



PRESENTS **UMANOOVE/DIDY VELDMAN**
Doris Duke Theatre
July 17-21, 2019

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/
CHOREOGRAPHER Didy Veldman

COSTUME & SET DESIGN Kimie Nakano

LIGHTING DESIGN Ben Ormerod

TECHNICAL MANAGEMENT
& RE-LIGHTER Anthony Arblaster

COMPANY MANAGEMENT Zara Rush

TOUR MANAGEMENT Sarah Trist

MUSICIAN Alexander Balanescu

DANCERS Eryck Brahmania
Estela Merlos
Madeleine Jonsson
Mathieu Geffré

PROGRAM

The Happiness Project (2016)

“I have been curious for many years why we chase after happiness like it is some sort of object we can buy, hold onto, or even re-create.”

—Didy Veldman

CHOREOGRAPHY Didy Veldman

MUSIC COMPOSITION
& PERFORMANCE Alexander Balanescu

COSTUME &
SET DESIGN Kimie Nakano

LIGHTING DESIGN Ben Ormerod

PERFORMERS Eryck Brahmania
Estela Merlos
Madeleine Jonsson
Mathieu Geffré

Funding Credit

umanoove-didy-veldman.org | [@umanoove](https://twitter.com/umanoove)

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We are so glad you are here. Enjoy the show!

COMPANY

DIDY VELDMAN (Artistic Director, Choreographer) is an established choreographer with vast international experience. She danced with Scapino Ballet, Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, and Rambert Dance Company. Veldman left Rambert in 2000 to concentrate on her choreographic career, and has created over 40 works for 25 international companies such as Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, Cedar Lake, Cullberg Ballet, Rambert Dance Company, and many others. In 2019, she will collaborate with Gabriel Prokofiev on a work for Birmingham Royal Ballet. She teaches at The Royal Ballet School, the Prix de Lausanne,

Lausanne, Rambert School, and Chichester University.

ALEXANDER BALANESCU

(Composer, Live Musician) was born in Romania and is a prolific composer as well as one of the most exciting and visionary violinists of our time. As leader of the Balanescu Quartet, he was instrumental in rejuvenating the new music scene in the U.K. by revolutionizing its repertoire and its relationship with the audience. Throughout his career, Balanescu has drawn inspiration from his collaborations with choreographers Pina Bausch and Meryl Tankard, and with theatre directors Matthew

Dunster (for Royal Shakespeare Company) and Pippo Delbono. He refuses to acknowledge divisions between different musical fields, working with such diverse artists as Michael Nyman, Gavin Bryars, David Byrne, Kraftwerk, Pet Shop Boys, Goldfrapp, Depeche Mode, and Grace Jones.

KIMIE NAKANO (Costume Designer)

has designed sets and costume for Didy Veldman's productions for Rambert Dance Company, Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal, The Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, and Luzerner Theatre. She has designed costumes for Akram Khan

COMPANY

Company's *DUST*, *iTMOi*, *Vertical Road*, *Torobaka*, *Gnosis*, *Kaash*, and *The Rashomon Effect*, and art for Sylvie Guillem's *Life in Progress*, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui's *Fall*, and The Royal Ballet of Flanders, English National Ballet, Stadttheater Bremerhaven, Yabin Wang, José Agudo, and Aditi Mangaldas. She has designed sets and costumes for opera, theater, and film; *Tristan und Isolde* for Longborough Opera Festival, Theatre de Sartrouville, Beckett at Theatre National Populaire, and the feature film *Macbeth*.

BEN ORMEROD (Lighting Designer) has previously worked with Veldman on *Three Dancers* (Rambert), *see blue through*, *Tender Hooks* (Ballet Gulbenkian), *Les Noces* (Geneva), and *Askungen* (Gothenburg). Ormerod has worked extensively with The Royal Shakespeare Company, The National Theatre, The Abbey Theatre, English Touring Theatre, and Propeller. His opera and dance credits include productions for Scottish Opera, ENO, Longborough, Buxton, Academia Santa Cecilia Rome, National Dance Company of Wales, Candoco, and Walker Dance Park Music. Recent work includes: *The Libertine*, *Mrs. Henderson Presents* (West End); *Donegal* (Abbey Theatre); and *This Restless House* (Glasgow Citizens). Ormerod is also lighting designer for the Calico Museum of Textiles, Ahmedabad, directed Athol Fugard's *Dimetos* (Gate, London), and adapted four films from Kieslowski's *Dekalog* for E15.

ANTHONY ARBLASTER (Technical Manager & Re-lighter) is a Lighting Designer, Tour Re-lighter, and Lighting Programmer. He trained at the postgraduate Lighting Design Program at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, London. He has lit theater, opera, and dance in Australia and the U.K. Recent Lighting Design credits include *The Woods* (Royal Court, London); *Unbecoming* (Canberra Theatre Centre, Australia); *Shadows of Time* (Marysas Trio, London); and *Town Hall Cherubs* (Battersea Arts Centre, London). Associate Lighting Design credits for theatre include: *Woyzeck*

in *Winter* (Galway International Arts Festival/Barbican); *Mrs. Henderson Presents* (West End/Toronto); *The Libertine*, *In the Next Room* (Bath, UK/West End); *Punishment without Revenge*, *Don Gil of the Green Breeches*, *A Lady of Little Sense* (UK Tour); and *Peep* (Edinburgh Fringe). Arblaster's associate credits for opera include *Der Fliegende Holländer*, *Tristan und Isolde*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (Longborough Festival, UK); and *A Midsummer's Night's Dream* (Trinity Laban, London).

ERYCK BRAHMANIA (Performer) was born in Essex, U.K., and trained at The Royal Ballet School. His dance career has seen him work for numerous companies including Rambert Dance Company, Michael Clark Dance Company, Umanoove, Protein Dance, Company Chameleon, Alexander Whitley Dance, New Movement Collective, Musemotion, and Hong Kong Ballet. He has performed works by Christopher Bruce, Itzik Galili, Richard Alston, Merce Cunningham, Siobhan Davies, Garry Stewart, Mark Baldwin, Andre Gingras, Darshan Singh Buller, Karole Armitage, Paul Taylor, Doug Varone, and many others. Brahmania has also worked on movement development for numerous West End musicals including *Charlie & the Chocolate Factory*, *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, *Groundhog Day*, and *Frozen*. In addition to dancing, Brahmania teaches yoga and Vedic thought, and trained under renowned teacher Claire Missingham. He teaches at numerous studios across London.

MATTHIEU GEFFRÉ (Performer) graduated from the Paris Conservatoire in 2006. Geffré danced in France, Holland, and the United Kingdom as part of companies such as Dansgroep Amsterdam, National Dance Company Wales, and Noord Nederlandse Dans. He has had the opportunity to collaborate with numerous leading choreographers including Itzik Galili, Didy Veldman, Theo Clinkard, Stephen Shropshire, Alexander Ekman, and Angelin Preljocaj, among others. An award-winning choreographer, he has presented his work in Wales, England, Ireland, Germany, Denmark, Spain,

and New York. He recently launched his new artistic project/company, *Rendez-Vous* dance, based in the United Kingdom.

MADELEINE JONSSON

(Performer) trained in ballet and contemporary at a pre-professional program in Gothenburg, Sweden before she started a Bachelors degree at London Contemporary Dance School, where she graduated in 2016. Alongside her training, she has been working in collaboration with international visual artists and choreographers, touring works to Finland as well as to several galleries across London, such as the V&A Museum, White Rainbow, and The Royal Academy. Since graduating, Jonsson has worked with Dane Hurst, Lea Anderson, Juri Nishi, Heidi Vierthaler, and began her collaboration with Didy Veldman in 2017.

ESTELA MERLOS (Performer) was born in Barcelona, and is now an independent dance artist based in London. She collaborates with a wide variety of international artists, dance companies, and institutions as a performer, choreographer, teacher, and rehearsal director. She trained at Escola de Dansa Madó and Central School of Ballet. Before joining Rambert (2008) she danced for companies Cannes Jeune Ballet (2004) and IT Dansa (2006), performing works by acclaimed choreographers such as Jiří Kylián, Christopher Bruce, Carolyn Carlson, Nacho Duato, and Itzik Galili. Since 2014 she has collaborated with Didy Veldman, Shobana Jeyasingh, Marcos Morau, Patricia Okenwa, New Movement Collective, and Avatara Ayuso. Her own choreographic work has been presented in Spain and the U.K., and was appointed Swindon Dance Associate Artist in 2017. Merlos is currently studying to become a Feldenkrais Practitioner at Instituto Feldenkrais Barcelona. More info at estelamerlos.com

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PILLOWNOTES

by Maura Keefe

The PillowNotes series comprises essays commissioned from our Scholars-in-Residence to provide audiences with a broader context for viewing dance.

There's just no accounting for happiness,
or the way it turns up like a prodigal
who comes back to the dust at your feet
having squandered a fortune far away.

—Jane Kenyon

For the first eighty or so years of modern dance history, if you wanted to be a choreographer, you founded a dance company in your own name, trained a group of dancers in your aesthetic, and began to make dances. There was little doubt of the relationship between the choreographer and the company. In the United States, choreographers such as Martha Graham, Paul Taylor, and Mark Morris helped shape generations of both dancers and dance audiences. And then modern dance, or in Europe, contemporary dance, began to embrace the notion of guest choreographers, long established in ballet companies. This was the career path for Dutch-born choreographer Didy Veldman, a highly regarded figure in European contemporary dance.

Veldman had the best possible training to become a choreographer: as a dancer, she worked with master artists such as Jiří Kylián, Mats Ek, and Christopher Bruce. She explained in an interview with *Dance Europe* that she had established a company when she was 26, but she couldn't juggle all of the responsibilities of directing, dancing, and choreographing. Opportunities to make work for other companies allowed her artistic development without management responsibilities. She has since created dances that are clever, ambitious, full-bodied, and darkly humorous, as exemplified in those performed at Jacob's Pillow by Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal and Cedar Lake Contemporary Dance.

While in residence creating a work for the School at Jacob's Pillow in 2010, Veldman recorded an interview for the Pillow Archives. She explained that no matter who the dancers are—whether professional dancers or students—Veldman works to identify distinctions within the ensemble. She said, "I love individuality. I love personality. When I can find that in people and they're willing to share that with me, I get inspired and want to use that. The more differences, the better."

In 2016, in the midst of a successful career as a freelance choreographer, Veldman decided to launch Umanoove/Didy Veldman. As she said in an interview with *Dance Europe*, she wanted to deepen relationships with dancers. "I'm at that stage where I want to develop my own work in a different way; you don't always get a lot of time in repertoire companies to create work and you don't always get the opportunities you'd like," Veldman said. "It's difficult working with new dancers all the time, very hard to be original and push boundaries with them because there's almost no time for that." Umanoove—as Veldman defines it: "Human, move, you, maneuver"—makes its U.S. debut at Jacob's Pillow with *The Happiness Project* (2016).

Veldman began her exploration in Umanoove's first production with two probing questions: what kinds of dancers did she want to work with? And what would a collaboration with composer and violinist Alexander Balanescu grow into? Romanian born Balanescu, who plays live during the performance, has a well-established list of collaborators that includes musicians David Byrne and Gavin Bryars, and choreographers Meryl Tankard and Pina Bausch. Another kind of research question emerged: Why do we all chase after happiness? Veldman, who brilliantly manages large casts of dancers for companies like Rambert Dance, wanted to work on a smaller scale, with just four dancers. With the intimate cast of dancers, Balanescu, and designer Kimie Nakano, Veldman dove into to the potentially overwhelmingly simple and incredibly complex quest for happiness.

An analysis of earlier works by Veldman reveals that she is intrigued by the porous borders between the emotional landscape of dance theater and the abstraction of highly physical, virtuosic, and abstract dancing. In Veldman's hands, it is possible to test the human-ness that contains the capacity for happiness or sadness. Veldman's choreography is also always fed by music. As she puts it herself, "I was always moving to music." Stravinsky and Shostakovich inspire her, as do contemporary composers such as Elena Kats-Chernin, as well as other music ranging from Nina Simone to Offenbach.

In a 1996 *New York Times* review of Rambert Dance Company, dance critic Anna Kisselgoff remarked, "Didy Veldman is riveting as the woman who does not break, no matter how much she is yanked around in the acrobatic choreography." Kisselgoff's words are metaphoric and prescient—Veldman is riveting, and her career path from dancer, to choreographer, to artistic director is an investigation of happiness indeed.

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Dance writer Maura Keefe has led audience programs at various venues around the country and is the Associate Director of Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, where she was named the Dorothy G. Madden Professor of Dance in 2018.