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COMPAÑÍA IRENE RODRÍGUEZ RETURNS TO JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE FESTIVAL, JUNE 26-30

June 6, 2019—(Becket, MA) In a highly-anticipated return to Jacob's Pillow, Compañía Irene Rodríguez makes their Ted Shawn Theatre debut, June 26-30, with a diverse and exhilarating program that features one U.S. premiere, two world premieres, and audience favorites. A prominent voice in the emerging contemporary Cuban dance scene, Compañía Irene Rodríguez unites traditional flamenco and Spanish dances and vibrant Afro-Cuban rhythms with ballet and contemporary techniques, creating work that ignites a "trail of triumph and applause" (*Granma*, Cuba).

The presentation of Compañía Irene Rodríguez coincides with a Professional Advancement Program of Flamenco & Spanish Dance at The School at Jacob's Pillow, June 24-July 7, which Rodríguez directs. For two weeks, renowned faculty and emerging artists in the international flamenco community convene for an in-depth intensive surrounding the traditions and new directions of these two intertwined genres, flamenco and Spanish dance.

"In 2017, Compañía Irene Rodríguez's performances in the Doris Duke Theatre were sold-out before opening night. They are truly back by popular demand this year, making their Ted Shawn Theatre debut, while Irene leads a flamenco and Spanish dance program that will enable dancers from around the world to have access to her artistry," says Jacob's Pillow Director Pamela Tatge.

Compañía Irene Rodríguez's Festival performance encompasses a series of short works that bring together the best of the company's unique style. This includes Pillow-commissioned *Pena Negra* based on poetry by Federico García Lorca, featuring Rodríguez performing in a striking, textured black dress co-designed by Jesús Villalonga and Rodríguez herself, which acts as the choreographic centerpiece of the work. This is followed by the U.S. premiere of *Encierro*, inspired by the Encierros de Navarra (an event where 12 bulls are transported through the streets of the city), praised as "one of the most memorable feats of flamenco dancing in Cuba" (*Arte por Excelencias Magazine*).

Compañía Irene Rodríguez brings two Pillow-commissioned world premieres: *La Desesperación*, inspired by Edvard Munch's iconic painting *The Scream*, performed by the entire company and set to music by Reynier Llorente and David Acosta; and *A Contra Tiempo*, a powerful showcase of the company's male dancers. Additional highlights include the International Choreography Contest Award-winning *El Mito*; and *Homanje*, a tribute to legendary flamenco choreographer and dancer José Greco, known for popularizing Spanish dance on the stage and screen. The program ends with *Amaranto*, lauded for "displaying an extraordinary level of physical stamina" (*Dance Enthusiast*).

Praised as “intense,” “exacting,” and as a “feisty contemporary flamenco dancer” by *The New York Times*, Rodríguez is a Prima ballerina of Spanish dances, Cuban teacher and choreographer, and choreographic advisor and rehearsal instructor for Alicia Alonso’s world-renowned National Ballet of Cuba. Rodríguez created her own company in 2012 which “has succeeded in positioning itself among the best of the Spanish genre in Cuba” (*Granma*, Cuba).

The dancers in Compañía Irene Rodríguez have extensive technical backgrounds in traditional Spanish dances. Five seasoned flamenco musicians accompany them with arrangements for saxophone, percussion, bass, and guitar. As one cohesive ensemble, the dancers and musicians present a performance that blurs the lines between a visual and aural experience. *The New Yorker* comments, “Flamenco rhythms played on Afro-Cuban instruments suggest a crossover that’s both historical and novel: evidence that a specifically Cuban form of flamenco might exist.”

ABOUT IRENE RODRÍGUEZ

Director, Prima Ballerina, and Choreographer, Irene Rodríguez is the leading figure of Spanish dance in Cuba. A member of the International Dance Council (UNESCO), she earned a Bachelor of Theater Arts Degree (Acting) from the National University of Arts (Instituto Superior de Arte, Havana, Cuba), receiving the “Diploma de Oro” in theater arts, an honor bestowed for her numerous roles as an actor. She also received a Master’s Degree in Theoretical Studies of Dance from the same university.

Born in Havana, she graduated in 1999 as a professional performer of Spanish dances. After graduating, she immediately joined the Ballet Español de Cuba, where she became Prima ballerina in 2007, as well as the Choreographer and Specialized Professor and Regisseur of First Level. For several years, she has worked as a Professor of the Cuban National Ballet School and a choreography consultant of the Cuban National Ballet, specifically for Prima Ballerina Assoluta Alicia Alonso’s Spanish works. On several occasions, she has performed as a guest dancer with the Cuban National Ballet. She has performed as Prima Ballerina in the most prestigious theaters of Barcelona, Granada, Andorra, Colombia, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, and Mexico, where she has shared the stage with world-renowned artists.

In January 2012, she founded her own company, Compañía Irene Rodríguez, receiving rave reviews since the company’s debut. As a dance professor, she plays a role in training many of the professional Spanish dancers in Cuba. She has given master classes and conferences both nationally and internationally, and has created several works for distinguished companies. In 2014, she created her own dance school, the Irene Rodríguez Spanish Dance Academy.

Rodríguez has received numerous awards, including the First Prize in the VIII “Alicia Alonso Ibero-American Choreography Competition” (CIC’ 2012); an award from the Author’s Foundation of the Spanish General Society of Authors and Editors (SGAE) for her work *El crimen fue en Granada*; the Choreography Award in 2006 from the Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba for best female artistic interpretation 2006-2007; the *Ramiro Guerra* award for the best interpretation in 2011; the Excellence Choreography Award in 2016 for the best choreography work at the International Ballet Schools Competition; the Ibero-American Medal given for the Honoris Causa Foundation from the Guadalajara’s University in Mexico and the Audience and UNEAC Award in the North Atlantic Choreography Contest “Vladimir Malakhov”. Among many accolades, Rodríguez was recently awarded the Order Isabel la Católica, the highest recognition given from Spain’s King.

In the U.S., she has performed at the Montalvo Art Center, MOLAA, the Moore Theater, The Joyce Theater, and The John F. Kennedy Center for The Performing Arts in Washington D.C, among others. She is featured in the PBS documentary “Weekend in Havana.” Since 2012, by special request of the Prima Ballerina Assoluta Alicia Alonso, she holds the post of Artistic Director of the International Festival “La Huella de España,” a very important annual event in Cuba.

JACOB’S PILLOW CONNECTIONS

Compañía Irene Rodríguez made their sold-out Jacob’s Pillow debut in 2017.

Explore past Pillow performances on Jacob’s Pillow Dance Interactive:

Compañía Irene Rodríguez in *Pena Negra* in 2017:

danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/compania-irene-rodriguez/pena-negra/

PERFORMANCE & TICKET INFORMATION

- **Compañía Irene Rodríguez**

Ted Shawn Theatre, June 26-30

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday at 8pm

Thursday, Saturday & Sunday at 2pm

\$78, \$65, \$45

A limited number of \$35 Under 35 tickets are available; adults ages 18-35 are eligible. One ticket per person; each guest must show valid I.D. when picking up tickets at Will Call.

ALSO THIS WEEK:

Abby Z and the New Utility

June 26-30, Wednesday-Saturday at 8:15pm; Saturday and Sunday at 2:15pm

Doris Duke Theatre

Abby Zbikowski makes her Pillow debut with *abandoned playground*, an adrenaline-inducing sequence of hyper physicality and extreme virtuosity. Creating an intimate setup, nine dancers are pushed to the brink of their capabilities and endurance. Recipient of the 2017 Juried Bessie Award, Abby Z is highlighted for bold, rhythmic, and high-intensity choreography that draws from tap, hip-hop, West African, postmodern, and a deep-rooted punk aesthetic as primary influences. *The New York Times* describes *abandoned playground* as “an onslaught of thwacking arms, emphatic kicks, dizzying spins, swift somersaults, perilous balances and slippery contortions.” *Tickets \$40.*

Inside/Out Performance Series: Briseyda Zárate Flamenco

Wednesday, June 26 at 6:15pm

FREE, LIVE MUSIC

Accompanied by the rhythmically melodic guitar and bitter sweet flamenco song, powerhouse dancer California-based Briseyda Zárate delivers an intimate rendition of flamenco. Pushing the limits of self-expression and moving away from choreographies and towards exciting improvisation, she and her inspired ensemble of musicians will take audiences on an exhilarating journey deep into the heart and soul of flamenco.

Inside/Out Performance Series: Vanaver Caravan

Thursday, June 27 at 6:15pm

FREE, LIVE MUSIC

Hudson-Valley based Vanaver Caravan performs excerpts of *Turn, Turn, Turn*, a celebration with dance and live music featuring Pete Seeger’s most beloved songs in honor of the esteemed folk singer’s 100th birthday. With a broad repertoire that covers percussive Appalachian clog dancing and incorporates reconstructed works by Ted

Shawn and Ruth St. Denis, as well as original choreography, the Caravan weaves tapestries of dance and music together with effortless skill and precision. Established in 1972 by musician/composer Bill Vanaver and dancer/choreographer Livia Drapkin Vanaver, the Caravan is dedicated to performing original, world-infused choreography and music, and draws from an ever-expanding repertoire of dance and music traditions.

PillowTalk: ¡Viva Spanish Dance!

Friday, June 28 at 5pm

Blake's Barn

FREE

Two illustrious artists on The School's faculty for the Pillow's Flamenco & Spanish Dance Program, Carmela Greco and Carmen Ledesma, celebrate the glories of their extraordinary art form.

Inside/Out Performance Series: Sayat Nova Dance Company

Friday, June 28 at 6:15pm

FREE

Boston-based Sayat Nova Dance Company was formed in January 1986 under the direction of Apo Ashjian. Named after a famous 18th century Armenian troubadour, they are dedicated to preserving and promoting Armenian culture and multicultural awareness. Their performance celebrates the livelihood, aspirations, legends, and beauty of Armenian folk dance.

PillowTalk: PS Dance: The Next Generation

Saturday, June 29 at 4pm

Blake's Barn

FREE

Following Nel Shelby's award-winning documentary on dance in public schools, her new film spotlights Northampton's Dance Education Laboratory, a partner to the Pillow's engagement efforts.

Inside/Out Performance Series: The School at Jacob's Pillow Flamenco & Spanish Dance Program

Saturday, June 29 at 6:15pm

FREE

Dancers of The School at Jacob's Pillow Flamenco & Spanish Dance program train with revered artists from Spain during their first week of study. Artist faculty coach dancers in the traditional rhythms and palos of flamenco and Spanish dance, such as alegrías, bulerías, and seguiriyas. Their performance for Festival audiences features a glimpse into their studio work where communication with musicians evokes each dancer's passionate duende.

The Flamenco & Spanish Dance Program is directed by Cuba-based Irene Rodríguez with highly-acclaimed artist faculty Carmela Greco and Carmen Ledesma from Spain. Guitarist and singer Cristian Puig and percussionist Peter Basil Bogdanos will accompany the performance.

Sunday Master Class: Abby Z and the New Utility

Sunday, June 30 at 10am

Doris Duke Theatre

Led by founder Abby Zbikowski, this workshop takes participants inside of an Abby Z and the New Utility training process. Participants will dive into physicality that sits at a nexus of movement disciplines, including modern dance, hip-hop, West African, basketball, tap, and postmodern dance. Participants will experience firsthand the correlation between the physical, philosophical, and cultural properties of movement. *Open to all intermediate and advanced dancers ages 16 and over. Quiet observation is welcome; \$20 per class or \$100 for a 6-class card. Participants younger than 18 will require a parent/guardian's signature on a liability waiver. Pre-registration is required at jacobspillow.org.*

All Styles Dance Battle

Sunday, June 30 at 8pm

Doris Duke Theatre

For the third year in a row, the Pillow hosts an all styles dance battle featuring DJ DP One, Festival artists, participants of The School at Jacob's Pillow, regional street artists, surprise judges—and of course, one winner. Audience members can choose to observe from theater seats, or become part of the action. *Tickets start at \$25.*

FESTIVAL 2019 EXHIBITS & ARCHIVES—ONGOING

Dance We Must: Another Look

Blake's Barn, June 19-August 25

Open Wed-Sat noon to final curtain (approx. 10pm) and Sun-Tues noon to 5pm; FREE

Drawing upon the acclaimed 2018 exhibit at the Williams College Museum of Art, the Pillow's historic costumes, set pieces, and other artifacts are viewed through a different lens, illuminating the early years of American modern dance with alternative voices brought forward. The adjacent Norton Owen Reading Room features recent donations and more from the Stephan Driscoll Collection.

Assemblages by Paul Taylor

Ted Shawn Theatre Lobby, June 19-August 25

Open daily, noon to final curtain; FREE

Beyond dancemaking, Paul Taylor was an infinitely creative artist in multiple media, and Jacob's Pillow salutes his memory with his own idiosyncratic visual works, some on public display for the first time. Assembled mostly from found objects, Taylor's artworks are joyful, haunting, humorous, bawdy, ingenious, and just as memorable as the dances for which he is best known.

Merce Cunningham: Loops

Doris Duke Theatre Lobby, June 19-August 25

Open daily, noon to final curtain; FREE

This abstract virtual reality portrait of Merce Cunningham was created by digital artists Paul Kaiser and Marc Downie. With imagery derived from a motion-captured performance by Cunningham of his solo dance for hands, and soundtrack of Cunningham reading from early diary entries, *Loops* recognizes the Cunningham Centennial by distilling the great choreographer's essence into a unique work of art.

Jacob's Pillow Archives/Norton Owen Reading Room

Blake's Barn, June 19-August 25

Open daily, Wed-Sat noon to final curtain (approx. 10pm) and Sun-Tue noon to 5pm; FREE

This spacious, informal library and reading room allows impromptu visitors to view videos, browse through books, access the Pillow's computer catalog, or peruse permanent collections of Pillow programs and photographs from the Pillow's Archives. The Norton Owen Reading Room also features recent donations and more archival treasures from the Stephan Driscoll Collection. Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive, available on a popular touch-screen kiosk, provides instant access to rare film clips ranging from the present day back to the 1930s.

ABOUT JACOB'S PILLOW:

Jacob's Pillow is a National Historic Landmark, recipient of the National Medal of Arts, and home to America's longest-running international dance festival, currently in the midst of its transition to becoming a year-round center for dance through a five-year strategic plan titled Vision '22. Each Festival includes more than 50 national and international dance companies and over 500 free and ticketed performances, talks, tours, classes, exhibits, events, and community programs. The School at Jacob's Pillow, one of the field's most prestigious professional dance training centers, encompasses the diverse disciplines of Contemporary Ballet, Contemporary, Tap, Photography, Choreography, and an annual rotating program (Flamenco and Spanish Dance in 2019). The Pillow also provides professional advancement opportunities across disciplines of arts administration, design, video, and production through seasonal internships and a year-round Administrative Fellows program. With growing community engagement programs, the Pillow serves as a

partner and active citizen in its local community. The Pillow's extensive Archives, open year-round to the public and online at danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org, chronicle more than a century of dance in photographs, programs, books, costumes, audiotapes, and videos. 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. On March 2, 2011, President Barack 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. The Pillow's Director since 2016 is Pamela Tatge. For more information, visit www.jacobspillow.org.

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