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Complexions Contemporary Ballet to Make Pillow Debut with David Bowie-inspired *STAR DUST*

Decidedly Jazz Danceworks to perform in a week-long engagement on the Henry J. Leir Stage, accompanied by live music

July 12, 2023 (BECKET, Mass.)— Week 7 of the 2023 Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival welcomes the dynamic New York-based company Complexions Contemporary Ballet, making their Pillow debut this summer. Complexions will take the stage in the Ted Shawn Theatre from Aug. 9-13. On the outdoor Henry J. Leir Stage, Canadian company Decidedly Jazz Danceworks will also make their Pillow debut, performing from Aug. 9-13. Tickets for all performances are on sale now.

In addition to these performances is a multi-day residency in the Sommers Studio for artists exploring the intersection of dance and technology. From Aug. 8-10, audiences can view demonstrations and speak with the artists on their work. The residency will conclude with a free PillowTalk on Sunday afternoon, led by the artists. A free community workshop in Pittsfield will take place on Thursday, led by Joanne Baker, Artistic Outreach Associate with Decidedly Jazz Danceworks. This all-levels workshop will incorporate rhythm, community, and musical connection.

Dutch architect Francine Houben will participate in a free PillowTalk on Saturday in Blake's Barn, discussing the design of the reimagined Doris Duke Theatre, anticipated to open in 2025. On Saturday afternoon, Adam Weinert will lead a free public tour of Jacob's Garden, departing from the Welcome Center. And on Sunday morning, Complexions will hold a workshop for intermediate/advanced dancers ages 12+ in their signature technique NIQUE, a style integrating modern fundamentals and ballet vocabulary, developed by Artistic Directors Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson.

"It's thrilling to be hosting the Pillow debuts of two major companies this week," said Pamela Tatge, Executive and Artistic Director of Jacob's Pillow. "New York City-based Complexions Contemporary Ballet has been touring the country and the world for nearly three decades with their high-intensity evolution of ballet set to classical and popular music, while Decidedly Jazz Danceworks is coming to us all the way from Calgary, Canada, and is one of the best and most entertaining jazz dance companies performing today with a spectacular live band. Both companies are not to be missed!"

Founded by Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson, Complexions will make its Pillow debut with a program featuring *STAR DUST*, a one-act tribute to the genre-bending innovation of rock star David Bowie that features many of Bowie's iconic hit songs. *The Los Angeles Times* said the piece "highlights how well-matched Complexions is to the genre-hopping, categorization-defying Bowie." Other works in the program include an excerpt from *Hissy Fits*, a "sleek" piece set to the music of Johann Sebastian

Bach (*LA Dance Chronicle*), and an excerpt from *SNATCHED BACK from the EDGES*, Rhoden's time capsule of 2020 angers, worries, and desires to connect.

Also making their Pillow debut in Week 7, Decidedly Jazz Danceworks, from Calgary, Canada, is a crowd-pleasing favorite with a style that has been described as "music for the eyes." They are known for exceptional musicality and a rhythmic, percussive aesthetic. The full company comes to the Pillow for their week-long engagement on the Leir Stage, accompanied by the six-piece Rubim de Toledo Ensemble with vocalist Karimah.

Alongside these performances is a week-long residency in the Sommers Studio, where artists demonstrate their work integrating dance and technology. Artists include Catie Cuan, a pioneer in the nascent field of 'choreorobotics', Grisha Coleman, a time-based artist working in performance and experiential media, and Andrew Schneider, an OBIE award-winning, Drama Desk nominated performer, writer, and interactive-electronics artist. Sydney Skybetter, who researches the intersection of dance and emergent technologies and has consulted with projects in human computer interfaces, will act as the consulting facilitator of the residency.

ABOUT COMPLEXIONS CONTEMPORARY BALLET

For nearly three decades, Complexions Contemporary Ballet has thrilled audiences around the globe with its full-throttle, high-intensity performances on five continents and in over 20 countries, committed to its mission of "bringing unity to the world one dance at a time." The diverse and inclusive company is made up of dancers "who blur lines and boundaries and exude an innate passion" (*The Guardian*). With their programs set to music from Kendrick Lamar, David Bowie, Metallica, and Lenny Kravitz, the company reinvents ballet with a mix of methods, styles, and cultures that engages and delights.

Headed by Artistic Directors Dwight Rhoden and Desmond Richardson, Complexions has received prominent honors, including *The New York Times* Critics' Choice Award. While their "daring, edgy repertoire" (*Pointe Magazine*) has garnered popularity, the company's steadfast commitment to diversity sets them apart in American contemporary ballet. Their foremost mission is to create dance that removes boundaries, continually evolving to reflect the movement of the world – and all its cultures – as part of an interconnected whole.

ABOUT DECIDEDLY JAZZ DANCEWORKS

A 39-year-old jazz company from Calgary, Decidedly Jazz Danceworks (DJD) is "Canada's finest jazz dance company" (*Calgary Herald*), dedicated to the rich traditions and boundless future of jazz dance. Dancing in the spirit of jazz, DJD recognizes themselves as guests in a form born out of Black American culture and the African American experience. DJD strives to create a wide and inclusive community of artists that contributes meaningfully to the future of jazz dance, prioritizing human connection and personal expression.

DJD began in 1984 with Vicki Williams, founder of the jazz dance department at the University of Calgary, and two of her graduating students, Michèle Moss and Hannah Stillwell, who sought to keep the spirit of jazz alive. Central to DJD is the "essential jazz relationship" between dancers and musicians: the company has worked with live music every season since 1988. DJD will make its debut at Jacob's Pillow with their evening length work *Family of Jazz*, called "an explosion of sparks" by *The Dance Current*. The program was choreographed by Kimberley Cooper, who has served as Artistic Director since 2013.

Jacob's Pillow Connections

Melanie George, Associate Curator and Director of Artistic Initiatives at Jacob's Pillow, created a piece for Decidedly Jazz Danceworks called *Groove Theory* in 2022.

Desmond Richardson, who co-directs Complexions, appeared at the Pillow with RhythMEK in 2000 and presented a one-time performance of a rare José Limón dance in 2001, while fellow director Dwight Rhoden's work was performed here by Carmen de Lavallade and Gus Solomons jr in 2001.

Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive:

Desmond Richardson performing in *Episodes (Living in the Present Moment)*, a work by the company RhythMEK, 2000:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/rhythmek/episodes-living-in-the-present-moment/>

Paradigm's *It All*, with choreography by Dwight Rhoden, 2004:

<https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/paradigm-dance/it-all/>

PERFORMANCE & TICKET DETAILS

Complexions Contemporary Ballet

Aug. 9-13, Wed., Thurs. and Sat. at 8 pm; Thurs.-Sun. at 2 pm

Ted Shawn Theatre

Tickets from \$60

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

Decidedly Jazz Danceworks

Aug. 9-13, Wed.-Sat at 6 pm; Sunday at 12 pm

Henry J. Leir Stage

Tickets \$45

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

ALSO THIS WEEK

Community Workshop in Pittsfield: Joanne Baker, Decidedly Jazz Danceworks

Thurs., Aug. 10, 6-7:30pm

Common Room, Zion Lutheran Church, 74 First Street

FREE

Join Joanne Baker, Artistic Outreach Associate for Decidedly Jazz Danceworks (DJD) for an all levels workshop that will incorporate rhythm, community, and musical connection. Participants will be led through a "follow along" warm up, circle dances, and a learned movement sequence. Come find your groove with DJD! Community members of all ages are invited to join artists in movement and

conversation. All ages and experience levels are welcome. Pre-registration is strongly encouraged at jacobspillow.org/sundayworkshops or by calling 413.243.0745. Walk-ups welcome!

PillowTalk: Envisioning a New Theater

Sat., Aug. 12, 4pm

Blake's Barn

FREE

Here's a rare chance to meet Francine Houben of Mecanoo, the Dutch architect who is entrusted with creating a new Doris Duke Theatre to open in 2025.

Public Tour of Jacob's Garden

Sat., Aug. 12, 12:30-1:30

FREE

Join us for a quick, Ted Shawn-style outdoor stretch followed by a walking tour of the garden beds, apiary, rainwater harvesting system, and pollinator meadow of Jacob's Garden. Wear clothes you can move in and shoes suitable for uneven terrain. Tours meet at the Welcome Center. Iced tea and water will be provided. Online pre-registration encouraged.

In Studio Pause in the Process Showing: Tap Dance Performance Ensemble

Sat., Aug. 12, 1-1:45pm

Perles Family Studio

In-person and on Instagram Live

Join Tap Dance Performance Ensemble Artist Faculty and School dancers for an informal sharing of their work in the studio together. Held in the Perles Family Studio. Seating is limited; priority entry given to visitors who pre-register online. Registration is now open.

Workshop with Festival Artists: Complexions Contemporary Ballet

Sun., Aug. 13, 10-11:30am

Perles Family Studio

\$25

Intermediate/advanced, ages 12+

Join Desmond Richardson for this workshop exploring NIQUE, the official training system of Complexions Contemporary Ballet. NIQUE bridges the divide between classical and contemporary movement languages. It activates keen memorization skills allowing students to quickly interpret complex movement sequences. It also increases the body's availability and fluency in nuanced movement vocabularies. NIQUE helps dancers unlock their expressive potential through highly physical and dynamic exploration. Please wear ballet shoes and tight-fitting clothing. Baggy attire is not recommended.

Artist Residency: Dancerly Intelligences

Aug. 8-10, 4-5:45pm

Sommers Studio

FREE

The Pillow will host a creative residency in its Sommers Studio for artists sharing their work at the intersection of dance and technology. Audiences will have the opportunity to view demonstrations and speak informally with artists about their work during open studio hours to be announced. Artists featured include Catie Cuan, Grisha Coleman, and Andrew Schneider with consulting facilitator, Sydney Skybetter.

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.

Morning Classes

Sommers Studio

Tues. and Wed. 8-9 am, Thurs. and Fri. 9-10 am, Jun. 27-Aug.25

\$12 per class

A variety of in-person dance and movement classes open to participants of all experience levels, including beginners, ages 16+ (sorry, no exceptions). Tuesday classes are body conditioning/Pilates, Wednesday classes are modern/contemporary, Thursday classes are ballet, and Friday classes are West African/Hip Hop. Pay via online pre-registration at jacobspillow.org/morningclasses or cash/card at the door.

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 New 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 ancestral homelands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok or Mohican people. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors and elders past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all. In addition, we acknowledge the Nipmuc, the Wampanoag and other tribal nations who also made their homes in what is now known as 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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