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**JACOB'S PILLOW EXPANDS VIRTUAL PROGRAMS  
AND WELCOMES ARTISTS BACK TO HISTORIC SITE**

October 2, 2020 (Becket, MA)—Jacob's Pillow announces its fall season including commissions, community artist partnerships, and COVID-19-compliant Pillow Lab residencies. With the aim of continuing to support artists and bring powerful, relevant work to audiences while prioritizing health and safety, these virtual events take place from October through December. Jacob's Pillow will welcome a small number of artists to its campus to develop new works, as well as participate in two community partnerships serving the greater Berkshires and present three online virtual premieres.

"It has been so moving to make calls and invite artists to the Pillow who will have the chance to be fully in the studio dancing together again. I also can't wait to invite audiences into the studio virtually, to see a new work be born through our new docuseries. I'm so grateful to our members and funders who have made this possible," says Director Pamela Tatge.

Highlights include:

- Residencies for Pillow artists Kyle Abraham and Brian Brooks whose earlier visits this year were canceled due to the pandemic
- First ventures at the Pillow with choreographers Emily Johnson and Shamel Pitts
- Artist-activists Danté Brown and Mar Parrilla collaborating with regional organizations working on food security, Black Lives Matter, and liberation and social change
- New commissions created especially for digital platforms from Francesca Harper with dancers from The School at Jacob's Pillow, 7NMS | E + M (Marjani Forté-Saunders and Everett Saunders) in their *#SatelliteResidencies* (orchestrated by *Art & Power*).

Launched in 2017 as part of Jacob's Pillow's Vision '22 strategic programming initiative, the **Pillow Lab** is an immersive residency program that provides financial support, archival and research resources, and unrestricted space use. This cohort of artists—Kyle Abraham, Brian

Brooks, Emily Johnson, and Shamel Pitts—is the first to be programmed by a team including new Associate Curators Melanie George and Ali Rosa-Salas. It is also the first cohort to work within a newly implemented, more responsive funding model for each residency, allowing artists to develop their work with a nuanced budget rather than a flat fee. Each artist will participate in a docuseries virtual presentation model called “Inside the Pillow Lab,” a free event streamed on YouTube offering an intimate look into their process and including a live chat with artists and company members.

Jacob’s Pillow joins a small number of organizations making their physical facilities available for residencies during the current pandemic, allowing for concentrated rehearsal periods at a time when most choreographers have lost access to studios and their collaborators. Rigorous safety protocols will be in place for onsite programming. Artists and company members will quarantine and undergo rounds of COVID-19 testing prior to arrival, and will remain onsite with all food and supplies delivered for the duration of the residency period. Pillow staff will provide contactless support to the companies, with mask-wearing and social distancing required during any interaction.

Welcoming Massachusetts-based choreographer Danté Brown and Boston-based choreographer Mar Parrilla, Jacob’s Pillow continues its partnership with the greater regional community through two extended engagements. Brown will work with Pittsfield-based Roots Rising at the intersection of sustainable food and holistic sustainability for communities during this pandemic, while Parrilla will conduct virtual Dance for Social Justice workshops alongside *Pittsfield Moves!*, supporting local organizations and individuals to pursue avenues for storytelling and community building through movement and decolonizing and antiracist framework.

For viewers in the Berkshires and around the world, two commissioned works will premiere online across digital platforms and will remain available for viewing, representing an exceptional array of styles and voices. Francesca Harper creates an elegant, powerful reflection on civil rights with dancers from the Contemporary Program of The School at Jacob’s Pillow; other new works will be created by Marjani Forté-Saunders and Everett Saunders as the collaborative duo 7NMS| E + M, known for award-winning textural, interdisciplinary performances.

The Pillow also continues to share digital resources from its renowned Archives including monthly releases of newly curated playlists, interactive Themes & Essays written by leading dance scholars, PillowVoices (podcast series), as well as a special series for educators teaching

virtually—[DELving into Dance History](#) which pairs embodied dance practices with the Pillow's dance online resources, created in collaboration with Dance Education Laboratory (DEL).

## **2020 Fall Events & Programs**

*Descriptions and details of events below. For more information visit [jacobspillow.org](http://jacobspillow.org).*

### **- PILLOW LAB VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS -**

*All Inside the Pillow Lab presentations will be available to view on YouTube through Sunday at midnight Eastern of their premiere week. These brief, 15-minute events are free and RSVP is required. To RSVP, visit [jacobspillow.org](http://jacobspillow.org).*

#### **Brian Brooks/Moving Company**

##### ***Inside the Pillow Lab: October 29, 7pm Eastern***

In a residency originally slated for March 2020 and cancelled due to the pandemic, Brian Brooks and his group of dancers, The Moving Company, return to the studio for the first time anywhere since March 13. Brooks will revisit *Closing Distance*, which premiered in January 2020 and is a prescient exploration of the human desire to connect physically and emotionally, with dancers in close contact, often arranging and rearranging one another's bodies. *Closing Distance* is set to Caroline Shaw's Pulitzer Prize-winning suite "Partita for 8 Voices," recorded by Williamstown, MA-based vocal ensemble Roomful of Teeth. Shaw, who wrote the suite during the ensemble's annual residency at MASS MoCA, has cited Sol Lewitt's line drawings as an influence.

Brooks and The Moving Company will also develop a new, outdoor site-based performance for audiences to experience while indoor venues remain restricted.

The Moving Company, based in New York City, creates and performs new work by founding choreographer Brian Brooks. Since 2002 the group has toured internationally, with presentations and residencies provided by The Joyce Theater, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Jacob's Pillow, NY City Center's Fall for Dance, The Guggenheim Museum, Lumberyard Performing Arts, the American Dance Festival, Lincoln Center Out of Doors, and the 92nd Street Y Harkness Festival. A Guggenheim Fellow, Brooks recently completed a Mellon Foundation Creative Artist Fellowship at University of Washington, researching the intersection of performance and augmented reality technologies. He has collaborated with New York City Ballet Associate Artistic Director and former principal dancer Wendy Whelan since 2012, including the Jacob's Pillow co-commissioned project *Restless Creature*.

## **A.I.M by Kyle Abraham**

***Inside the Pillow Lab: November 12, 7pm Eastern***

Kyle Abraham, the “best and brightest creative talent to emerge in New York City in the age of Obama” (*OUT Magazine*), and his company, A.I.M, will build two new works during their residency. *An Untitled Love* was originally set to premiere during summer 2020 as an evening-length work set to the music of D’Angelo and The Vanguard; Abraham will also develop an untitled work scheduled to premiere in summer 2021. “The Pillow evokes a natural sense of camaraderie and inspiration,” says Abraham. “This residency couldn’t have come at a better time. With the realities and fears surrounding COVID-19 and the vast uncertainties faced in the performing arts, this residency gives my dancers and me an opportunity to create, to build and find each other again.”

The mission of A.I.M is to create an evocative interdisciplinary body of work with a sincere provocation of cultural pride and history. Born into hip-hop culture in the late 1970s and grounded in Artistic Director Kyle Abraham’s artistic vision, the goal of the work is to delve into dance-based storytelling that addresses personal history through movement hybridity and abstraction. Through live and pre-recorded performances, education, and community-based workshops, A.I.M is a righteous representation of black art and culture. As an organization, community and artistry work in tandem as a way to lift and highlight our voices while making the space to see and recognize voices beyond our own.

Artistic Director Kyle Abraham is a recipient of the Princess Grace Statue Award (2018), Doris Duke Artist Award (2016), MacArthur “Genius” Grant (2013), and Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award (2012). In addition to his own company, Abraham has set work on Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, New York City Ballet, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, and American Ballet Theatre principal dancer Misty Copeland, among others.

## **Emily Johnson/Catalyst**

***Inside the Pillow Lab: December 3, 7pm Eastern***

Emily Johnson’s work is “a domain in which dream and memory and history meet in present-day...and reach out their arms to one another” (Deborah Jowitt, *Arts Journal*). In her first residency at the Pillow, Johnson will develop *Being Future Being*, a new, richly layered evening-length performance for the stage and beyond. Working with one other dancer as well as Indigenous scholars during her PillowLab residency, Johnson will later incorporate an ensemble of four Indigenous performers and a chorus of ten more-than-human creatures—an omnipresent collective adorned in futuristic garments crafted from community-sewn quilts,

designed by Ojibwe textile artist Maggie Thompson. *Being Future Being* contains narrative elements from Johnson's own family history, a commissioned score sung by a BIPOC community chorus, a soundscape by Diné composer Raven Chacon, and movement, projections, and scenic design that build a visual and aural landscape of Indigenous power. *Being Future Being* asks audiences to consider new stories with the power to sustain a world that must begin again, with the goal of igniting community stewardship.

Emily Johnson is a Bessie Award-winning choreographer, Guggenheim Fellow, and recipient of the Doris Duke Artist Award. Originally from Alaska and now based in New York, Johnson is of the Yup'ik Nation and since 1998 has made work that considers the experience of seeing and sensing performance. Her works have included opera (*Doctor Atomic* at the Santa Fe Opera, directed by Peter Sellars) and durational performance gatherings (*Then A Cunning Voice and A Night We Spend Gazing At Stars*, an all-night outdoor event that took place in the midst of 84 community-hand-made quilts, premiered on the Lower East Side of Manhattan), and have been presented across the United States and Australia. Johnson is a lead organizer of First Nations Dialogues and part of a U.S.-based advisory group—including Reuben Roqueni, Ed Bourgeois, Lori Pourier, Ronee Penoi, and Vallejo Gantner—who are developing a Global First Nations Performance Network.

### **Shamel Pitts/TRIBE**

#### ***Inside the Pillow Lab: December 10, 7pm Eastern***

Shamel Pitts is a performance artist, choreographer, conceptual artist, dancer, spoken word artist, and teacher. During his residency, Pitts will develop the second piece in his RED series, *Touch of RED*. An intensely personal duet performed by Pitts with Tushrik Fredericks, *Touch of RED* addresses the power of vulnerability and offers its dancers, two Black men, space to soften. As Pitts and Fredericks meet in a performance space akin to a gladiator's arena, heat between them builds, not from aggression but rather from a healing, electrifying effeminacy.

TRIBE is a New York City-based arts collective dedicated to creating, developing, and sharing multidisciplinary art projects and inspired by the afro-futuristic movement. Artistic Director Shamel Pitts is a Guggenheim Fellow (2020), NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow (2019), and Princess Grace Award winner (2018). Born in Brooklyn, Pitts studied dance at LaGuardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, The Ailey School, and The Juilliard School before beginning his dance career in Mikhail Baryshnikov's Hell's Kitchen Dance and Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal. He went on to dance with the Batsheva Dance Company for seven years, under the artistic direction of Ohad Naharin. Pitts was the choreographer for the play *Help* by poet and playwright Claudia Rankine, directed by Taibi Magar at The Shed in New York. TRIBE is a 92Y Harkness Dance Center Artist In Residence for the 2020-2021 season.

## - COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS-

### **Danté Brown with Roots Rising**

#### ***In partnership with Roots Rising, Funded by Artists at Work***

Jacob's Pillow will support choreographer Danté Brown working in partnership with Roots Rising, a local organization whose mission is to empower youth and build community through food and farming, strengthening the local food system and providing opportunities for meaningful work. Roots Rising, a woman-led nonprofit, provides community food access during the pandemic through its Virtual Farmers Market. Brown, whose choreography has been praised as "stunning and thought-provoking work about which voices get heard" (*BroadwayWorld*), will explore ways to integrate ideas of food sustainability with the concept of sustainability of mind, body, and spirit for marginalized communities in conjunction with the ongoing protests for Black Lives Matter. This partnership is spearheaded and funded by Artists at Work, a new project of THE OFFICE Performing Arts+Film.

Danté Brown began his dance training at Wesleyan University and received an M.F.A. in Choreography from The Ohio State University. In 2010 he founded the New York City-based company Warehouse Dance and has gone on to show work at Bates Dance Festival (ME), Boston Contemporary Dance Festival and Dance Complex (MA), Columbus Dance Theater and Wexner Center for the Arts (OH), Dance Gallery Festival (NYC & TX), Dixon Place and LaMaMa Moves Festival (NYC), and more. Brown has also danced with artists such as Esther Baker-Tarpaga, Christal Brown, David Dorfman, Nicole Stanton, Noa Zuk, and at the Dance Exchange. He has been an Adjunct Professor at CUNY Westchester Community College, Visiting Artist at Middlebury College, Lecturer in Dance at Bates College, and a Visiting Assistant Professor at Amherst College and Wesleyan University. He was awarded the Schwartz Center for Performing Artists Fellowship at Emory University.

### **Mar Parrilla with Pittsfield Moves!**

Boston-based Afro-Indigenous/Afro-Taíno Borikua choreographer Mar Parrilla and her company Danza Orgánica will steward a community residency, leading virtual Dance for Social Justice workshops that explore movement as a means of liberation and social change for Berkshire County residents. *Pittsfield Moves!*, conceived by Jacob's Pillow with The Berkshire Bridges - Working Cities Pittsfield and Angela's Pulse, is an ongoing initiative led by Berkshire-based artists and community stakeholders rooted in developing a practice of storytelling and relationship building through movement to address issues that impact and affect Berkshire communities.

*Pittsfield Moves!* launched in Fall 2017 as a year-long artist residency led by choreographer Paloma McGregor (Director of Angela's Pulse) and MK Abadoo, (Lead Facilitator of Angela's Pulse) alongside Berkshire County partner organizations Youth Alive!, NAACP - Berkshire County Branch, Manos Unidas Multicultural Education Cooperative, Railroad Street Youth Project, Berkshire Children & Families, and Transformative Development Initiative, among others.

Mar Parrilla is the founding artistic director of Danza Orgánica (2007) and the recipient of several awards from the New England Foundation for the Arts and the Boston Foundation, among others. Parrilla is the recipient of an Outstanding Community Arts Collaborative award in dance from Arts|Learning (2019), a city of Boston Artist-in-Residence focused on Environmental Justice from Indigenous Perspectives (2018), a Luminary Artist at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and the founder and producer of the Boston-based annual festival "We Create!". She is currently collaborating with Native American communities in Massachusetts with a focus on best practices towards antiracist decolonization, and with Puerto Rico-based artists on a residency-based cultural exchange exploring the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States. Danza Orgánica has appeared as part of the Inside/Out series, facilitated a community movement workshop and performance in Pittsfield, MA as part of 10x10 Upstreet Arts Festival, and participated in a Creative Development Residency at Jacob's Pillow.

#### - VIRTUAL COMMISSIONS -

**Francesca Harper**

***Still***

***Virtual Premiere: October 8***

Choreographed by Francesca Harper in collaboration with the dancers of the Contemporary Program of The School at Jacob's Pillow, *Still* is a dance film inspired by the courage of the civil rights movement. Set to an original score by Arcoiris Sandoval with artistic contributions by Nel Shelby Productions and Maleek Washington, the work deconstructs Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, fusing text and original movement into a compelling work reflecting on revolutions past and present. Harper describes *Still* as "a call to action," going on to say "as the daughter of a civil rights lawyer I am inspired by our current political climate and all of the momentum, empathy, and courage I am witnessing through our collective efforts."

Francesca Harper, after being named Presidential Scholar in the Arts and performing at the White House, joined and performed soloist roles with Dance Theatre of Harlem and later as a Principal Artist in William Forsythe's Ballet Frankfurt. Harper has choreographed for Alvin Ailey

American Dance Theater, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Richmond Ballet, Ailey II, Tanz Graz, Hubbard Street II, and her own company, The Francesca Harper Project, which was founded in 2005 and tours internationally. She has been a fellow at Urban Bush Women's Choreographic Center and The Center for Ballet and The Arts at NYU. Harper served as a ballet consultant for the Oscar-winning film *Black Swan* and is currently engaged as Executive Producer with Sony Pictures on a series in development while also pursuing an M.F.A. in performance creation at Goddard College.

## **7NMS| E + M**

***Virtual Premiere: December, date to be announced.***

7NMS| E + M is the work of collaborative music and dance duo Everett Saunders and Marjani Forté-Saunders, now operating bi-coastally (Pasadena, CA and New York, NY). They are students and descendants of black liberation movements, and radically engage music and dance forms as alchemic mediums of elevation, healing, and futurity. Their latest work is *A Prophet's Tale: Portrait of the Lyricist*, a multi-year film, literary, music, and performance project discussing the life journey, the mystic pilgrimage, of hip-hop music's emcee/lyricist. The project marks their eighth collaboration, and is an awardee of the MAP Fund 2020 and New Music USA Award 2020. Thus far the work has been incubated in residencies at the Petronio Residency Center, Baryshnikov Arts Center, and 7NMS' own *#SatelliteResidency (in response to COVID-19)* in partnership with co-commissioners Abrons Arts Center and Kelly Strayhorn Theatre. *A Prophet's Tale* and *#SatelliteResidency* were featured in the September issue of *Dance Magazine*. 7NMS are the architects behind *Art & Power*, a platform dedicated to Black Purpose and Innovation, fueling the initiative behind *#SatelliteResidencies* and a burgeoning network of Black radical experimenters and innovative critical thinkers.

Everett Saunders's work as a composer/sound designer includes projects with violinist Juliette Jones, award-winning filmmaker and screenwriter Damon Colquouhoun, Sony Music, and Urban Bush Women. His most recent work can be heard in Jaamil Olawale Kosoko's multimedia project and film *Chameleon* (2020). Marjani Forté-Saunders is a three-time Bessie Award-winning choreographer and performer. She is a Foundation for Contemporary Arts grantee, an inaugural recipient of the Jerome Foundation Jerome Hill Artist Fellowship, Dance/USA Artist Fellow, UBW Choreographic Center Fellow, and a two-time Princess Grace Foundation awardee. Her work has been incubated in residencies at MANCC, LMCC Extended Life Residency, BAX, CUNY Dance Initiative, 651 Arts, and Movement Research.

## **ABOUT JACOB'S PILLOW:**

Jacob's Pillow, founded by Ted Shawn in 1933 on the traditional lands of the Agawam, the Nipmuc, the Pocumtuc, and the Mohican, 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](http://www.jacobspillow.org).

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