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**RONALD K. BROWN RECEIVES THE 2020 JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE AWARD  
BROWN IS HONORED AT DANCE WE MUST: A VIRTUAL EVENT  
SUPPORTING JACOB'S PILLOW, ON JUNE 20TH AT 7PM**

June 17, 2020 (Becket, MA)—Jacob's Pillow announces Ronald K. Brown as the recipient of the 2020 [Jacob's Pillow Dance Award](#). A master choreographer and visionary storyteller, Brown's distinct blend of West African, Caribbean, and contemporary genres is embedded with an unmatched sense of musicality, spiritual traditions, and humanity. An advocate for the growth of the African American dance community for over thirty years, Brown creates works that show audiences "the evidence of themselves and the evidence of our human condition," and tells stories of human struggles, tragedies, and triumphs. Brown will be honored at [Dance We Must: A Virtual Event Supporting Jacob's Pillow](#), streamed free online on June 20th, at 7pm Eastern.

"I'm honored beyond measure for this recognition from Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. I still remember all of the times Evidence has premiered works at the Pillow especially our first, *Dirt Road* in 1994 and most recently *New Conversations: Iron Meets Water* in 2018. I often tell students and mentees to 'work for the sake of the work, and not for the sake of the goal', and to find gratitude in every opportunity to share your purpose," says Ronald K. Brown.

"At the start of the year, I thought deeply about who should receive this award and it was such an honor to call Ron in January and give him the news. Ron is an artist of great power who is being recognized for his vision and a signature vocabulary that is deeply grounded and visceral while also highly spiritual and transcendent. In all of his works, Ron is there: a radiant human being who is deeply dedicated to dance as a means of transformation and action. I couldn't be more excited that he will be receiving this award," says Jacob's Pillow Executive and Artistic Director Pamela Tatge.

Brown was nineteen when he created a solo called *Evidence*, a work which embodied the philosophical basis of his choreography and company. Founded in 1985 and based in Brooklyn, Evidence, A Dance Company focuses on the seamless integration of traditional African dance with contemporary choreography and spoken word. Brown uses movement as a way to reinforce the community in African American culture and to acquaint audiences with the beauty of traditional African forms and rhythms. Evidence has traveled to Cuba, Brazil, England, France, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Mexico, Senegal, Nigeria, South Africa, and Canada to perform, teach master classes, and conduct lecture/demonstrations for individuals of all ages, reaching an audience of over 25,000 people annually.

Today, Brown is one of the most sought-after choreographers, and has created over 100 works for his own dance company Evidence, in addition to companies like Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, PHILADANCO, and Ballet Hispánico, among others. The subject of his work varies from the depiction of a Goddess' journey to Earth to spread grace among humans (*Grace*, 1985; and a call to fight for peace inspired by music and sociopolitical legacies of artist/activists Nina Simone and Fela Kuti (*Come Ye*, 2002); to a soulful, uplifting dance set to Afro-Cuban jazz music by GRAMMY-Award winning Arturo O'Farrill (*New Conversations: Iron Meets Water*, 2018).

Notable dance artists that have performed with Brown's company include Camile A. Brown, Shani Nwando Ikerioha Collins, Evidence's current Rehearsal Director Annique Roberts, current Assistant Rehearsal Director Keon Thoulouis, and current Associate Artistic Director Arcel Cabaug.

Esteemed dance critic Eva Yaa Asantewaa describes Brown's work, "To me, Brown's oeuvre forms a seamless fabric... less a collection of discrete works than a consistent philosophy in motion, set to music. It's evidence." Gia Kourlas, Dance Critic of *The New York Times*, lauds Brown's legacy, "Through [Brown's] dances, he speaks to the spirit of Ailey, and for nearly 20 years now he has enriched Ailey's company with unaffected, soulful choreography that gives its dancers dimension and depth." Jacqueline Green, dancer with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater praises "His movement just feels good...it's like breathing, a little."

Ronald K. Brown will be honored at [Dance We Must: A Virtual Event Supporting Jacob's Pillow](#), streamed online for free on Saturday, June 20th at 7pm Eastern, where an excerpt from his work *Come Ye*, performed at Jacob's Pillow in 2018 will be presented. Audiences are invited to celebrate Brown virtually at a Post-Show Dance Party immediately following Dance We Must. *RSVP required, event details can be found below.*

### **JACOB'S PILLOW CONNECTIONS**

Ronald K. Brown/EVIDENCE first performed at Jacob's Pillow in 1994 in the Doris Duke Theatre, and participated in a community-wide residency in 1998-99. Over the past 25 years, EVIDENCE has performed at Jacob's Pillow on numerous occasions, including a special appearance at the 1997 Gala where Brown recreated an iconic Asadata Dafora solo, and a tribute performance for Katherine Dunham in 2002. Evidence has returned for performances in 1999, 2000, 2002, and 2005 and most recently, in 2018, where the program included *New Conversations*, a work developed in part through a residency at Jacob's Pillow. Other world premieres presented at the Pillow include *Water* in 1999, *High Life* in 2000, *Walking Out the Dark, Part II* in 2002, and *Blueprint of a Lady: The Once and Future Life of Billie Holiday* in 2005.

#### **Related video on Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive:**

Ronald K. Brown in *Awassa Astrige (Ostrich)* from 1997:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/ronald-k-brown/awassa-astrige-ostrich/>

Ronald K. Brown in *In Gratitude a tribute to Katherine Dunham* from 2002:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/ronald-k-brown/in-gratitude-a-tribute-to-katherine-dunham/>

Ronald K. Brown/Evidence in *New Conversations* from 2018:

[danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/ronald-k-brownevidence/new-conversations/](https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/ronald-k-brownevidence/new-conversations/)

### **ABOUT THE JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE AWARD**

The Jacob's Pillow Dance Award was created in 2007 by an anonymous donor whose commitment to an ongoing annual gift to Jacob's Pillow of \$50,000 is generous and far-reaching. The Award, presented each year to an artist of exceptional vision and achievement, carries a cash prize of \$25,000 which the artist can use in any way they wish. Past honorees include Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Faye Driscoll, Liz Lerman, Camille A. Brown, Kyle Abraham, and Michelle Dorrance.

The remaining \$25,000 supports the Pillow's commitment to the research and development of new work in the recently launched Pillow Lab. Year-round residencies at the Pillow Lab offer free housing, unlimited use of studio space, and access to the Pillow's rare and extensive Archives and resources, in the beautiful retreat-like atmosphere in Western Massachusetts. In commemoration, the honoree also receives a custom-designed glass award sculpture by Berkshire-based artist Tom Patti, whose work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum and other major arts institutions around the world.

## **ABOUT RONALD K. BROWN**

Brown founded Evidence, A Dance Company in 1985. He has worked with Mary Anthony Dance Theater, Jennifer Muller/The Works and other choreographers and artists. Brown has set works on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, Cleo Parker Robinson Ensemble, Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Jennifer Muller/The Works, Jeune Ballet d'Afrique Noire, Ko-Thi Dance Company, PHILADANCO, Muntu Dance Theater of Chicago, and Ballet Hispánico. He has collaborated with such artists as composer/designer Omotayo Wunmi Olaiya, the late writer Craig G. Harris, director Ernie McClintock's Jazz Actors Theater, choreographers Patricia Hoffbauer and Rokiya Kone, and composers Robert Ee, Oliver Lake, Bernadette Speech, David Simons, and Don Meissner

He choreographed Regina Taylor's award-winning play, *Crowns* and won an AUDELCO Award for his work on that production. Brown has won a Fred & Adele Astaire Award for Outstanding Choreography in the Tony Award winning *The Gershwin's Porgy & Bess*, adapted by Suzan Lori Parks, arrangement by Diedre Murray and directed by Diane Paulus. In addition, Brown was named Def Dance Jam Workshop Mentor of the Year in 2000 and has received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowship, National Endowment for the Arts Choreographers Fellowship, New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, United States Artists Fellowship, and The Ailey Apex Award for teaching. Brown is a member of Stage Directors & Choreographers Society.

## **EVENT DETAILS**

### **Dance We Must: A Virtual Event Supporting Jacob's Pillow**

Saturday, June 20th at 7pmEDT

FREE and open to all; Online registration required.

RSVP at [jacobspillow.org/events/dance-we-must/](https://jacobspillow.org/events/dance-we-must/) to receive event details and to be kept up to date on the evening's program

### **Post-Show Dance Party**

Saturday, June 20th at approx. 8:30pmEDT

Hosted by Christal Brown, featuring DJ DP One

FREE and open to all; hosted on Zoom.

RSVP at [jacobspillow.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_mmfpSWrGT-mJaf68aRda5A](https://jacobspillow.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mmfpSWrGT-mJaf68aRda5A)

## **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, Musical Theatre Dance, Photography, Choreography, and an annual rotating program (Street & Club Dances in 2020). 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](https://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](https://www.jacobspillow.org).

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