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**Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble
Returns for the First Time in Two Decades
for Week 9 of Festival 2022, the 90th Anniversary Season**

Vanessa Sanchez and La Mezcla; Abdiel, Alessandra Marconi, and Joana Matos; Estrellitas de Sorto; Breakfast Club, D.R.E.A.M. Ring, Bmore Than Dance, Beat Ya Feet Academy; and The School at Jacob's Pillow's Afro-Latin Immersion Performance Ensemble Make One-Night-Only Appearances on the Henry J. Leir Stage

July 20, 2022 (BECKET, Mass.)— Returning to Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival for the first time since 2002, Denver-based modern dance company, Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble, will perform in the Ted Shawn Theatre from Aug. 17-21, with pieces enriched in emotion, femininity, war, race, and elegance. Additionally, works on the outdoor Henry J. Leir Stage will include Vanessa Sanchez and La Mezcla; Abdiel, Alessandra Marconi, Joana Matos, and Estrellitas de Sorto; Breakfast Club, D.R.E.A.M. Ring, Bmore Than Dance, and Beat Ya Feet Academy; and The School at Jacob's Pillow's Afro-Latin Immersion Performance Ensemble, in one-night-only appearances.

"After a three-year wait, we are overjoyed to finally celebrate fifty years of Denver's Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble with a program that will showcase its gorgeous dancers and the stunning body of work that this remarkable American company has assembled," said Jacob's Pillow Executive and Artistic Director, Pamela Tatge. "Cleo has moved our field forward in her commitment to uniting people of all races and ages and celebrating the complexity of life through movement. She's bringing a series of signature works that will highlight the amazing work this company has been doing for decades."

Vanessa Sanchez and La Mezcla will open the Leir performances on Aug. 17 at 6pm. On Thursday, Hustle dancers Abdiel, Alessandra Marconi, and Joana Matos will perform in *Hustle at the Pillow* on Aug. 18, alongside an opening from Estrellitas de Sorto. Breakfast Club, D.R.E.A.M. Ring, Bmore Than Dance, and Beat Ya Feet Academy will take the stage in the Pillow's *East Coast Styles* program on Aug. 19. Closing out the week, The School's Afro-Latin Immersion Performance Ensemble will perform on the outdoor stage Saturday evening, sharing works directed by program leader Maria Torres.

In addition, Blake's Barn will host two free PillowTalks. On Aug. 20 at 4pm, dance practitioners will evaluate different dance styles in a discussion entitled "All Styles Roundtable." On Sunday at 4pm, "Documenting the Hustle," featuring Maria Torres and Abdiel along with New York Public Library's Cassie Mey, will bring the underrated dance form of Hustle into conversation.

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble's program highlights works from dance masters Katherine Dunham (*Ragtime*), Donald McKayle (*Crossing the Rubicon: Passing the Point of No Return*), Cleo Parker Robinson (*Mary Don't You Weep*), Garfield Lemmonius (*Catharsis*), and Nejla Yatkin (*Salome's Daughters*). Each piece will allow audiences to link historic perspectives with today's headlines.

In their Jacob's Pillow debut, La Mezcla and the group's founder, Vanessa Sanchez, will perform selections from *Pachuquismo*, a multi-disciplinary, rhythmic performance with a live band that unveils a forgotten history of las Pachucas, the Mexican-American female youth of the 1940s, and explores the struggles that communities of color face today, through a blend of tap dance, Mexican zapateado, Son Jarocho music, and jazz.

Hustle dancers Abdiel, Alessandra Marconi, and Joana Matosare are dedicated to preserving this fast, flashy, and powerful American social dance, and honoring its tradition of partner dancing that is not gender-specific. *Hustle at the Pillow* is a component of a project being developed by a consortium of partners including the Pillow and led by Works & Process at the Guggenheim that will support the premiere of Abdiel's upcoming work *Do the Hustle*. Following their Thursday performance, Abdiel will teach a Hustle dance workshop Friday evening in Pittsfield, inviting community members to take part in this unique dance approach.

Estrellitas de Sorto is a nationally-recognized Afro-Latin dance program for youth, offering children and teens the opportunity to expand their experience of the world by building social and emotional skills through dance. In this group's Pillow debut, school children will take audiences on a journey of Latin dance culture.

Also making their Pillow debut, dance groups Breakfast Club (New York City), D.R.E.A.M. Ring (New York City), Bmore Than Dance (Baltimore), and Beat Ya Feet Academy (Washington D.C.) will participate in the Pillow's *East Coast Styles* program. Dancers in this presentation will compete in the All Styles Dance Battle at the end of the week.

ABOUT CLEO PARKER ROBINSON DANCE ENSEMBLE

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble (CPRDE) is a Denver-based, professional dance company founded in 1970 by Cleo Parker Robinson. CPRDE is a world-renowned arts organization that presents works beyond the typical dance scope—most often by fusing the African-American dance legacy with classical, modern, and contemporary dance techniques. Since its founding, the ensemble has traveled worldwide, seen by millions of fans from more than 40 countries. Today, CPRDE continues to break barriers regarding culture, class, and age, and stands as one of America's foremost modern dance companies.

With the company's mission "to transform ourselves and others, give a voice to the voiceless, and leave a lasting legacy of excellence and understanding," the organization comprises five pillars: the CPRD Ensemble, Academy, Theatre, Arts-In-Education Programs, and Arts and Wellness. Through each program, CPRD cultivates a global approach with students, professional dancers, and teaching artists from many backgrounds and cultures.

As a master dance teacher, choreographer, and cultural ambassador, Parker Robinson is a recipient of numerous honors, including four honorary PhDs. Other notable awards include a Kennedy Center Medal of Honor, the King M. Trimble Community Award, and the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Humanitarian Award. In 1998, President Clinton appointed Parker Robinson to the National Council on the Arts, where she served as one of two nominated members among the fourteen-member council in Washington D.C. for five years. Alongside her various achievements, Parker Robinson has conducted numerous workshops, master classes, and motivational seminars for people of all ages and backgrounds, making her one of the most sought-out artists in the dance world.

ABOUT VANESSA SANCHEZ AND LA MEZCLA

Vanessa Sanchez, from the San Francisco Bay Area, is a 2019 Dance/USA Artist Fellow. She is a Chicana dancer, choreographer, and educator who focuses on community arts and traditional dance forms to emphasize voices and experiences of Latina, Chicana, and Indigenous people. With over 20 years of artistic experience, Sanchez's work is rooted in percussive arrangements that tell stories of her heritage and challenge systemic oppression through dance and music. Sanchez is currently a dance lecturer at UC Santa Cruz and a resident artist at Brava! For Women in the Arts.

To continue her deep commitment to culture and community, Sanchez founded La Mezcla in 2015, a multi-disciplinary dance and music ensemble. Rooted in Latina, Chicana, and Indigenous traditions, La Mezcla brings together tap dance, Son Jarocho (a tradition from Veracruz, Mexico), and Afro-Caribbean rhythms to highlight the experiences of communities of color on stages and beyond. Currently on their first national tour, La Mezcla has been featured in many venues and events across the nation, including Lincoln Center, Dance Place, and KQED Arts. Their production *Pachuquismo*, an all-female work about las Pachucas of the 1940s and the Zoot Suit Riots, received the Isadora Duncan Award for Outstanding Production. In 2020, Sanchez received a Hewlett 50 Arts Commission grant with Brava! For Women in the Arts for La Mezcla's upcoming work *Ghostly Labor*, a piece rooted in the history of labor in the US-Mexico borderlands and the joy of collective resistance. With the full production set to premiere in 2023, *Ghostly Labor: a Dance Film* is currently being screened at film festivals across the country.

In addition to La Mezcla's recent awards and projects, the group has a year-round community engagement program, offering free grant workshops, dance classes, and paid internship opportunities.

ABOUT HUSTLE AT THE PILLOW

Hustle dance is a pre-disco style that originated in New York City in the 1970s. Performed by Hustle masters Abdiel, Alessandra Marconi, and Joana Matos, *Hustle at the Pillow* strives to spark recognition of the all-inclusive dance form. Also responsible for bringing queer and straight communities together through touch and rhythm, this fast-paced, stepping style captures the interest of all people across the globe. In a partner dance that is not gender-specific, followed by a live DJ set, Abdiel and Dancers will celebrate the style's accepting nature and powerful message on the Leir Stage.

Formerly a principal dancer with Martha Graham Dance Company, Abdiel has been featured in many original works around the world. From performing leading roles in Graham's iconic repertoire to collaborating with dance professionals Michelle Dorance, Sonya Tayeh, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Doug Varone, and more, Abdiel works to preserve Hustle dance to audiences everywhere, in order to bring forth healing, celebration, and transformation.

Marconi is a graduate from Marymount Manhattan College with a BA in Communication Arts and minors in Journalism and French. Driven by emerging stories through dance, Marconi's artistic career took off after college, performing roles in *PHISH* at Madison Square Garden, *Hamilton & Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* on Broadway, *In The Heights* with Warner Brothers, and many more. In 2016,

Marconi produced “The Hustle Social,” a social dance event offering Hustle dance lessons and parties to locals in the area.

Matos is a native Portuguese artist who started practicing Hustle dance in 2010 as an attempt to learn social dance at its very core. Immersing in Hustle ever since, Matos has frequently collaborated with dancers Aldo, John Boots, Mihoko Nimoya, and Smitty, among others.

ABOUT ESTRELLITAS DE SORTO

Estrellitas de Sorto is a Latin dance program that originated at Promise Academy within Washington D.C.'s beloved KIPP school system. Led by Edwin Sorto, the program brings children closer to Latin culture by offering live performance opportunities and more. In addition to its many gigs around the Washington D.C. area, the group has traveled across the U.S., in venues such as the Chicago International Salsa Congress, the Capital Salsa Congress, and BailaCura in North Carolina.

Sorto is a college-preparatory teacher within KIPP public schools, particularly known for his dance moves within the classroom. Moving to the U.S. from El Salvador at the age of 13, Sorto used dance as a universal language to connect with American culture. Estrellitas de Sorto serves as a symbiotic relationship between Sorto's two passions: education and dance.

ABOUT EAST COAST STYLES

The Northeast United States is an incubator for some of the country's most globally influential street and social dance styles. To highlight some of these world-renowned dance forms, this high-energy program features leading culture bearers from the New York City, Baltimore, and Washington D.C. dance worlds. Performing groups in this program include Breakfast Club, D.R.E.A.M. Ring, Bmore Than Dance, and Beat Ya Feet Academy.

Particular east coast dance forms in this series feature styles from the Lite Feet, Flex, Baltimore Club, and Go-Go communities. Lite Feet, also described as “getting light,” is a type of new evolution hip-hop dance using lightweight, high energy foot motions. Flex dance is a form of street dance originating in Brooklyn, NY, which involves the bending and folding of body parts into origami-like structures. Founded in Maryland, Baltimore Club is a high-energy dance style, utilizing high knees, leg kicks, arm hinges, and intricate patterns. Baltimore Club dancers embody this complex footwork within 130 beats per minute. Go-go dancers, also entertainers, typically perform in nightclubs in efforts of energizing large crowds. The *Pillow's East Coast Styles* program will welcome each of these different dance genres to the outdoor stage.

Jacob's Pillow Connections

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble first presented works at the Pillow in 1996. In the program, company dancers performed *Nocturne* by Donald McKayle, *Ellingtonia* by Talley Beatty, *Barrelhouse Blues* by Katherine Dunham, *Dry Each Other's Tears in the Stillness of the Night* by David Roussève, and *Too Much in Love* by Dianne McIntyre. In 2002, the company returned with *Barrelhouse Blues* as part of a special tribute to Katherine Dunham.

In honor of Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble's 50th anniversary, Jacob's Pillow hosted an online PillowTalk featuring Cleo Parker Robinson and moderator Seth Williams in 2020. Parker Robinson discussed her company's long history and its future plans in the virtual talk.

In 2013, Abdiel made their Pillow debut with the Martha Graham Dance Company, performing

Diversion of Angels, Lamentation Variations, Rust, and The Rite of Spring. Two years later, Abdiel returned with the company as a soloist, performing *Embattled Garden* by Martha Graham, *Depak Ine* by Nacho Duato, and *Echo* by Andonis Foniadakis.

Abdiel performed with Breton Follies, a dance group rooted in classical ballet, cabaret, and Latin rhythms, in the Pillow's Inside/Out series in Festival 2018. The program featured the world premiere of *All About Love* choreographed by Breton Tyner-Bryan.

Making their fourth appearance on Pillow grounds, Abdiel performed Archie Burnett's *Life Encounters* in Festival 2021. Choreographed by the founding father of House of Ninja, Archie Burnett, the piece explored the evolution of New York City dance histories, with inspirations from Burnett's personal past.

East Coast Styles group D.R.E.A.M. Ring hosted a dance competition in collaboration with Jacob's Pillow and the Berkshire Museum on July 22, 2016. In the all-styles dance event, participants of any age and level were invited to apply and choreograph three, one-minute pieces. Additionally, Reggie "Regg Roc" Gray taught a flex dance master class in the free one-day program. The next year, D.R.E.A.M. Ring dancers performed in the Pillow's Inside/Out program with a piece embodying the revolutionary dance form of Flexn.

Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive:

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble in *Nocturne* in 1996:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/cleo-parker-robinson-dance-ensemble/nocturne/>

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble in *Barrelhouse Blues* in 1996:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/cleo-parker-robinson-dance-ensemble/barrelhouse-blues/>

Abdiel with Martha Graham Dance Company in *The Rite of Spring* in 2013:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/martha-graham-dance-company/the-rite-of-spring-2013/>

Abdiel with Martha Graham Dance Company in *Rust* in 2013:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/martha-graham-dance-company/rust/>

PERFORMANCE & TICKET DETAILS

Cleo Parker Robinson Dance Ensemble

Aug. 17-21, Wed.-Sat. at 8pm; Saturday and Sunday at 2pm

Ted Shawn Theatre

Tickets starting at \$55

Tickets on sale now; online at jacobspillow.org and via phone at 413.243.0745

Vanessa Sanchez & La Mezcla

Wed., Aug. 17, 6pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

Tickets starting at \$25

Tickets on sale now; online at jacobspillow.org and via phone at 413.243.0745

Hustle at the Pillow

With opening performance by Estrellitas de Sorto

Thurs., Aug. 18, 6pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

Tickets starting at \$25

Tickets on sale now; online at jacobspillow.org and via phone at 413.243.0745

East Coast Styles

Fri., Aug. 19, 6pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

Tickets starting at \$25

Tickets on sale now; online at jacobspillow.org and via phone at 413.243.0745

The School at Jacob's Pillow: Dance Theatre: Afro-Latin Immersion Performance Ensemble

Sat., Aug. 20, 6pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

FREE

The School at Jacob's Pillow Performance Ensemble provides an inside look at The School experience and features work created by a team who serve as program faculty. This presentation features original music composed by Jaime Lozano, played live, and a groundbreaking celebration of musical theatre and Afro-Latin dance, vocals and spoken word works; developed under the direction of Broadway director, choreographer, producer, and Program Director Maria Torres.

ALSO THIS WEEK

PillowTalk: All Styles Roundtable

Sat., Aug. 20, 4pm

Blake's Barn

FREE

Practitioners of many different dance styles come together to define their unique characteristics and discuss their common ground.

Community Workshop: Hustle Dance with Abdiel

Fri., Aug 19, 6-7:30pm

Common Room in Zion Lutheran Church

74 First St. Pittsfield, MA 01201

FREE

Open to all ages. No experience needed. Pre-registration encouraged. Learn Hustle with artist Abdiel. This partner dance with roots in Afro-Latin vernacular forms was popularized during the Disco era and continues to evolve today. Participants will explore lead and follow connection, Hustle rhythm, timing, and footwork. This form takes a gender-neutral approach to partnered movement, and each participant will learn elements of leading and following. Wear comfortable shoes to dance in.

Freestyle Dance Battle

Sat., Aug. 20, 8:30pm

Festival Tent

Tickets \$50

A lively freestyle dance battle hosted by the legendary Princess Lockerooo. Dancers representing a wide range of styles will compete for a \$1,000 first-place cash prize. Standing room only; limited capacity. Presented in partnership with Red Bull.

Workshop with Festival Artists: Beat Ya Feet Dance Movement Workshop

Sun., Aug. 21, 10-11:30am

Pillow Grounds

Tickets \$10

Open to all ages. Family-friendly. No experience needed. Experience the history, music, and style of Beat Ya Feet with Washington D.C.'s Beat Ya Feet Academy. Discover how this style engages, educates, and empowers through the percussive beat of go-go music, culture, and call-and-response elements.

PillowTalk: Documenting the Hustle

Sun., Aug. 21, 4pm

Blake's Barn

FREE

Hustle experts Maria Torres and Abdiel Jacobsen demonstrate and discuss this under-appreciated dance style, explore its 1970s roots, and look to a more gender-neutral future.

FESTIVAL 2022 EXHIBITS & ARCHIVES—ONGOING**Now & Then: Evocative Dance Portraits by Christopher Duggan**

Blake's Barn

Tuesday-Sunday, noon through final curtain

FREE

Photography has been an integral part of Jacob's Pillow throughout its 90 seasons, and Festival Photographer Christopher Duggan has often mined this tradition for inspiration, culminating in these pairings of vintage and contemporary images.

The Ted Shawn Theatre: An Evolving Landmark

Ted Shawn Theatre Lobby

Open daily, noon through final curtain

FREE

While the unveiling of an entirely new stage house takes the focus in 2022, this landmark structure has been a "work in progress" ever since its opening in 1942. Through vintage imagery and artifacts on display, the rich history of America's first dance theater comes into view.

Jacob's Pillow Archives/Norton Owen Reading Room

Blake's Barn

Tuesday-Sunday, noon through final curtain

FREE

This spacious, informal library and reading room allows visitors to view videos, browse through books, access the Pillow's computer catalog, or peruse permanent collections of Pillow programs and photographs from the Archives. The Norton Owen Reading Room and new Special Collections Room also feature recent donations and more archival treasures from the Stephan Driscoll Collection.

Online Exhibit: Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive

This evolving online resource features breathtaking video highlights of Pillow performances from the early 1930s through today, with an expanded section of multimedia essays featuring talks, photos, and other exclusive content organized into various themes. danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org.

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 celebrating its 90th Anniversary Season. Jacob's Pillow acknowledges that it rests on the unceded lands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok and recognizes the Agawam, Nipmuc, and Pocumtuc who also made their homes in Western Massachusetts. We honor their elders past, present, and future. Each Festival includes national and international dance companies and 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, 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 Executive and Artistic Director since 2016 is Pamela Tatge. For more information, visit www.jacobspillow.org.

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