



PRESENTS

***SARA MEARNS:
BEYOND BALLET***

**Doris Duke Theatre
August 14-18, 2019**

CHOREOGRAPHERS

Martha Graham
Liz Gerring
Christopher Williams
Jodi Melnick
Company Wang Ramirez

PERFORMERS

Sara Mearns
Ashley Boudier
Jodi Melnick
Honji Wang

Sara Mearns: Beyond Ballet is supported, in part, by a special contribution from Natalie and Howard Shawn.

PROGRAM

EKSTASIS

CHOREOGRAPHY Martha Graham, reimagined by Virginie Mécène

PERFORMANCE Sara Mearns

MUSIC Original music by Lehman Engel, reimagined by Ramon Humet*

"The body is a sacred garment."
- Martha Graham

The Martha Graham Dance Company is delighted to have Sara Mearns dance this special solo as part of her program at Jacob's Pillow.

Premiere, May 4, 1933 – Guild Theatre, New York City
Ekstasis (reimagined) Premiere, February 14, 2017 – The Joyce Theater, New York City

*"Interludi meditativu VII" from *Homenaje a Martha Graham*,
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DUET

CHOREOGRAPHY Liz Gerring

MUSIC Michael J. Schumacher

LIGHTING DESIGN Mike Faba (Based on the original design by Jimmy Lawlor)

REHEARSAL
DIRECTORS Claire Westby
Brandon Collwes

COSTUME DESIGN Carbon 38

PERFORMANCE Ashley Boudier
Sara Mearns

Premiere, March 17, 2017 – Peter Norton Symphony Space, New York City

Jacob's Pillow is committed to providing an inclusive environment that cultivates the celebration of the art of dance and its positive impact on communities.

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If you have any suggestions, comments, or incidents to report,
please direct them to Deputy Director A.J. Pietrantone at apietrantone@jacobspillow.org.

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Silence cell phones • Photography & recording are prohibited • Other than water, food & beverages are prohibited • Keep your ticket with you at all times • Let a staff member know if you need help

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

DAPHNIS & CHLOÉ (excerpt)

CHOREOGRAPHY Christopher Williams

CHLOÉ
(A SHEPHERDESS) Sara Mearns

MUSIC Excerpt from the ballet *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) by Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)

COSTUME DESIGN Reid Bartelme and Harriet Jung

LIGHTING DESIGN Mike Faba (Based on the original design by Serena Wong)

- INTERMISSION -

OPULENCE INTO PART 2 (World Premiere)

CHOREOGRAPHY Jodi Melnick

PERFORMANCE Sara Mearns
Jodi Melnick

SOUND DESIGN Tei Blow
Drums by Kid Millions
Guitar by Zach Lehrhoff

LIGHTING DESIGN Mike Faba

COSTUME DESIGN Kaye Voyce with J.E.M

Jacob's Pillow staff members and interns are featured: Akinyemi Blackshear, Sienna Jessurun, Lydia Murray, Annie Peterson, Madalyn Rupprecht, and Izzi Wayner.

Commissioned by Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival 2019.

NO. 1

No. 1 begins with a film realized by Laurent Daufès and Sébastien Ramirez with support from BNP Paribas Foundation. Set to "SHUFFLE" by LACRYMOBOY, featuring Jonathan Soucasse.

CHOREOGRAPHY Company Wang Ramirez

PERFORMANCE Sara Mearns
Honji Wang

LIGHTING DESIGN Mike Faba

EXECUTIVE
PRODUCTION Company Wang Ramirez, Clash66

COSTUME DESIGN Honji Wang

Premiere, 2017.

Co-commissioned and developed in part in a residency at Jacob's Pillow, with additional development support from Fall for Dance (New York City Center) and Fall for Dance North (Toronto).

BIOS

SARA MEARNS (Performer) is originally from Columbia, South Carolina, and has been dancing since the age of three. Mearns entered the School of American Ballet in the Fall of 2001 and became an apprentice with New York City Ballet in the Fall of 2003. She joined the corps de ballet in June 2004, was promoted to soloist in 2006, and to principal dancer in 2008. Mearns is known for her roles as the Swan Queen in *Swan Lake* and for Balanchine ballets including *Jewels* (Diamonds) and *Symphony in C*, among countless others. She has originated roles in ballets by choreographers including Justin Peck, Kyle Abraham, Alexei Ratmansky, and Christopher Wheeldon, to name a few, and has appeared as a guest artist with the Paul Taylor Dance Company with *Dances of Isadora* (Isadora Duncan Dance Foundation), The Martha Graham Company (2019 Gala in *Ekstasis*), The Ashley Boudier Project (*Duet* by Liz Gerring), and Company Wang Ramirez (*No. 1*). Mearns appeared in *New Bodies*, a collaboration with Jodi Melnick, at the Spoleto Festival in South Carolina and at the Guggenheim Museum in New York. At New York City Center, she has appeared in the Fall for Dance Festival (2013, 2014, 2017, 2018), where she most recently performed the piece *Dances of Isadora Duncan – A Solo Tribute*, and the 2018 Balanchine Festival. Mearns was a guest artist alternating the role of Victoria Page in the U.S. premiere of Matthew Bourne's *The Red Shoes*. She recently collaborated with Pam Tanowitz Dance in *Time is forever dividing itself toward innumerable futures*, a world premiere performed outside at the 2019 River to River Festival in New York. She is a Benois de la Danse and Princess Grace Award nominee and winner of the 2018 "Bessie" Award for Outstanding Performer. This past May, Mearns received an

Honorary Doctorate of Fine Arts from the University of South Carolina. Mearns made her musical theatre debut as the Angel in New York City Center Encores! *I Married an Angel* in March 2019, directed and choreographed by her husband, Joshua Bergasse. In April 2019, Mearns was a performer in the *Night of 100 Solos: A Centennial Event* in New York City, celebrating what would have been Merce Cunningham's 100th birthday. This coming fall Mearns will premiere in a new commissioned piece by Kim Brandstrup at the Fall for Dance Festival at New York City Center.

ASHLEY BOUDER (Performer) was born in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and began her ballet training at the age of six at the Central Pennsylvania Youth Ballet with Marcia Dale Weary. After attending the 1999 Summer Program at the School of American Ballet (SAB), the official school of New York City Ballet, she was invited by SAB to continue her training during the Winter Session. Boudier was named an apprentice with New York City Ballet in June 2000 and became a member of the corps de ballet that October. She was promoted to the rank of soloist in February 2004, and in January 2005 Boudier was promoted to principal dancer. Boudier has danced in ballet galas around the world and guest starred in companies including the Paris Opera Ballet, Rome Opera Ballet, Bayerisches Staatsballett, and the Mariinsky Ballet. She has been awarded the Mae L. Wien Award for Outstanding Promise at the School of American Ballet as a student. As a professional her awards include the Janice Levin Honoree from the New York City Ballet, the Miss Dance Expressivity for 2011, the Miss Virtuosity for 2013 from the Open Gala, and the 2019 Benois de la Danse. Beginning her teaching training in her teens at the Central Pennsylvania

Youth Ballet (CPYB), Boudier has taught at the summer programs of the School of American Ballet (SAB), Saratoga Summer Dance Intensive (SSDI), Manhattan Youth Ballet (MYB), Carolina Ballet School, and the CPYB. She continues to be a frequent guest teacher at Ballet Academy East, MYB, and SAB while guest teaching and holding master classes around the country, including the Boston Ballet School and Princeton University. As an Artistic Director and choreographer using the arts collaborative she founded, The Ashley Boudier Project (ABP), Boudier hopes to promote other female choreographers, while also setting an example for women to be more forward and prominent in the creation and directorial sides of the arts world. Her previous work has been presented at the School of American Ballet Choreographic Workshop, the New York City Ballet in the Dancer's Choice Program, the Ashley Boudier Project at New York's Peter Norton Symphony Space, Bryant Park Presents, and The Joyce Theater. In her second residency at the Vineyard Arts Project this summer, she held the first ABP choreographic workshop to help young choreographers hone their skills.

JODI MELNICK (Choreographer & Performer) is a NYC-based choreographer, dancer, and teacher. Melnick designs intricate movement to explore the exquisite nature and dynamic relationships between human beings. She uses the profound expression of the dancing body and lucid performing instincts to drive the creative process. The work is transformed through the phenomenon of dancing. Her work has been presented both nationally and internationally. Melnick's critically acclaimed *New Bodies 2016/18*, made on NYC Ballet principal dancers Sara Mearns, Jared Angle, Gretchen

Smith, and Taylor Stanley, originated at Jacob's Pillow and went on to be performed at the Guggenheim Museum in NYC, and the Spoleto Festival in S.C. Her work has been presented at BAM Fisher as part of the Next Wave Festival; City Center's Fall for Dance; The Joyce Theater; New York Live Arts (NYLA); The Kitchen; La MaMa; Jacob's Pillow; American Dance Festival; The Yard; Vail International Dance Festival, commissioned by Damian Woetzel and Yo Yo Ma; Barnard College; Sarah Lawrence College; George Washington University; DanceBox in Kansai, Japan; the opening of the Dublin Dance Festival; Belfast, Ireland; St. Petersburg and Moscow, Russia; and Tallinn, Estonia. In 2012, Melnick had the esteemed privilege of collaborating with Trisha Brown and performing the solo *One of Sixty-five Thousand Gestures*. Melnick's rich history of working with a vast array of significant artists includes dancing in Twyla Tharp Dance (1990-94, 2009); with Mikhail Baryshnikov (2005-08); and continued creative experiences with Sara Rudner, David Neumann, Yoshiko Chuma, John Jasperse, Vicky Shick, Beth Gill, Elena Demyanenko, Rashaun Mitchell, Jon Kinzel, Paul Kaiser, Liz Roche, Charles Atlas, David Michalek, Yvonne Rainer, and Sibyl Kempson. Melnick is honored with a Doris Duke Impact Award (2014), a Guggenheim Fellow (2012), a Jerome Robbins New Essential Works Grant (2010-11), a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grant (2011), two "Bessie" Awards for sustained achievement in dance (2001 and 2008), a Gibney DIP Residency Grantee, and a two-year extended Life grant awarded from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Center (LMCC). Melnick is a 2019 Center for Ballet Arts residency fellow. Melnick teaches master classes, technique, improvisation, and composition workshops

throughout the U.S., Europe, Australia, and Asia. Currently, she is an adjunct professor of dance at Barnard College at Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College (undergraduate and graduate), and Trevor Day School (middle and high school).

HONJI WANG (Choreographer & Performer) is a German Korean choreographer and performer, recognized as an artist who brings contemporary and hip-hop together in an exceptionally organic fashion. Her dance language is an abstraction of hip-hop and has influences of earlier martial arts and ballet training. Wang's first collaboration with Sébastien Ramirez, a duet titled *AP15*, was in 2010. Soon after, she became Co-Artistic Director of Company Wang Ramirez and ever since the duo has been creating larger scale works that have established them in the contemporary dance scene. Wang was selected in Madonna's final auditions and earned an invitation to tour and perform in the *Rebel Heart Tour*. Wang has also collaborated with flamenco dancer Rocío Molina, with British choreographer Akram Khan, as well as with New York City Ballet principal dancer Sara Mearns in a series of duets. In 2014, Wang was appointed Associate Artist at L'Archipel, National Theater of Perpignan and in 2018 at Théâtre de la Ville in Paris.

LIZ GERRING (Choreographer) was born in San Francisco in 1965 and grew up in Los Angeles where she began studying dance at age 13. Gerring studied at the Cornish Institute in Seattle and in 1987, received a B.F.A. from The Juilliard School. Gerring formed the Liz Gerring Dance Company in 1998 and has been presenting her work in New York City and abroad continuously since that time. Gerring was awarded the Jacob's Pillow

Dance Award in June 2015 and a Joyce Theater Residency the same year. Between 2013-18 she was commissioned for three works in collaboration with composer Michael J. Schumacher for Peak Performances at the Kasser Theater in Montclair, NJ. In 2017-18 she was awarded a City Center Choreographic Fellowship, and in 2019 was one of five artists to receive the Cage Cunningham Fellowship from the Baryshnikov Arts Center. Gerring is currently working on a project for the ICA in Boston with composer John Luther Adams. She lives in New York City and upstate NY with her husband Kirk Radke, her three children, two dogs, and a cat.

MARTHA GRAHAM

(Choreographer) has had a deep and lasting impact on American art and culture. She single-handedly defined contemporary dance as a uniquely American art form, which the nation has in turn shared with the world. Crossing artistic boundaries, she collaborated with and commissioned work from the leading visual artists, musicians, and designers of her day, including sculptor Isamu Noguchi and composers Aaron Copland, Samuel Barber, and Gian Carlo Menotti. Graham's groundbreaking style grew from her experimentation with the elemental movements of contraction and release. By focusing on the basic activities of the human form, she enlivened the body with raw, electric emotion. The sharp, angular, and direct movements of her technique were a dramatic departure from the predominant style of the time. Graham influenced generations of choreographers that included Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, and Twyla Tharp, altering the scope of dance. Classical ballet dancers Margot Fonteyn, Rudolf Nureyev, and Mikhail Baryshnikov sought her out to

broaden their artistry. Artists of all genres were eager to study and work with Graham—she taught actors including Bette Davis, Kirk Douglas, Madonna, Liza Minnelli, Gregory Peck, Tony Randall, Eli Wallach, Anne Jackson, and Joanne Woodward to utilize their bodies as expressive instruments. During her long and illustrious career, Graham created 181 dance compositions. During the Bicentennial she was granted the United States' highest civilian honor, The Medal of Freedom. In 1998, *TIME Magazine* named her the "Dancer of the Century." The first dancer to perform at the White House and to act as a cultural ambassador abroad, she captured the spirit of a nation. "No artist is ahead of his time," she said. "He is his time. It is just that the others are behind the time."

SÉBASTIEN RAMIREZ

(Choreographer) was born in the south of France, has a Spanish background, and specializes in the use of aerial work as well as choreographic rigging development. The underground scene, followed by a number of competitions, collaborations, and encounters consolidated his artistic vision. In 2007, he founded his company in Perpignan. Integrating a new vision of space and choreography, the company's distinct language brought hip-hop dance to a wider and new audience. Sharing the Company's Artistic Direction with Honji Wang, the pair has produced more than nine choreographic pieces that blend hip-hop with other styles and has collected several awards, including the Special Prize at the International Choreography Competition in Osaka (2009), the 1st and Special Audience Award at the No Ballet Contemporary Dance Competition in Ludwigshafen (2012), the 1st and Special

Audience Award at the International Contemporary Dance Competition in Hannover (2012), a New York Bessie Award for Outstanding Performer (2013), and a Bessie Award Nomination for Outstanding Production (2017). His first commissioned work was as one of the choreographers of *RIOT OffSpring*, a 2013 Sadler's Wells production. Ramirez contributed to the creation phase of Madonna's *Rebel Heart* tour and choreographed for her live show. He also conducted a personal training on floorwork movement for the creation of Akram Khan's solo *DESH*. Ramirez was appointed Associate Artist at L'Archipel, National Theater of Perpignan in 2014 and at Théâtre de la Ville in Paris in 2018.

COMPANY WANG RAMIREZ

produces dance-theater pieces that splice together genres as divergent as hip-hop, ballet, contemporary dance, and martial arts, under the direction of internationally renowned choreographers Honji Wang and Sébastien Ramirez. Company Wang Ramirez The company's unique choreographic language—with means of expression built on technical virtuosity, poetry, and humor—has been recognized with numerous awards such as two New York "Bessie" Award recognitions and the 1st and Special Audience Award at the International Contemporary Dance Competition in Hannover. Wang & Ramirez have earned invitations to collaborate with big-name artists from the dance, plastic arts, film, and music worlds, including Madonna, Nitin Sawhney, Akram Khan, Rocío Molina, New York City Ballet principal dancer Sara Mearns, Constance Guisset, Osgemeos, Andy Serkis, and Hussein Chalayan, among others. In 2016, Wang and Ramirez were commissioned by Sadler's Wells to direct and perform a hybrid piece of

dance-musical theatre made to Nitin Sawhney's album *Dystopian Dream*. The duo's latest commission will see them appear alongside choreographer, acrobat, and dancer Yoann Bourgeois in a program named *Beyond*, performed by the GöteborgsOperans Danskompani. Company Wang Ramirez has produced more than nine highly-demanded and critically-acclaimed works including *Monchichi* (2010), *Borderline* (2013), *EVERYNESS* (2016), *No.1* (2017), and *W.A.M.* (2018). The Company tours in numerous cities around Europe, Asia, America, and beyond.

CHRISTOPHER WILLIAMS

(Choreographer), hailed as "one of the most exciting choreographic voices out there" (*The New York Times*), is a New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award-winning choreographer, dancer, and puppet artist who has created over 30 original and collaborative works in New York City and abroad since 1999. In addition to touring internationally in France, England, Italy, Spain, Holland, Colombia, Russia, and Malawi, as well as nationally in Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Kalamazoo, Princeton, Carlisle, and Interlochen, his works have been presented in many New York City venues including Lincoln Center, City Center, Danspace Project, Dance Theater Workshop, HERE Arts Center, the 92nd Street Y, and Judson Church. His recent commissioners include New York Live Arts, Opéra Royal du Château de Versailles/Opéra National de Bordeaux, English National Opera, Teatro Real/Perm Opéra & Ballet Theater, Danspace Project, Philadelphia Dance Projects, American Opera Projects, Reid & Harriet Design, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, The Blanket, and HERE Arts Center's Dream Music Puppetry Program. Williams

has received fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, The Foundation for Contemporary Arts, the Center for Ballet and the Arts, and the Bogliasco Foundation for multiple residencies at the Liguria Study Center for Arts & Humanities in Bogliasco, Italy. Williams has also held creative residencies at Robert Wilson's Watermill Center, Captiva Island via the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation, the Anderson Center, the White Oak Plantation, Kaatsbaan, Yaddo, and The Yard. Since graduating from Sarah Lawrence College and the École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris, he has danced for Douglas Dunn, Rebecca Lazier, Tere O'Connor, Yoshiko Chuma, John Kelly, Sally Silvers, and Mina Nishimura, among others, and as a puppeteer, has worked with the award-winning master puppeteer Basil Twist and Dan Hurlin.

REID & HARRIET DESIGNS

(Costume Design) was founded in 2011 by Harriet Jung and Reid Bartelme. Prior to meeting at the Fashion Institute of Technology, Reid spent 10 years working as a dancer and Harriet studied visual arts and completed a degree in Molecular and Cell Biology at UC Berkeley. Their choreographer clients include Justin Peck, Pam Tanowitz, Jack Ferver, Trey McIntyre, Matthew Neenan, Robert Binet, Lar Lubovitch, Kyle Abraham, Gwen Welliver, and Burr Johnson, among others. They have designed productions at companies domestically and internationally, including New York City Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, American Ballet Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Malpas Dance Company, Miami City Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Ballet Austin, and Semper Oper Dresden. They recently designed the costumes for all three venues of *Night of*

100 Solos: A Centennial Event in celebration of Merce Cunningham's 100th birthday. They have produced their own costume-centric dance performances at both the Guggenheim and the Museum of Art and Design in New York City. Reid and Harriet aim to expand the notions of costume in dance performance and evolve traditional ideas on collaboration.

TEI BLOW (Sound Design) makes work that combines live performance, video, and sound with found media. It has been featured at Hartford Stage, Dance Theater Workshop, Lincoln Center Festival, The Kitchen, BAM, The Public Theater, The Broad Stage, MCA Chicago, MFA Boston, Kate Werble Gallery, Baryshnikov Arts Center, The Wadsworth Atheneum, and at theaters around the world. He has performed and designed for Dmitry Krymov Laboratory, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Big Dance Theater, and David Neumann/Advanced Beginner Group. He received a 2015 New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" Award for Outstanding Sound Design, a 2016 Creative Capital Award, a 2016 NYSCA Individual Artist Grant, and a 2018 Cage Cunningham Fellowship from Baryshnikov Arts Center. He is a founding member of Royal Osiris Karaoke Ensemble, a musical priesthood exploring contemporary mythologies of love and connection.

MIKE FABA (Lighting Design) is a Lighting Designer and Supervisor for theatre and dance. Recent design credits include *No. 1* (Company Wang Ramirez & Sara Mearns) at New York City Center and Jacob's Pillow; *Wednesday Morning, 11:45* (Pilobolus) at *Marksman* (Kate Weare) at The Joyce; and *Unstruck* (Kate Weare) at BAM Fisher. Faba spent two summers as the Lighting Supervisor for Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

Other Lighting Supervisor credits include Mark Morris Dance Group, Paul Taylor American Modern Dance, Company Wang Ramirez, Pilobolus, Martha Clarke's *Angel Reapers*, and Radiolab Live: In The Dark.

MICHAEL J. SCHUMACHER

(Composer) has collaborated with Liz Gerring since they were both students in the 1980s. His specific interests are in the areas of electronic music, improvisation, algorithmic composition, and spatialized sound. His works have been presented in galleries, museums, and concert halls, as well as in public and private spaces. His most recent project is the Portable Multi-channel Sound System, a 12-channel sound system that fits in a suitcase. Schumacher's interest in the relationship of musical form and architecture led to the founding of Diapason, a gallery devoted to the presentation of multi-channel sound installations, long-duration performances, and intermedia artworks. In its 15 years of existence, Diapason has presented over 300 artists at a time when sound art was emerging as a distinct practice in the United States. Schumacher studied music composition with Stanley Applebaum, Bernhard Heiden, John Eaton, and Vincent Persichetti and piano with Seymour Bernstein, John Ogdon, and Shigeo Neriki. Schumacher has degrees from Indiana University and Juilliard. He has received awards and residencies from NYFA, Harvestworks, RPI, DAAD, and others.

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PILLOWNOTES

by Brian Schaefer

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

Just over four years ago, Sara Mearns found herself in an unlikely place. Usually, as a star principal dancer with New York City Ballet, she calls Lincoln Center home and is often centerstage in the vast Koch Theater, in pointe shoes, performing something sleek and tricky by Balanchine. But that spring, she was downtown in the East Village, in the intimate and historic St. Mark's Church, in basic ballet slippers, improvising.

The occasion was the annual Platform series, a deep-dive into a different cerebral theme, produced by the venerable contemporary dance organization, Danspace Project. Claudia LaRocco, a former dance critic for *The New York Times*, was the curator in 2015 and decided it was high time that ballerinas and postmodern choreographers got to know each other a bit better. She invited Mearns and Mearns's City Ballet colleague, Ashley Boudier, to pair up with Rashaun Mitchell, an alumnus of the Merce Cunningham company, and Jodi Melnick, an acclaimed dance maker in the so-called "downtown" dance scene. For Mearns, the collaboration was a revelation.

"It was my first experience not doing ballet," she recalls. "It opened my eyes and gave me the itch to do other things." For an artist of Mearns's stature, that's a serious itch. In 2004, she joined City Ballet's corps; only four years later, she was promoted to principal and has been an audience favorite ever since owing to her intoxicating mix of regal grandeur and raw attack. In that time, she has only known ballet and only balletomanes have known her.

But even at the top of her game, a ballerina can feel pigeonholed. "I was never chosen to be in the avant-garde pieces," she says of her casting at City Ballet. "I was thought of as a Balanchine ballerina." That's not a bad thing to be, of course. But to be labeled a certain type of dancer can inhibit growth and risk. And after her taste of experimentation with Melnick, Mearns wanted more. So, she went after it. "I took it upon myself to get out of that bubble," she says.

She courted Melnick, aggressively, but Melnick was wary of choreographing a ballet and she demurred. Mearns was persistent, however, and eventually they agreed to step into a studio without any expectations of producing something. "This wasn't for an external reason," Mearns told *The New York Times* of the process. "It was an opportunity to see what else my body could do." And that's when Jacob's Pillow stepped in to help make it happen.

In the fall of 2015, Mearns and Melnick (and two other City Ballet dancers, Jared Angle and Gretchen Smith) arrived here for a residency with the simple intention of exploring movement. Though creating a dance to perform wasn't the goal, the two ended up showing their work at the Guggenheim the following year. When Mearns was invited to be part of the Pillow season this summer, she knew she wanted to again work with Melnick—the one who had first opened the doors to dance beyond ballet—and so a brand-new Pillow-commissioned work is on the program.

And the rest of the current Pillow program is a reminder of the myriad of experiences that followed her initial explorations with Melnick. In just a few years, she has performed the work of the modern dance pioneers Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and Merce Cunningham, as well as that of young contemporary hip-hop artists. The latter are Honji Wang and Sébastien Ramirez, who made their much-loved Pillow debut in 2015. The following year, they danced at the popular Fall for Dance Festival in New York City, where Mearns also performed. Mearns was blown away by their strength, agility, and unique style. She went up to them afterward. "I know this is crazy, but I want to work with you," she told them. "I'm not going to do the hip-hop, but I want to collaborate."

Once again, the Pillow showed up to support the project. "Pam made it happen," Mearns says, referring to the Pillow's artistic director, Pamela Tatge. "All of a sudden we were there in the studio." And then all of a sudden, they were at Jacob's Pillow's 85th Anniversary Gala, performing the results of their exploration. And now that short work, *No. 1*, is part of Mearns's eclectic program, a product of the Pillow's investment in the curiosity of artists.

Also on the program, representing Mearns's recent endeavors into the repertory of the modern dance masters, is *Ekstasis*, an early solo created and originally performed by Martha Graham in 1933. "I never expected to do Graham ever," she says. Learning it was a revelation. "She understood the woman's body and how to showcase it and how to empower a woman on stage and in life." With the Graham company performing next door at the Ted Shawn Theatre this week, Mearns found it a fitting tribute—"the cherry on top for me."

Rounding out the program are works by Liz Gerring and Christopher Williams that were made for her, each of which allows Mearns to tap into another new corner of her artistry and physical capabilities. Which is not to say that she's straying from her first love. Come fall, she'll once again be centerstage at Lincoln Center with City Ballet.

But something will be different. The artistic adventure she has embarked on over the last few years has left its mark. "Everything I do outside of ballet informs my ballet performing," she says. She points to something Melnick taught her, about having confidence in the power of your own presence. "When you walk on stage you don't have to be bigger than you are," Mearns says. "Who you are is enough."

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Brian Schaefer is a New York-based journalist who writes about dance, culture, and politics for a number of publications, including The New York Times.