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## **JACOB'S PILLOW BRINGS FREE PUBLIC POP-UP PERFORMANCES TO BERKSHIRE COUNTY WITH JACOB'S PILLOW ON THE ROAD SERIES**

July 20, 2021 – (BECKET, Mass.) – Jacob's Pillow will offer two weekends of free Pillow Pop-Up performances in Berkshire County during the last weekend in July and first weekend in August. Performances will happen on a uniquely designed portable stage and feature local performers, as well as the all-female intergenerational **Ladies of Hip-Hop Dance Collective (July 31 – Aug. 1)** known for illuminating the strength, power, and diversity of women in hip-hop, and Philadelphia-based **Kulu Mele African Dance & Drum Ensemble (Aug. 7-8)**, dedicated to preserving the traditional dance and music of West Africa and the African diaspora.

Jacob's Pillow and On the Road program partners, including NAACP Berkshires, Becket Arts Center, Cultural Pittsfield, and the municipalities of Great Barrington, Pittsfield, North Adams, and Becket, and lead sponsor Milltown, encourage the public to pack a blanket or outdoor chair and invite family and friends to enjoy these 45 minute pop-up performances.

"Jacob's Pillow is honored to work with town leaders and our community partners to bring free performances to public spaces where people are," said Pamela Tatge, Executive and Artistic Director of Jacob's Pillow. "We all so need the healing power of dance right now, and both Ladies of Hip-Hop and Kulu Mele are companies who will bring joy and possibility to communities around the County and get us dancing together!"

"Jacob's Pillow is a national treasure and a beloved cultural asset for everyone in the Berkshires," said North Adams Mayor Tom Bernard. "The partnership between the Pillow and the City of North Adams is deep and longstanding, and I am so thrilled that Jacob's Pillow On the Road will bring the talent, creativity, and wonder of these amazing artists to the city this summer."

Local performers will include Berkshire Dance Theatre and dysFUNKcrew at the North Adams performances, The Funkbox Studio for the July 31 performance in Pittsfield, Dancers of the Berkshires in Becket and more to be announced soon.

### **ABOUT THE PERFORMERS**

**Ladies of Hip-Hop Dance Collective, LDC**, is an all-female intergenerational dance collective that creates dance works illuminating the strength, power and diversity of women in hip-hop. Ever

present in the work is the freestyle, ciphery, dancing with your family... call and response aspects of cultural dance forms that serve as the essence of street and club dance culture; while still exploring the space of cultural forms in proscenium performance. Founded by director and choreographer Michele Byrd-McPhee, LDC creates collaborative works that celebrate and center feminist narratives examining the intersections of gender, race, and resistance.

### **Black Dancing Bodies Project**

Led by Ladies of Hip-Hop Executive Director Michele Byrd-McPhee and LOHH Chairwoman, LaTasha Barnes, this intersectional project captures the knowledge, beauty, and power of Black female street dancers. It seeks to look beyond the traditional lens of exposure for Black bodies in dance, which has overwhelmingly focused on Eurocentric dance aesthetics, including modern, contemporary, and ballet.

Ladies of Hip-Hop will be performing a work from The Black Dancing Bodies Project. Launched in 2018, The Black Dancing Bodies Project is an ongoing documentary effort to represent Black women in street and club dance culture (including street and club dance, hip-hop, house dance, Waacking, and Lite Feet) through a series of sessions that include photography and interviews.

Addressing the erasure, miscoding, and often intentional exclusion of Black women in art, BDB has embarked on the journey to collect, preserve and tell the stories of these women. This intersectional transgenerational project captures the knowledge, beauty, and power of Black female street dancers that looks beyond the traditional lens of exposure for Black bodies in dance.

This project is of immense importance for the continued empowerment of women working in the world's most popular culture, hip-hop. Women remain underrepresented in hip-hop, and current representations often negatively impact women's sense of self-worth within the community. The need for women-led change to the culture is relevant now more than ever. This project specifically focuses on Black women as a subset within the overall narrative and mission; however, it is just as important to achieving equity in the arts.

**Kulu Mele African Dance & Drum Ensemble** preserves, presents, and perpetuates the traditional dance and music of West Africa and the African Diaspora, inspired by the voice of its ancestors. Based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Kulu Mele's performance repertoire features authentic, traditional dance and drumming from West Africa, Cuba and the African Diaspora, as well as contemporary American hip-hop. Kulu Mele performs year-round throughout Philadelphia and tours nationally and internationally. Kulu Mele has performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), the Frank Gehry-designed Disney Hall at The Los Angeles Music Center, the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts at UPenn and – now and in 2015 – at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival. In September, 2015, Kulu Mele performed as part of the official entertainment during the Philadelphia visit of Pope Francis. Founded in 1969 by celebrated percussionist Robert Crowder, 50-year-old Kulu Mele has been led by artistic director Dorothy Wilkie for more than three decades.

**ABOUT JACOB'S PILLOW ON THE ROAD:**

Mill Town Capital is the lead sponsor for Jacob's Pillow On the Road. All performances are offered at no cost to the public and no RSVP is required to watch these performances. Programming for these events is subject to change. Donations are welcome and will support Jacob's Pillow's mission in dance creation, presentation, education, and preservation, and in harnessing the community-building power of dance. On the Road event partners include NAACP Berkshires, Becket Arts Center, and Cultural Pittsfield. Jacob's Pillow On the Road is made possible in part with generous support from the Feigenbaum Foundation and Joan B. Hunter.

**EVENT DETAILS:**

In the event of rain, performances may be canceled; in the event of inclement weather, please go to [jacobspillow.org](https://jacobspillow.org) for cancellations and rain plans. No RSVP required. To share your interest and receive updates about "On the Road" and other Jacob's Pillow Pop-Up events around Berkshire county, sign up at <https://jacobspillow.prospect2.com/f/23>

**Becket**

North Becket Park – Maple Street

Sat., July 31 at 1 p.m.

Sun., Aug. 8 at 5 p.m.

**Great Barrington**

Town Hall Park

Sun., Aug. 1 at 5 p.m.

Sun., Aug. 8 at 1 p.m.

**North Adams**

River Grove Park – Corner of River and Houghton streets

Sun., Aug. 1 at 1 p.m.

Sat., Aug. 7 at 5 p.m.

**Pittsfield**

The Common, 100 First St.

Sat., July 31 at 5 p.m.

Rosemary and Reverend Willard Durant Park, 30 John St.

Sat., Aug. 7 at 1 p.m.

**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. Jacob's Pillow rests on the traditional lands of the Agawam, the Nipmuc, the Pocumtuc, and the Mohican and we honor their elders past, present, and future. 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, Photography, Choreography, and an annual rotating program. 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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