

NATIVE AMERICAN CONNECTIONS AT JACOB'S PILLOW

A summary of the intersections between the Pillow and Indigenous peoples and traditions of the Americas, compiled by Jacob's Pillow Director of Preservation Norton Owen.

According to the chapter titled "Indians in Becket" by Pillow neighbor Ruth I. Derby in *A Bicentennial History of Becket*, the Mohicans camped in Becket during the summer months, hunting moose, deer, and bear, as well as otter, raccoons, beaver, foxes, and other small fur-bearing animals. A later Becket history identified descendants of the Muckhaneek, Narragansett, and Pequot tribes. They collected and dried food for the winter and skins for clothing. They also made maple syrup and sugar and taught settlers to do this. They sold the land to settlers in 1736, though the plans weren't accurate and Chief Konkapot was upset that traditional hunting grounds were inadvertently included in the property transfer. This discrepancy was later settled with an additional payment that covered all lands west of the Westfield River. There are reportedly Indian burial grounds off George Carter Road, near Jacob's Pillow.

1933 – During its first summer of Pillow performances, the repertory of Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers includes the *Osage-Pawnee Dance of Greeting* and a Shawn solo, *Invocation to the Thunderbird*.

1934 – Ted Shawn revives his *Hopi Indian Eagle Dance*, originally part of his full-length 1923 production, *Feather of the Dawn*. A new group work, *Ponca Indian Dance*, is presented for the first time.

1936 – The first act of a full-evening work, *O Libertad!*, opens with a section titled *Noche Triste de Moctezuma* and also includes other sections about Native Americans of the Southwest.

1937-40 – Several of the works mentioned above continue to be performed through the final season of Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers.

1941 – Shawn performs *Osage-Pawnee Dance of Greeting*

1942 – Argentinita and her troupe perform *Cadiz*, which "tells the story of a little boy from Cuba who arrives in Cadiz and shows the Andalusians the way his people dance in Cuba."

– La Meri presents *Ea Mai Hawaiiinuiakea*, taken from an ancient historical Hawaiian chant.

– Shawn presents excerpts from *Feather of the Dawn* and *Invocation to the Thunderbird*, two of six "American Dances Based on Primitive Motifs" on a program shared with Asadata Dafora.

1943 – Shawn performs his *Invocation to the Thunderbird* and *Osage-Pawnee Dance of Greeting*.

1944 – Shawn performs his *Invocation to the Thunderbird* and *Osage-Pawnee Dance of Greeting*.

1945 – Rex Cooper performs *American Indian Hoop Dance* and Shawn performs his *Hopi Indian Eagle Dance* and *Invocation to the Thunderbird*.

– La Meri performs *Kolo Pa*, a Hawaiian Hula.

1946 – Barton Mumaw and Jacob's Pillow students (including Joan Gross as "The Indian Girl") perform *Indian Summer*, set in 1625.

– Rosella Hightower, an Oklahoman of Choctaw heritage, becomes the first of five Native American ballerinas to perform at the Pillow.

1947 – Reginald and Gladys Laubin present an Indian dance program entitled “The First American” with a program note stating “Music is played on native musical instruments and all costumes are authentic examples of Indian art. These are authentic dances of our Plains Indians.”

1948 – Shawn creates *Minuet for Drums*, based on Stefan Lorant’s book, *The New World*. Program note excerpt: “In this ballet Shawn has made no attempt at authenticity as to Indian dancing—but shows what might have been conjured up in the mind of a 16th century Queen of France who has never seen an Indian.”

1949 – Tom Two Arrows, an Onondagan-adopted Lenni-Lenape (Delaware) Indian, teaches American Indian Dancing for a week in the University of the Dance (former name for The School at Jacob’s Pillow), and presents a lecture on American Indian Dancing.

– Josefina Garcia presents *Rascapetate*, a Chamula Indian dance; and ritualistic dances by Tarascan Indians.

– Taneo, a Hawaiian dancer, presents “the native hula in its true, charming and beautiful form” in an offsite performance produced by Jacob’s Pillow.

1950 – Josefina Garcia presents dances rooted in Indian traditions of Mexico, including Tarascans and *Jarana Yucateca*.

– Ted Shawn presents his *Hopi Indian Eagle Dance*.

– La Meri presents dances of the Otavalo Indians in Ecuador, the Venezuelan *Joropo*, and two Peruvian dances stemming from the Incas.

1951 – Maria Tallchief’s Pillow debut. (Her family name at birth was Tall Chief, and her Osage family name was Ki He Kah Stah Tsa. She was the first Native American to achieve the rank of prima ballerina in any prominent ballet company.)

– La Meri presents two Peruvian dances stemming from the Incas, and Peter di Falco presents a study with Incan origins.

– José Limón performs the U.S. premiere of his *Tonantzintla*, inspired by a Mexican church in the style known as “Indigenous Baroque”.

1952 – Josefina Garcia utilizes Pillow students and faculty to create *Mosaico Mexicano* based on numerous Indigenous sources, including the Yaqui, Mixtecs, Akateks, Tlaxcalans, and others.

1953 – José Limón presents *La Malinche*, his 1949 dance about Cortez’s conquest of Mexico, with two of the three dancers portraying Indigenous characters. (The title character was based on Malintzin, an Indian princess who was Cortez’s interpreter.)

– Ted Shawn presents his *Invocation to the Thunderbird*.

– Yvonne Chouteau performs on two programs. (Chouteau was part Shawnee-Cherokee, known as one of the five Native American ballerinas of Oklahoma.)

1954 – The Ernestis (the professional name of Roger and Gloria Ernesti) present nine dances of the Pacific Northwest Indians.

1955 – Moscelyne Larkin (a part Shawnee-Peoria Indian who was known as one of the five Native American ballerinas of Oklahoma) makes her only Pillow appearance.

1957 – Tom Two Arrows offers three traditional dances on the same program with Maria Tallchief; and presents a lecture on American Indian Dancing.

– Josefina Garcia creates *Fiesta Pan-Americana*, a premiere, based on native dances from Argentina, Colombia, Venezuela, Mexico, Chile, Peru, and Bolivia.
– Peru’s Carlos Antonio Fernandez makes his U.S. debut in sixteen traditional Indigenous dances from Argentina, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela, as well as Peru.

1959 – La Meri dances *Navajo Trail* as one of three “Gesture Songs”.
– Carola Goya presents an ancient chant and modern Hula from Hawaii.

1960 – Maria Tallchief appears as a guest artist with The Joffrey Ballet.
– Samoan Teokila A’asa makes his U.S. debut with three Samoan dances.

1961 – Both Maria Tallchief and Teokila A’asa return.

1962 – Maria Tallchief performs.

1963 – The fifth of the five Native American ballerinas, Marjorie Tallchief, makes her Pillow debut.

1964 – Both Maria Tallchief and Marjorie Tallchief perform on separate programs.

1965 – A group billed as Six American Indian Dancers (from St. John’s Indian School in Arizona) performs two suites of authentic dances, each consisting of five distinct dances.
– Maria Tallchief makes her final Pillow appearance, and the Pillow names one of its student cabins in her honor.
– Mexican choreographer Alonzo Rivera creates *Kukulcan*, “a ritualistic dance drama of the ancient Mayans,” for a week of performances by Jacob’s Pillow students. The scenario by Ted Shawn is inspired by ethnomusicologist Gertrude Kurath’s book, *Dances of Anahuac*.

1967 – Hawaiian dancer Edith Kawelohea Kapule McKinzie makes her continental U.S. debut in traditional works directed by La Meri, and teaches Hawaiian dance in The School.

1972 – Matteo and his Indo-American Dance Company present two Hawaiian dances as part of a suite devoted to Polynesian works.

1978 – The Argentinian Gaucho folk company known as Los Indianos is scheduled to make its U.S. debut, but is denied a travel visa at the last minute and forced to cancel.

1980 – Brazilian Loremil Machado performs works rooted in Samba and Capoeira.

1989 – A program devoted entirely to Indigenous dance is divided between two Hawaiian companies, Halau Hula O Hoakalei and Ka Pa Hula Hawai’i Hula, and American Indian Dance Theatre. Separate workshops in Hawaiian Dance and Native American Dance are taught by members of all three companies and offered to the general public.

1990 – Two companies from Hawaii, Ka Pa Ula Hawai’i Hula and Halau Hula O Hoakalei, share a full week’s program in the Doris Duke Theatre. John Kaha’i Topolinski, director of Ka Pa Hula Hawai’i, offers a public workshop in the Bakalar Studio.

1992 – Jacob’s Pillow’s Men Dancers presents José Limón’s 1970 work, *The Unsung*, described by the choreographer as “a paean to the heroic defenders of the American patrimony.” The dancers are identified as Metacomet, Pontiac, Tecumseh, Red Eagle, Black Hawk, Osceola, Sitting Bull, and Geronimo. This production later tours both nationally and internationally.

1995 – American Indian Dance Theatre presents a full evening program in the Ted Shawn Theatre, directed by Hanay Geiogamah. The company features 18 dancers and musicians from the Dakotas, the Southwest, Canada, and the Great Plains. Tribes represented include Arikara, Assiniboine, Cherokee, Comanche, Cree, Creek, Dakota First Nation, Hidatsa, Jicarilla Apache, Kiowa, Menominee, Navajo, Nez Perce, Pawnee, Potawatomi, Sioux, Southern Ute, Ute, Yakima, and Zuni.

1996 – Erick Hawkins Dance Company presents two works inspired by Indigenous themes: *Heyoka*, which takes its title from the Sioux word for clowns; and *Plains Daybreak*, which is described as “a ceremony that takes place on the great American Plains on one of the days at the beginning of the world.”

1998 – American Indian Dance Theatre returns in a full-evening work by Hanay Geiogamah entitled *Kotuwokan*, encompassing eight traditional dances.

2004 – A Blake’s Barn exhibit on *America’s Irreplaceable Dance Treasures* includes a display and moving images devoted to Native American social and ceremonial dance traditions as well as Hula.

2006 – Two special film screenings of the documentary *Ballets Russes* are presented in the Doris Duke Theatre, featuring Native American ballerina Yvonne Chouteau.

2007 – The School’s Cultural Traditions Program is directed by Neil Ieremia, who instructs participants in many Indigenous forms including Hawaiian hula.

– Video footage of American Indian Dance Theatre (from 1995) and Maria Tallchief is included in a kiosk installation called *Jacob’s Pillow Dance Interactive*, a precursor to the website of the same name.

– Photos of Tom Two Arrows and Maria Tallchief are included in the Pillow’s 75th Anniversary exhibit.

2008 – Honolulu-based Hālau I Ka Wekiu presents six traditional hula dances as well as six modern hula selections based on traditional forms on Inside/Out.

– Part-Navajo ballet star Jock Soto introduces the screening of a documentary film about his career with New York City Ballet, entitled *Water Flowing Together*.

2012 – Honolulu-based Pua Ali’i ‘Ilima presents both traditional and contemporary Hawaiian dances on Inside/Out.

– *American Indian Magazine* publishes “A Great Charge: How Native Dance Changed American Ballet,” an article by James Ring Adams focusing on Ted Shawn’s promotion of Indigenous dance themes in the 1920s.

2017 – Thunderbird American Indian Dancers perform the Fancy Dance and Hoop Dance on Inside/Out, as well as a variety of other regional tribal dances.

– Canada’s Red Sky Performance presents *Miigis* on Inside/Out, exploring the catalysts, trade routes, and stories of a journey from the Atlantic Coast to the Great Lakes.

2018 – Video footage of Pua Ali’i ‘Ilima is added to an online resource, *Jacob’s Pillow Dance Interactive*.

2019 – Canada’s Red Sky Performance makes its official Pillow debut in the Doris Duke Theatre with *Trace*, inspired by Anishinaabe sky and star stories. This engagement is the topic of a cover story in *American Indian Magazine*.

– Original costumes from Shawn’s *Feather of the Dawn* are displayed in Blake’s Barn as part of an exhibit entitled *Dance We Must: Another Look*, which includes commentary by John Haworth, senior executive emeritus and retired director of the National Museum of the American Indian.