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Jacob's Pillow Announces Building Plans For the Reimagined Doris Duke Theatre

The new addition to the Jacob's Pillow campus will look to the future with advanced technological capabilities, flexible performance spaces, and a sustainable, accessible design

May 4, 2023 (BECKET, Mass.)— Jacob's Pillow is excited to announce building plans for the reimagined Doris Duke Theatre, a flexible theater on the site of the original Doris Duke Theatre, which was lost to a fire of undetermined cause in November 2020. In replacing what was lost while looking to the future, Jacob's Pillow seeks to create a future-forward dance theater as it looks ahead to its second century.

The new theater's design embraces the Pillow's diverse history to create an accessible and inclusive space for dialogue, collaboration, and education. The new Doris Duke Theatre will maintain the intimacy of the former studio theater, while incorporating a new digital backbone. The ability for the facility to adapt to different programmatic needs as well as future technical upgrades will be key to the theater's purpose as a makerspace and digital lab, and will ensure long-term resiliency and future growth.

The new building is projected to cost \$30 million and is supported by a coalition of donors and foundations, with a formal campaign launching in May 2023. Since the announcement of the naming gift of \$10 million from The Doris Duke Foundation in November, Jacob's Pillow has received leadership support from the Knight Foundation to support digital implementation, as well as commitments from Barbara and Amos Hostetter, the Barr Foundation, and Sarah Arison and the Arison Arts Foundation. The Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund supported the pre-schematic design phase of the project. An endowment of at least \$5 million is being raised to help support the digital integration of the new Doris Duke Theatre and provide direct support to the artists who will make their work in Pillow Lab residencies in the future.

"We are so grateful for the leadership support that makes it possible for us to envision a re-imagined Doris Duke Theatre, one that promises to have the warmth and character of the original and beloved Duke, while at the same time being relevant and accessible to what artists and audiences will need in the future," said Jacob's Pillow Executive & Artistic Director, Pamela Tatge. "The building will deeply

resonate with and respect the land and environment on which it rests. At the same time, it will be technologically equipped to ensure that the creative appetites of artists will be served in the decades to come.

“The design creates a year-round space,” added Tatge, “that will serve as an incubator for a new generation of artists seeking to integrate technology into live performance and create art native to the digital realm. It will be a porous, indoor/outdoor space for creation, performance, and community engagement that speaks to the lessons we've learned during the pandemic about the need for community-building, and our innate connection with nature, which we at the Pillow treasure greatly.”

“Jacob’s Pillow has always been at the forefront,” said Sam Gill, president and CEO of the Doris Duke Foundation. “The new Duke Theatre will enable Jacob’s Pillow to harness the digital revolution to serve a more inclusive, innovative, and engaging vision for dance.”

The reimagined Doris Duke Theatre will be approximately 20,000 sq. ft., compared with the former Duke’s roughly 8,500 sq. ft. footprint. The design allows for multi-use flexibility, so that the building can support performances, events, residencies, and more, sometimes simultaneously. The theater will seat up to 230 patrons in the main performance space, with an array of seating and stage configurations.

The building will feature two lobbies with sliding doors, which will create multiple entrances and exits to the building. The lobby on the west side of the building will serve to welcome visitors in from the spacious artist quadrangle, and will also provide a covered and ventilated space for pre-show talks alongside a new exhibition space. The lobby on the east side of the building will serve as a warm-up and rehearsal space for artists, and can also host receptions and meetings as needed. Rainwater will be collected from the extensive green rooftops of the building to be reused for flushing toilets and irrigation. This embrace of the site and nature, balanced with a need to push the boundaries of dance, embodies the ambition for the theater and captures the magic of performing at Jacob’s Pillow.

Contributions from Indigenous artists to the design will include visual art installations, a medicinal garden with local and indigenous plantings near the entrance of the building, and a fire pit for gatherings and celebrations. Jacob’s Pillow has continued to engage community members, artists, technicians, staff and Board members, and Indigenous stakeholders in workshops and engagement sessions to inform the design process.

The robust infrastructure of the theater will include high-speed internet, as well as flexible locations for stage management and sound, and a dedicated video room for documentation and livestreams. The theater will also have improved lighting and audio capabilities, with an efficient LED stagelighting system as the baseline, and with the ability to add incandescent fixtures. Many windows and skylights (with darkening capabilities) throughout the building will connect the theater with the surrounding campus and landscape.

The building’s infrastructure will support technological capabilities including the use of a digital spatial audio system with live tracking of dancers correlated to moving sound images, infrared camera tracking

of performers for interactive video content, and live dance performance interaction with recorded/projected dance content. Hard-wired connectivity between buildings will enable real time collaboration across Pillow venues using simultaneous filmed performances.

“I can’t overstate the importance of this sort of technologically-forward space for the dance field right now,” said Sydney Skybetter, Choreographer and Founder of the Conference for Research on Choreographic Interfaces at Brown University. Skybetter is a consultant on the Doris Duke Theatre project. “Dance artists sorely need the sorts of space, tech, and expertise that the Pillow is assembling right now. This is where the future of the field will come from.”

Safety, comfort, and accessibility will be improved for audiences, artists, and staff compared with the former Duke. This will include the addition of catwalks for easy technical installation, additional bathrooms, and an enlarged green room and dressing rooms for artists. New seating arrangements will include mezzanine access to the top of the retractable seating to allow for late seating and more accessible seating options. Additional functions include a support box office and office spaces for staff.

Netherlands-based architecture firm Mecanoo, led by Creative Director and Founding Partner Francine Houben, is serving as the lead architect for the new building project, in partnership with New York-based architecture firm Marvel, led by Jonathan Marvel, founding principal, as the architect of record and landscape architects. Theater and acoustics consultants Charcoalblue are working alongside the architectural team on the project.

“For me, what was inspiring arriving at Jacob’s Pillow is the energy of the festival and experiencing performance in this unique natural setting,” said Francine Houben. “We wanted to make a building which embodied Indigenous principles of connecting with the land and thinking seven generations forward. The sequence of moving between outdoors and indoors and the sculptural layering of the building emphasizes the feeling of movement in space, while firmly rooted to the site in this special place in the Berkshires.”

Jeffrey Gibson, a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and of Cherokee descent, is serving as a consultant on the building's relationship to the site and Indigenous design values, a key element of the building's design. The Pillow seeks to honor the building's context on the ancestral lands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok, or Mohican peoples, who are now known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community and reside in Wisconsin. Additionally, the Pillow honors the Agawam, Nipmuc, and Pocumtuc who also made their homes in what is now known as Western Massachusetts. Gibson has participated in regular design sessions and has helped steward stakeholder engagement with Indigenous community members to seek feedback on the evolving design.

“It’s been great working with Jacob’s Pillow and Mecanoo to develop the new Doris Duke Theatre,” Gibson said. “The current design takes into account important Indigenous values and supports multiple kinds of performances that can engage the inside and the outside of the building and traditional and more intimate performances. Certain Indigenous materials, patterns, and processes will be reflected in the interior and exterior, and I’m excited to see the submissions from Indigenous artists to help realize

the final iteration of the building.”

The original Doris Duke Theatre at Jacob’s Pillow was built as the Studio/Theatre in 1989 as one of three primary performance spaces on Jacob’s Pillow’s 220-acre campus in Western Massachusetts and opened for its first full season in 1990. For 30 years, it was a beloved blackbox theater and incubator for groundbreaking artists including Reggie Wilson, Michelle Dorrance, and Kyle Abraham, as well as the place where international artists including Black Grace, Chandralekha, and Danish Dance Theater made their U.S. debuts.

The new Doris Duke Theatre will restore a second indoor theater space for Jacob’s Pillow’s annual summer Dance Festival alongside the flagship Ted Shawn Theatre, and provide year-round studio space on the Pillow campus, in addition to the Perles Family Studio, which is home to The School at Jacob’s Pillow and the Pillow Lab, artist-in-residence program.

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. It is with gratitude and humility that Jacob’s Pillow acknowledges that it rests on the ancestral homelands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok or Mohican people, who are the Indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today, their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all. In addition, we honor the Agawam, Nipmuc and Pocumtuc who also made their homes in what is now known as Western Massachusetts and recognize their continued existence and contributions to our region. 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 award. The Pillow’s Executive and Artistic Director since 2016 is Pamela Tatge. www.jacobspillow.org.

About Mecanoo Architects:

Mecanoo, officially founded in Delft, the Netherlands, in 1984, is made up of a multidisciplinary staff of over 130 creative professionals from 25 countries. The team includes architects, engineers, interior designers, urban planners, landscape architects and architectural technicians. The company is led by creative director and founding partner Francine Houben. The extensive collective experience, gained over three decades, results in designs that are realized with technical expertise and great attention to detail. Mecanoo’s projects range from single houses to complete neighborhoods, skyscrapers, cities and polders, schools, train stations, theaters and libraries, hotels, museums, and even a chapel.

Discovering unexpected solutions for the specifics of programme and context is the foremost challenge in all of our assignments. Each design is considered in terms of its cultural setting, place and time. As such, Mecanoo treats each project as a unique design statement embedded within its context and orchestrated specifically for the people who use it. Within the practice are knowledge centers which enable us to stay current on technological and design innovations in sustainability, eco-engineering, technology, education and learning, high-rise and mobility.

Preoccupied not by a focus on form, but on process, consultation, context, urban scale and integrated sustainable design strategies, the practice creates culturally significant buildings with a human touch. Selected works include Delft University of Technology Library, Delft (1997), La Llotja Theatre and Congress Centre, Lleida, Spain (2010), Library of Birmingham, United Kingdom (2013), Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building, Boston, United States (2015), Delft City Hall and Train Station (2017), National Kaohsiung Center for the Arts, Taiwan (2018) and Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library (MLKL), Washington D.C. United States. For more information, visit www.mecanoo.nl

About Marvel

For the last ten years, Marvel has worked at the intersection of public and private space, creating intentionally timeless design solutions that integrate nature and context. The recipient of over 125 international industry awards, including the AIA's highest honor, the 2019 Presidential Citation for integrating design and community service. The firm's portfolio spans a range of sectors, including affordable housing, commercial, cultural institutions, schools and higher education, civic and public works, hospitality, high-end residential, recreational projects, workspaces, and parks and gardens. The firm has offices in New York City, San Juan, Puerto Rico and Richmond, Virginia. For more information, visit: www.marveldesigns.com

About Charcoalblue

Charcoalblue is the world's leading, multi-national theater, acoustic and experience consultancy. Since our foundation in London in 2004, we have grown to a team of over one hundred with studios in New York, Chicago, Bristol, Glasgow, and Melbourne. Working in partnership with leading architects and arts clients, Charcoalblue provides strategic consultancy and design services for innovative auditoria and technical systems, balanced acoustics, and state-of-the-art experiences, such as immersive environments for cinema, broadcast, and event spaces. Charcoalblue's world-class cultural and education portfolio includes People's Theatre Project, Steppenwolf Theatre, St. Ann's Warehouse, Chicago Shakespeare Theater, LAMDA, Barack Obama Presidential Library, and Pratt Institute. To learn more about Charcoalblue, visit: www.charcoalblue.com

About the Doris Duke Foundation

The Doris Duke Foundation supports the well-being of people and the planet for a more creative, equitable and sustainable future. The foundation operates five national grantmaking programs—in the performing arts, the environment, medical research, child and family well-being, and mutual understanding between communities—as well as Duke Farms and Shangri La, two centers that serve the public directly.



About the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

We are social investors who support democracy by funding free expression and journalism, arts and culture in community, research in areas of media and democracy, and in the success of American cities and towns where the Knight brothers once had newspapers. Learn more at kf.org and follow @knightfdn on social media.



About the Barr Foundation

There is so much potential all around us. We aim to serve as both stewards and catalysts of that potential. As stewards, we nurture and enhance vital community assets. As catalysts, we cultivate and advance the breakthrough ideas that will shape our collective future.



About the Massachusetts Cultural Council

Mass Cultural Council works to elevate our rich cultural life in Massachusetts. We partner with communities across the Commonwealth to expand access, improve education, promote diversity, and encourage excellence in the arts, humanities, and sciences. Through our efforts, we make our state a better place to live, work, and visit for everyone.



About MassDevelopment

MassDevelopment is committed to achieving three goals: stimulating business, driving economic growth, and helping communities thrive across Massachusetts.



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