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## **JACOB'S PILLOW EXPANDS CURATORIAL TEAM**

### **Melanie George & Ali Rosa-Salas Join Jacob's Pillow as Associate Curators**

September 22, 2020 (Becket, MA)—Jacob's Pillow announces an expansion to its curatorial team with newly established positions, naming Melanie George and Ali Rosa-Salas Associate Curators. This role is designed to broaden the pool of dance artists the Pillow regularly supports, strengthen the Pillow's ability to identify new voices in the field, and increase the perspectives involved in programmatic decision-making at the organization. The scope of this position has been in development since the Fall of 2019 and will begin immediately.

"I am delighted to deepen my relationship with the organization. I look forward to working with this curatorial team on a season that reflects and responds to the needs and goals of 21st century dancemaking," says Melanie George.

"I am honored to be part of the Jacob's Pillow curatorial team. I look forward to the 2021 Festival reflecting the prismatic approaches artists are taking in response to the political and social movements of our time," says Ali Rosa-Salas.

"Melanie and Ali are deeply respected experts in the field. I can't wait to work alongside them as they bring their experiences as curators, producers, educators, and dramaturgs to benefit Jacob's Pillow," says Jacob's Pillow Executive & Artistic Director Pamela Tatge.

In the new curatorial positions, George and Rosa-Salas will work closely with Jacob's Pillow Executive & Artistic Director Pamela Tatge and Producing Director Ariana Massery to identify, research and engage with a wide breadth of local, national, and international dance artists, review and contemplate programming choices, and discuss curatorial approaches to their presentation. The positions will deeply understand and leverage 88 years of the Pillow's history of presenting diverse dance genres from around the world as it spearheads new programming for the organization.

Their role will be focused on curating [the Pillow Lab](#) artist residency program, which awards 8-10 customizable developmental, research, and technical residencies to artists throughout the months of September to May (this year including COVID-19 safety protocols); [Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival](#), which annually presents over 50 artists from around the world; as well as new virtual opportunities, including upcoming commissions aligned with the expansion of the Pillow's growing online presenting arm, [Virtual Pillow](#). The appointment, as currently stands, is through February 2021. The role will be revisited on an annual basis.

Jacob's Pillow has been one of the nation's leading presenters of dance for over 88 years. This step in broadening its curatorial scope directly aligns with the organization's anti-racist commitment made in response to the murder of George Floyd in June. In a public commitment that confronted the reality of racism and pledged to expand previous efforts to confront implicit biases, the Pillow identified a need to convene and compensate a group of Black and Brown artists and cultural practitioners to assess the Pillow's curatorial,

education, preservation, and community engagement programs in terms of racial equity. This appointment marks one step towards this multifaceted goal.

### **ABOUT MELANIE GEORGE**

Melanie George is an educator, dramaturg, choreographer, scholar, and certified movement analyst. She is the founder of Jazz Is... Dance Project and a Scholar-in-Residence at Jacob's Pillow. As a dramaturg, she works closely with internationally recognized contemporary performing artists in the incubation of new works for the stage. George has contributed to projects by David Neumann & Marcella Murray (on the Obie Award winning *Distances Smaller Than This Are Not Confirmed*), Kimberly Bartosik/daela, Raja Feather Kelly, Susan Marshall & Company, Urban Bush Women, Machine Dazzle, Kathy Westwater, and Alice Sheppard/Kinetic Light, among others. Current projects include new works by Helen Simoneau Danse and Ephrat Asherie Dance. A highly sought-after teacher and choreographer of the neo-jazz aesthetic, her jazz choreography is regularly commissioned by colleges throughout the United States.

George has presented her research on jazz dance improvisation and pedagogy throughout the U.S., in Canada and Scotland, and founded the global jazz dance advocacy website [jazzdancedirect.com](http://jazzdancedirect.com). Publications include "Jazz Dance, Pop Culture, and the Music Video Era" in *Jazz Dance: A History of the Roots and Branches* and "Imbed/In Bed: Two Perspectives on Dance and Collaboration" in *Working Together in Qualitative Research*. George is a featured contributor and consultant for the documentary *UpRooted: The Journey of Jazz Dance*. George has worked as a consultant in the arts for over a decade, applying her expertise in scholarship and education to assist artists and arts organizations in articulating language and facilitating the development of creative work. In addition to her work with independent choreographers and dance educators, George has provided professional services for The Joyce Theater, The Guggenheim Museum, BAM, and Stephen Petronio Company, among others. She is the former Dance Program Director at American University, and has guest lectured at Harvard University and The Juilliard School, among other institutions. Currently, she is a Visiting Professor at Cornish College of the Arts.

### **ABOUT ALI ROSA-SALAS**

Ali Rosa-Salas is a curator of live performance, music, and visual art. Her approach is rooted in the belief that curatorial practice must serve the public good. She finds inspiration from cultural ecosystems of New York City, where she was born and raised. Rosa-Salas is currently the Director of Programming at Abrons Arts Center/Henry Street Settlement, where she curates the Center's performance and exhibition programming, as well as supports the Center's residency programs. During her tenure, she has commissioned programming that engages many of the vibrant cross-sections of Manhattan's Lower East Side.

Some highlights include: *Zapatografia/Shoegrphy* (2018), a performance by Larissa Velez-Jackson created in collaboration with the Henry Street Settlement Senior Center; *YOUNG WORLD* (2019), a three-day hip hop festival curated by the rapper MIKE that honored coming of age in New York City; and *Rainbow Shoe Repair: An Unexpected Theater of Flyness* (2020), a photography exhibition co-presented with Photoville that celebrated the Lower East Side residents' love for their community and expression of personal style by featuring portraits taken at a local shoe cobbler from the late 1980s to early 2000s.

Prior to Abrons, Rosa-Salas produced performances, exhibitions, and events as an independent curator, organizing: *No Such Thing As Neutral* (2015) at the Barnard Center of Research on Women about Flex and Lite Feet dance; *FUTURE PERFECT/indices & marginalia* (2015) at Weeksville Heritage Center, a solo exhibition of work by Kameelah Janan Rasheed; *pleasure principles* (2016) at Danspace Project, featuring performance by Jonathan Gonzalez, Jasmine Hearn, Londs Reuter, and serpentwithfeet; *MAMI* (2016) at Knockdown Center, an exhibition co-curated with Dyani Douze, with work by Salome Asega, Doreen Garner, Nona Faustine, Aya Rodriguez-Izumi, MALAXA, and Rodan Tekle; the American Realness Festival (2017), where she produced the Festival's discursive events and essay commissions; and the Whitney Museum's first annual Pride Celebration

(2018), featuring performances by Ziúr and NIC Kay, which Ali organized in her role as Special Projects Manager for Discwoman. Rosa-Salas received a B.A. from Barnard College in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and an M.A. from the Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance at Wesleyan University.

#### **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](http://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](http://www.jacobspillow.org).

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