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Mark Morris Dance Group Opens Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival 2023 With an Added Thursday Matinee

Kyle Marshall Choreography, Te Ao Mana, and SOLE Defined to Perform on the Henry J. Leir Stage

May 31, 2023 (BECKET, Mass.)—Mark Morris Dance Group will kick off Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival 2023, with the evening-length work *The Look of Love* as the season's first week-long engagement in the Ted Shawn Theatre, from June 28-July 2. Due to demand, an additional Thursday matinee has been added to Mark Morris Dance Group's Pillow performance schedule, at 2pm on June 29, for a total of 7 performances. Week 1 of the Festival will also feature one-night-only performances on the outdoor Henry J. Leir Stage by Kyle Marshall Choreography on June 28, *Te Ao Mana* on June 29, and *SOLE Defined* on June 30—tickets for which are available on a Choose What You Pay model. Tickets for all performances are now on sale.

In addition to these onsite and online performances, a free PillowTalk will be offered on Sat., July 1, when Mark Morris will join the company's executive director, Nancy Umanoff, to discuss their partnership and decades-long teamwork. Also on Saturday, The School at Jacob's Pillow will present the Contemporary Ballet Program on the Leir Stage, featuring works created for the dancers by guest choreographer Andrew McNicol and Jacob's Pillow Dance Award recipient and Program Director Annabelle Lopez Ochoa.

"It brings us all such joy to open the Festival with Mark Morris Dance Group, a fan favorite and a company that has been coming to the Pillow regularly since its first performance in 1986, amassing the most extensive performance record of any company in our history," said Jacob's Pillow Executive and Artistic Director, Pamela Tatge. "And we're excited to kick off the series on our outdoor stage with Kyle Marshall Choreography in their first Pillow appearance since 2019."

A longtime Pillow favorite, Mark Morris Dance Group will bring audiences *The Look of Love*, an homage to the music of the late Burt Bacharach, which had its world premiere in 2022 and which *Fjord Review* called "a breath of fresh, brilliant, joyous—and much needed—air." A towering figure of popular music, Bacharach is known for his soaring melodies and unique orchestrations influenced by jazz, rock, and Brazilian music. The work features original choreography by Morris and new musical arrangements by Ethan Iverson, performed live by an ensemble of piano, trumpet, bass, and drums, with singer, actress, and Broadway star Marcy Harriell on lead vocals.

On the outdoor Henry J. Leir Stage, Week 1 features a series of one-night-only "choose what you pay" performances. On June 28, Kyle Marshall Choreography will perform *Onyx*, a work that digs into the

origins of rock and roll, revealing the Black and Brown people whose sounds, performances, and personalities created this revolutionary genre. *Onyx* is a continuation of Kyle Marshall's incorporation of history and social reform in his work, which views dance as a medium to encourage empathy with others. This socially significant choreography aims to expand our view on the cultural experience of Black Americans while celebrating these innovative musicians.

Te Ao Mana will make their Pillow debut on the Henry J. Leir Stage on Thursday evening, June 29, performing works with Polynesian influence. Led by directors Anthony Aiu and Kaina Quenga—lifelong practitioners of Hula and Ori Tahiti—the intergenerational group emphasizes community and storytelling in their performances, creating space for their rich culture through dance.

SOLE Defined's unique percussive dance is coming to the Leir Stage on Friday evening, June 30 once again to perform works that use human bodies as instruments. Their choreography is an innovative convergence of traditional musical, percussive dance, and multi-media, combining singing and acting to create an inventive twist. A BIPOC-led company based in Washington D.C., SOLE Defined charms and excites their audiences with high energy and musical expression.

ABOUT MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

Called “the Mozart of Modern Dance” for his musicality and movement versatility, Mark Morris has distinguished himself as a prolific ballet, modern dance, and opera choreographer and director. His work has been characterized as “sophisticated simplicity,” with a history that is intertwined with the Pillow's (*The New York Times*). Morris made his Pillow debut in 1982, while his company first appeared at the Pillow in 1986 and has returned for more than twenty seasons since, amassing one of the most extensive Pillow performance records of any artist.

Founded in New York City in 1980 by artistic director and choreographer Mark Morris, the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) has been called “the preeminent modern dance organization of our time” (Yo-Yo Ma), its members receiving “highest praise for their technical aplomb, their musicality, and their sheer human authenticity” (*Bloomberg News*). Live music and community engagement are vital components of the Dance Group, which has toured with its own musicians, the MMDG Music Ensemble, since 1996. Through its community programming, the Dance Group provides educational opportunities in dance and music to people of all ages, with and without disabilities, while on tour internationally and at home at the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, NY.

Morris is hailed as “the most successful and influential choreographer alive, and indisputably the most musical” (*The New York Times*). He has created over 150 works for the company since its inception.

ABOUT KYLE MARSHALL CHOREOGRAPHY

A New York City-based contemporary dance company founded in 2014, Kyle Marshall Choreography sees the dancing body as a container of history, an igniter of social reform, and a site of celebration. Expressing “a choreographic voice like no one else's” (*The New York Times*), Kyle Marshall Choreography believes in the creation, sharing, and teaching of dance as a way to deepen our knowledge of who we are as individuals, how we develop relationships, and ultimately societies.

Winner of the 2018 Juried Bessie Award, the company has performed at venues including Jacob's Pillow, Chelsea Factory, BAM Next Wave Festival, Roulette, and New World Center. Commissions have included Philadelphia Museum of Art, Baryshnikov Arts Center, American Dance Festival, “Dance on the Lawn” Montclair Dance Festival, and Harlem Stage.

Kyle Marshall Choreography's performances bring its inspirations to life through expressive, innovative dance that elicits introspection and a widened perspective.

ABOUT TE AO MANA

Te Ao Mana expands the presence of Indigenous Polynesian culture worldwide through creative projects, dance classes, workshops, and community gathering and sharing. The intergenerational group shares an appreciation of Mana, "the heart of Polynesia and the very genesis of everything in existence," and to identify more deeply with nature and each other, "living in a place of constant creation and discovery of oneself and one's connection to the natural world."

Founders and directors Anthony Aiu and Kaina Quenga combine tradition and innovation to create performances that employ their rich ancestry while simultaneously traversing its modern application. Aiu and Quenga's community-centered mission has expanded the presence of Pacific Islanders in New York City. Hula and Ori Tahiti are foundational in Te Ao Mana's storytelling and pursuit of establishing a voice for the Native and Indigenous community.

ABOUT SOLE DEFINED

SOLE Defined is the Washington, D.C. metro area's leading arts organization specializing in percussive dance, using the body as an instrument creating sonic and kinetic embodied storytelling. Advancing styles such as Tap, Body Percussion, Sand Dance, and Vocal Percussion, this BIPOC-led company infuses powerful skills to delight and inspire audiences. Founded in 2011 by Quynn Johnson and Ryan Johnson, the company produces immersive performance experience promoting an understanding and appreciation for African-American percussive dance forms rooted in the African Diaspora.

"A percussive group that effectively fuse[s] tap and stepping footwork with a call and response vocalization" (*The Washington Post*), SOLE Defined's energetic performances are captivating and innovative. Percussive narratives are SOLE Define's medium for expressing their commitment to social justice. Interactive performances, professional development workshops, and Town Hall sessions with national performing artists are held to facilitate solution-oriented practices that address racial bias.

Jacob's Pillow Connections

Mark Morris first appeared at the Pillow in 1982 as a soloist, performing Ted Shawn's *Mevlevi Dervish* as part of the 50th anniversary celebration. This solo was again performed by the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2002 for the Pillow's 70th anniversary—the only time the MMDG has presented a work by anyone other than Morris.

Mark Morris taught at The School at Jacob's Pillow in 1983 and 1984 and was commissioned to create two new works, including *Ponchielliana* (Ballet Project) and *Come on Home* (Jazz Project). A number of students he worked with during those summers became early members of his company. The School at Jacob's Pillow has conducted two Mark Morris workshops, led by Morris himself and members of his company, in 1989 and 1990. The company's most recent Pillow appearance was in 2019.

Kyle Marshall Choreography made their Jacob's Pillow debut in 2016. They returned to the Pillow as part of the Inside/Out series in 2019, performing *King*; excerpts from *Colored*; and *Reign*, a work in progress. Kyle Marshall has also performed at the Pillow as part of Trisha Brown Dance Company in 2017 and with Doug Elkins in 2014.

SOLE Defined first performed at the Pillow in 2014 and again in 2016 for the Inside/Out program. Company member Quynn Johnson was a soloist performing with Dormeshia in the work *Unsung Heroes of the 20th Century*, part of the Pillow-exclusive engagement *America(na) to Me* in 2022.

Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive:

Mark Morris Dance Group in *Sport*, 2019:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/mark-morris-dance-group/sport/>

Mark Morris Dance Group in *Crosswalk* in 2014:

danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/mark-morris-dance-group/crosswalk/

Mark Morris in *Deck of Cards* in 1987:

danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/mark-morris-dance-group/deck-cards/

Essay by Seth Williams on Mark Morris's musicality:

danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/themes-essays/men-in-dance/mark-morris-musician/

PERFORMANCE & TICKET DETAILS

Mark Morris Dance Group

June 28-July 2, Wed., Thurs. and Sat. at 8pm; Thurs.-Sun. at 2pm

Ted Shawn Theatre

Tickets from \$65

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

Kyle Marshall Choreography

Wed., June 28, 6pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

Choose What You Pay

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

Te Ao Mana

Thurs., June 29, 6pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

Choose What You Pay

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

SOLE Defined

Fri., June 30, 6pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

Choose What You Pay

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

ALSO THIS WEEK

PillowTalk: Partnering with Mark Morris

Sat., July 1, 4pm

Blake's Barn

FREE

Executive Director Nancy Umanoff has been a key administrative partner to Mark Morris for four decades, and their teamwork continues in this freewheeling story hour.

The School at Jacob's Pillow: Contemporary Ballet Program

Sat., July 1, 6pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

Choose What You Pay

Performances by The School at Jacob's Pillow Performance Ensembles provide an inside look at The School experience and feature repertoire created on the dancers by leading choreographers who serve as program faculty. This performance culminates the Contemporary Ballet Program and will feature work created for the dancers by guest choreographer Andrew McNicol and Jacob's Pillow Dance Awardee and Program Director Annabelle Lopez Ochoa.

Dancers of The School at Jacob's Pillow are apprentices, trainees, pre-professionals, and early-career professionals from around the world. The School's professional advancement programs are held onsite during the Festival to nurture the artistic voices and growth of the next generation of dance artists.

Workshop with Festival Artists: Mark Morris Dance Group

Sun., July 2, 10-11:30am

Open to all dance experience levels, ages 16+

Join Mark Morris Dance Group company member Domingo Estrada Jr. for this workshop exploring movement drawn from a variety of contemporary styles. Technical exercises are designed to engage and challenge participants' minds and bodies, while across the floor phrases emphasize fluidity. Participants will also have the opportunity to learn phrases from Mark Morris repertory. Please wear comfortable clothing to move in.

In Studio Observation in The School

Perles Family Studio

Quiet observation of classes and rehearsals inside the Perles Family Studio will be open from 10:45am-12:15 p.m. and 2:30-4pm, Tuesday through Friday, June 20–Aug. 18, on a first come, first served basis. In the case of inclement weather, School observation hours will not be held.

FESTIVAL 2023 EXHIBITS & ARCHIVES—ONGOING

Welcoming the World

Blake's Barn

Tuesday-Sunday, noon through final curtain

FREE

From the first international artists who performed here in the 1940s to today, Jacob's Pillow has long worked to connect audiences with all kinds of dance. As people now emerge from extended isolation, the need for cultural exchange is keener than ever. Using historic photos and moving images that span the globe and transcend time, this exhibition demonstrates the wide-ranging definition of dance that has always epitomized the Pillow's worldview. *Co-curated by Tanisha Jones, Hari Krishnan, and Norton Owen.*

Envisioning a Theater

Ted Shawn Theatre Lobby

Open daily, noon through final curtain

FREE

An international team of architects and designers/consultants led by Netherlands-based Mecanoo are now busily planning a new Doris Duke Theatre, reimagining the beloved structure consumed by fire in 2020. On display here are color renderings, a scale model, video simulations, and other resources to help audiences visualize this exciting new building project and its design process. With a projected opening in 2025, the Doris Duke Theatre is envisioned as a versatile home for dance-making and performance in the 21st century. *Co-curated by Katy Dammers and Norton Owen.*

Fantasy Meets Reality: The Far East Tour

Blake's Barn Special Collections Room

Tuesday-Sunday, noon through final curtain

FREE

Denishawn's Asian tour in 1925-26 proved pivotal in the artistic evolution of Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis, as their famous oriental dance fantasies encountered authentic Asian dances and audiences. Shawn and St. Denis spent months studying with local artists, buying up hordes of set and costume pieces. Their return set off a renaissance of Western interest in authentic Asian dance, opening doors for Asian and Asian American artists. Today, costumes from the Far East Tour challenge us to grapple with how to share culture with integrity. *Co-curated by Phil Chan and Caroline Hamilton.*

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*

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 Reading Room and new Special Collections Room also feature recent donations and more archival treasures from the Stephan Driscoll Collection.

ABOUT JACOB'S PILLOW:

Jacob's Pillow acknowledges that it rests on the unceded lands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok, or Mohican people. Today, their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community and we honor their elders past, present and future. We also recognize the Agawam, Nipmuc, and Pocumtuc who also made their homes in what is now known as Western Massachusetts. 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 its 91st season. 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, a prestigious professional dance training center, advances the careers of the upcoming generation of performers and choreographers; during the Festival, 100 international dancers evolve as artists in ballet, choreography, contemporary, musical theatre, tap, and other genres, and year round, artist faculty and accomplished alumni nurture younger dancers in a series of Jacob's Pillow 360 workshops and intensives offered in partnership with leading dance institutions worldwide. 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. Through its 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.

Jacob's Pillow is grateful to its global community of supporters and Members for their ongoing support for our mission. Major institutional support for Jacob's Pillow is provided by the Alphadyne Foundation, Arbella Insurance Foundation, Arison Arts Foundation, Arnhold Foundation, Barr Foundation, Doris Duke Foundation, Ford Foundation, William Randolph Hearst Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, Mellon Foundation, Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Mill Town Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Craig H. Neilsen Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, and Jacob's Pillow Business Partners (as of May 23, 2023).

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