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INNOVATIVE CHOREOGRAPHER, PERFORMER, WRITER, EDUCATOR, AND SPEAKER**

March 28, 2017 (Becket, MA) — The 2017 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award, a prestigious honor that carries a \$25,000 cash prize, will be presented to choreographer, performer, writer, educator, and speaker Liz Lerman in acknowledgement of her vision and outstanding contributions to the dance field. Long ago dubbed the "Democrat of Dance" by Alan M. Kriegsman of *The Washington Post*, Lerman's extraordinary career of the past four decades includes a wide range of groundbreaking work. Established in 2007, the Jacob's Pillow Dance Award's previous recipients include the legendary choreographer Merce Cunningham; MacArthur Fellows Michelle Dorrance and Kyle Abraham; and choreographer, performer, and artistic director Camille A. Brown, among others.

"Liz is a creative visionary," says Jacob's Pillow Director Pamela Tatge. "Since the 1970s, she has built bridges to other domains and expanded where dance lives in our society. She has paved the way for a whole generation of dance makers to discover the power of social change through community engagement and by, as she puts it, 'rattling around in other people's universes.' Her vision, artistry and her spirit of inquiry continue to dramatically shape the field. As the Pillow embarks on its next evolution of research and development, we find it particularly important to honor one of the seminal forces of this work in our country."

"I am so fortunate to be acknowledged in my own lifetime, and for that recognition to come from such an iconic place as Jacob Pillow, which has been a spiritual and radical home to dance, is incredible," says Liz Lerman. "I think the recognition is casting a light on a larger set of ideas, that allow people to think about the relationship between stage work, learning environments of all kinds, engagement, and the role of the artist as citizen. I hope what the Pillow is saying to me, is we have respected your willingness to push boundaries, and we expect and need that to continue."

"A veteran choreographer of ideas" (Sarah Kaufman, *The Washington Post*), Liz Lerman introduced an important era of radical inclusion in dance. Her artistic research brings various publics into the work, tackling topics of developmental biology and astrophysics to the physical and psychological wounds of war. From the multigenerational ensemble of the former Liz Lerman Dance Exchange to her more recent "necessary, vital, and...uplifting" (Tim Smith, *The Baltimore Sun*) projects, her work exhibits "expansive range, emotional depth and singular beauty" (Sarah Kaufman, *The Washington Post*). She was an early

innovator mixing media with dance, including dancers talking on stage beginning in 1974. The use of new technologies is a central part of her work from 1984 to the present, showing a huge range of study from shipyards, to genetics, to the Large Hadron Collider at CERN. Lerman has been met with numerous accolades, including a 2002 MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, a 2011 United States Artists Ford Fellowship in Dance, and the 2014 Dance/USA Honor Award. Her work has been commissioned by prestigious venues and universities alike, including Harvard Law School, Wesleyan University, Lincoln Center, and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, as well as Jacob's Pillow.

Jacob's Pillow Director Pamela Tatge will present Lerman with the Award at the Season Opening Gala on June 17. This fall, Lerman will participate in the Pillow's regional convening of New England choreographers, where participants will share work, discuss career-building issues and be introduced to Lerman's Critical Response Process, and internationally renowned system in use for over 25 years for soliciting feedback on any creative work. In the week after receiving her award, Lerman will participate in a free PillowTalk titled *Liz Lerman: Dance for Our Time* on Friday, June 23 at 5pm.

Lerman's rich history with Jacob's Pillow dates back to 1985 with her Pillow debut performance in the Inside/Out Performance Series with a work titled *Liz Lerman and Seniors*. Throughout the last 30 years, Lerman has held several engagements in both the Ted Shawn and Doris Duke Theatres, participated in PillowTalks, directed workshops in The School at Jacob's Pillow, performed in co-presentation engagements with the Pillow's cultural partner MASS MoCA, and more. An especially close collaboration between Lerman and the Pillow took place in 2000 when the Pillow commissioned a component of *The Hallelujah Project*, a multi-year initiative that resulted in the premiere of *In Praise of Fertile Fields*.

The Jacob's Pillow Dance Award was created in 2007 through an annual anonymous gift of \$50,000, of which \$25,000 is given to an artist of exceptional vision. In commemoration, the honoree receives a custom-designed glass award sculpture by Berkshire-based artist Tom Patti, whose work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York, among other prominent institutions worldwide. The inaugural Award was given in 2007 to Annie-B Parson and Paul Lazar, co-directors of Big Dance Theater. Subsequent awardees were Alonzo King (2008), Artistic Director of Alonzo King LINES Ballet; Merce Cunningham (2009), whose company gave its final performances during his lifetime at Jacob's Pillow that season; Bill T. Jones (2010), who accepted the Award weeks after receiving his second Tony Award for the Broadway hit *FELA!*; Crystal Pite (2011), international choreographer and Artistic Director of Kidd Pivot; Kyle Abraham (2012), dancer, choreographer, and Artistic Director of Abraham.In.Motion; perennial Festival artist Michelle Dorrance (2013) dancer, choreographer, and Artistic Director of Dorrance Dance; John Heginbotham (2014) choreographer and Artistic Director of Dance Heginbotham; Liz Gerring (2015) choreographer and director of Liz Gerring Dance; and Camille A. Brown (2016) choreographer, performer, teacher, and artistic director of Camille A. Brown & Dancers.

The donor's annual gift also provides for \$25,000 for Jacob's Pillow commissions, presentations, and the Creative Development Residency Program, which has funded residencies for numerous dance artists including Ephrat Asherie, Netta Yerushalmy, Ronald K. Brown & Arturo O'Farrill, Sara Mearns, Bryan Arias, John Heginbotham, Michelle Dorrance, Andrea Miller, Adam H. Weinert, Kyle Abraham, Camille A. Brown, Suzanne Farrell, MADBOOTS DANCE, Big Dance Theater, zoe | juniper, Stephen Petronio, Kimberly Bartosik, Rashaun Mitchell, Silas Reiner, and many others.

Related interview:

Liz Lerman speaks with Jacob's Pillow about her life's work and pushing the art form forward:

<https://www.jacobspillow.org/picks/profiles/and-the-award-goes-to-liz-lerman/>

ABOUT LIZ LERMAN

Liz Lerman is a choreographer, performer, writer, educator and speaker. From a piece about her days as a go-go dancer in 1974 to a recent investigation of origins that included putting dancers in the tunnels of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN, she has spent the past four decades making her artistic research personal, funny, intellectually vivid, and up to the minute. A key aspect of her artistry is opening her process to various publics from shipbuilders to physicists, construction workers to ballerinas, resulting in both research and outcomes that are participatory, relevant, urgent, and usable by others.

She founded Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in 1976 and cultivated the company's unique multi-generational ensemble into a leading force in contemporary dance until 2011, when she handed the artistic leadership of the company over to the next generation of Dance Exchange artists. Now she is pursuing new projects with fresh partnerships, including a semester at Harvard University as an artist-in-residence. Her current work *Healing Wars* recently finished touring across the US. Liz conducts residencies on the Critical Response Process, creative research, the intersection of art and science, and the building of narrative within dance performance at such institutions as Harvard University, Yale School of Drama, Wesleyan University, Guildhall School of Music and Drama, and the National Theatre Studio among many others. In 2016 Liz was named the first Institute Professor at the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University, where she is building a new ensemble lab focused on creative research.

Hiking the Horizontal: Field Notes from a Choreographer, Liz's collection of essays, was published in 2011 by Wesleyan University Press and released in paperback in 2014. Liz has been the recipient of numerous honors, including a 2002 MacArthur "Genius Grant" Fellowship, a 2011 United States Artists Ford Fellowship in Dance, and a Deutsch Fellowship. Her work has been commissioned by the Harvard Law School, the Lincoln Center, American Dance Festival, and the Kennedy Center, among many others. Born in Los Angeles and raised in Milwaukee, Liz attended Bennington College and Brandeis University, received her BA in dance from the University of Maryland, and an MA in dance from George Washington University. She is married to storyteller Jon Spelman. Their daughter is a documentary photographer.

Related videos in Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive:

Liz Lerman Dance Exchange in *Hallelujah: In Praise of Fertile Fields* in 2000:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/liz-lerman-dance-exchange/hallelujah-in-praise-of-fertile-fields/>

ABOUT THE 85th SEASON OPENING GALA, JUNE 17:

The Season Opening Gala is the Pillow's signature fundraising event. Benefit performances will include Festival 2017 artist Miami City Ballet, a work-in-progress performance by New York City Ballet principal dancer Sara Mearns and Honji Wang of hip-hop duo Company Wang Ramirez, the students of The School at Jacob's Pillow in a world premiere by acclaimed choreographer Bruce Wells, and others. Jacob's Pillow Director Pamela Tatge will present the 11th annual Jacob's Pillow Dance Award to visionary choreographer Liz Lerman. The day's events begin with the opening of an exclusive photo exhibition in Blake's Barn, *Jacob's Pillow Jumps!* as well as the opening of an exhibit highlighting Rose Eichenbaum's new book, *Inside the Dancer's Art*. A silent auction, dinner under the stars, and an after party and dancing with Paul Loren and his One Night Only Band. All proceeds benefit the non-profit programs of Jacob's Pillow Dance, a National Historic Landmark and National Medal of Arts recipient. Gala tables and tickets are currently on sale via phone; for tickets and more information call 413.243.9919 x126.

ABOUT JACOB'S PILLOW: Jacob's Pillow, celebrating its 85th Festival in 2017, is a National Historic Landmark, recipient of the National Medal of Arts, and home to America's longest-running international dance festival. Each Festival includes more than 50 national and international dance companies and 350 free and ticketed performances, talks, tours, classes, 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 Musical Theatre Dance, as well as an Intern Program in various disciplines of arts administration, design, video, and production. The Pillow's extensive Archives, open year-round to the public, chronicle more than a century of dance in photographs, programs, books, costumes, audiotapes, and videos. Year-round Community Programs enrich the lives of children and adults through public classes, residencies in area schools, and an extensive schedule of 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 curricula such as biology, literature, and history into kinesthetic and creative learning experiences. Creative Development Residencies, in which dance companies are invited to live and work at the Pillow and enjoy unlimited studio time; choreography commissions; and the annual \$25,000 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award all support visionary dance artists and choreographers. During Creative Development Residencies, artists are invited to spend one to three weeks at the Pillow creating or rehearsing new work, with free housing for the company, unlimited use of studio space, and access to the Pillow's rare and extensive Archives and other Pillow resources. In the beautiful, retreat-like atmosphere of the Pillow, the Creative Development Residencies are rare opportunities for artists to focus on the creative process without distraction. Notable artists who have created or premiered dances at the Pillow include choreographers Antony Tudor, Agnes de Mille, Alvin Ailey, Donald McKayle, Kevin McKenzie, Twyla Tharp, Ralph Lemon, Susan Marshall, Trisha Brown, Ronald K. Brown, Wally Cardona, Andrea Miller, and Trey McIntyre; performed by artists such as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Carmen de Lavallade, Mark Morris, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Edward Villella, Rasta Thomas, and hundreds of others. The Pillow's digital initiatives are 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 social media. An important part of the Pillow's digital presence, Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive is a curated online video collection of dance highlights from 1933 to today. 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, making the Pillow the first dance presenting organization to receive this prestigious award. For more information, visit www.jacobspillow.org.

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