom Ralabate Jazz Dance Scholarship, The Juilliard Alumni Scholarship, and most recently, the 2010 Princess Grace Dance Performance Scholarship. Black’s career goal is to dance professionally in Europe and tour with a company whose work challenges himself as an artist. Black is “a natural dancer who happens to be gifted with an acute intelligence,” explains Director of The Juilliard School Dance Division Lawrence Rhodes. “Dancing is in his bones.”

In discussing the impact of this Award, Black states, “Having just graduated from Juilliard, I am embarking on the scary yet incredibly thrilling journey of starting my professional dance career and [this] scholarship will not only help me financially but gives me hope for an amazing dance life. Dance is my passion, my career, my love... it is my everything.”

The recipient of the Lorna Strassler Award for Student Excellence is chosen each spring during The School’s competitive audition and application process. Selection is based on a DVD, resume, and written statement that demonstrates advanced technical abilities, superior performance skills, a strong work ethic, and exemplary dedication to the art of dance. The Strassler Award makes a significant difference in the lives and careers of those who have received it, many of whom go on to join prestigious companies throughout the world. Previous awardees include Calvin Royal III (American Ballet Theatre), I-Fen Lin (freelance

dancer/choreographer and faculty member of the University of Utah Modern Dance Department), Lindsey Holmes (Philadanco company member), Shannon Kline (freelance jazz/musical theatre artist), Min Li (Scapino Ballet Rotterdam company member), Avichai Scher (Artistic Director of Avi Scher & Dancers), and Winston Dynamite Brown (Pilobolus Dance Theater company member).

Lorna Strassler has been a member of the Jacob's Pillow Board of Directors since 1988. The Lorna Strassler Award was established by David Strassler in 2004 to honor his wife's long-held passion for dance education at the Pillow. The Strasslers are residents of Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

For more information about the Lorna Strassler Award for Student Excellence or The School at Jacob's Pillow, visit jacobspillow.org.

About *A Jazz Happening*: 2011 marks the 5th anniversary celebration of *A Jazz Happening*. Established in 2007 as a benefit event for The School at Jacob's Pillow, *A Jazz Happening* highlights students of the Jazz/Musical Theatre Dance Program after three weeks of intense study and preparation. They perform alongside award-winning guest celebrities and a live band in an evening of works directed by Chet Walker, original conceiver of *Fosse*. Every year, one to two accomplished alumni of The School are invited to return as guest performers in *A Jazz Happening*. This year's alumni guests include 2010 Tap and Jazz/Musical Theatre Dance Program alumnus Caleb Teicher, a 2011 Bessie Nominee for Outstanding Individual Performance, and Emanuel Abruzzo, performer with Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo and WALKERDANCE. Proceeds benefit The School at Jacob's Pillow; tickets are \$100 and include a reception with the performers. Performance-only tickets are also available for \$75; jacobspillow.org or 413.243.0745 to purchase.

About The School: The School at Jacob's Pillow prepares pre-professional and professional dancers for the demands of a dance career. The curriculum offers conservatory-style training led by acclaimed faculty members six days a week. Dancers also prepare work for weekly showings on the Henry J. Leir Stage as part of the Inside/Out performance series every Saturday evening at 6:15pm, and special events such as the Season Opening Gala and *A Jazz Happening*. The School's curriculum also includes the opportunity to watch rehearsals and performances of professional dance companies performing at the Festival, attend PillowTalks

given by the field's leading artists, authors, and scholars, and research and study videos, books, photographs, and other materials in the Pillow's extensive Archives. Students learn career-building strategies, performance skills, and the history of their particular field while also deepening their personal artistry. More than 3,000 dancers audition or apply throughout the year across the U.S., Europe, and South America. Each year only 100 dancers are accepted to The School, with more than half receiving scholarships made possible in part by benefit events such as *A Jazz Happening*.

Alumni of The School at Jacob's Pillow include MacArthur "Genius" Grant-winner Meredith Monk; Chez Bushwick founder, former Merce Cunningham Dance Company member, and Festival 2011 Artist Jonah Bokaer; 2011 MTV Video Music Award nominee for "Best Choreography" for Beyonce's "Run the World (Girls)" and dancer in Broadway's *FELA!* Jeffrey Page; and *So You Think You Can Dance* judge and choreographer Mia Michaels. Alumni are frequently seen performing and choreographing at Jacob's Pillow, on Broadway, in films, and with leading dance and touring companies worldwide, including American Ballet Theatre, Batsheva Dance Company, Het Nationale Ballet, Merce Cunningham Dance Company, Mark Morris Dance Group, Munich Ballet, National Ballet of Canada, Tania Pérez-Salas, Compañía de Danza, San Francisco Ballet, Twyla Tharp, and Cirque du Soleil. 30 alumni are part of the 2011 Festival to date.

The School at Jacob's Pillow is one of America's most prestigious training centers for dance, encompassing four professional advancement programs in Ballet, Cultural Traditions, Contemporary, and Jazz/Musical Theatre Dance. An integral part of Jacob's Pillow, The School draws program participants and acclaimed artist faculty from all corners of the globe and is one of only five organizations in the United States selected for the Talented Students in the Arts Initiative award, a collaboration between the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and the Surdna Foundation, Inc. Through this initiative, the Pillow has been able to establish The Fund for Jacob's Pillow School Endowment to ensure the availability of scholarships, world-class faculty, and free access to all Festival performances and events for all faculty and students.

Jacob's Pillow, celebrating its 79th anniversary in 2011, is a National Historic Landmark and home to America's longest running international dance festival. The **Festival** includes more than 50 national and international dance companies and 300 free and ticketed performances, talks, tours, exhibits, and events. **The School at Jacob's Pillow**, one of the most prestigious professional dance training centers in the U.S., encompasses the diverse disciplines of Ballet, Cultural Traditions, Contemporary, and Jazz/Musical Theatre Dance, as well as an Intern Program in various departments of arts administration and production. The Pillow's extensive **Archives**, open year-round to the public, chronicle more than 80 years of dance in photographs, programs, books, costumes, audiotapes, and video. Year-round **Community Programs** enrich the lives of children and adults through public classes, residencies in area schools, and more than 200 free public events. Through *Jacob's Pillow Curriculum in Motion*®, a nationally-recognized program, artist-educators work with Berkshire County teachers and students grades K-12, transforming existing curricula such as biology, literature, and history into kinesthetic and creative learning experiences. Choreography commissions; **Creative Development Residencies**, in which dance

companies are invited to live and work at the Pillow and enjoy unlimited studio time; and the annual \$25,000 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award all support visionary choreographers. **Virtual Pillow** is aimed at expanding global audiences for dance and offers the opportunity to experience dance and Jacob's Pillow from anywhere in the world via online interactive exhibits, global video networks, and mobile social media. As part of the Virtual Pillow initiative, **Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive**, an online video collection of dance highlights from 1937 through 2010, is a new resource with a curated selection of videos by artists who have performed at Jacob's Pillow over the past seven decades. On March 2, 2011, President Obama honored Jacob's Pillow with a National Medal of Arts, the highest arts award given by the United States Government. Jacob's Pillow is the first dance presenting organization to receive this prestigious award.

As of July 28, 2011, support for Jacob's Pillow has been provided by:

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