



NATIONAL MEDAL OF ARTS | NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

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**Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival
Kicks Off Historic 93rd Season With
*The Center Will Not Hold: A Dorrance Dance Production***

**Prehistoric Body Theater, Marie-Bess Wiles and Omari Wiles, and The School at
Jacob's Pillow Will Perform on the Henry J. Leir Stage**

**Festival Week 1 also begins a summer of dance classes,
family-friendly workshops, free PillowTalks and exhibits, and more**

June 12, 2025 (BECKET, Mass.) — Jacob's Pillow will begin its 93rd annual season with fan favorites **Michelle Dorrance and Ephrat Asherie**, in their highly-anticipated presentation of ***The Center Will Not Hold***, Wednesday, June 25 through Sunday, June 29 in the Ted Shawn Theatre. Produced by Dorrance Dance, *The Center Will Not Hold* is a “percussive, eye-popping collaboration” (*The Boston Globe*) and will feature an eclectic ensemble of 11 performers dancing a range of genres from tap dance and hip-hop to breaking, house, and body percussion.

Week 1 performances on the picturesque Henry J. Leir outdoor stage will feature the experimental **Prehistoric Body Theater** from Indonesia channeling dinosaurs and igniting themes of ancestry, art, and science (Wednesday, June 25 and Thursday, June 26 at 5:30pm); mother-and-son duo **Marie-Bess Wiles and Omari Wiles** uniting their companies to showcase the rhythmic power of West African dance and contemporary club culture (Friday, June 27 at 5:30pm); and **The School at Jacob's Pillow Contemporary Ballet Performance Ensemble** (Saturday, June 28 at 5:30pm).

“This season’s range of artists is one of the most diverse we’ve ever had,” said Pamela Tatge, Executive and Artistic Director at Jacob's Pillow. “We are pleased to launch Festival 2025 with an

electrifying run of *The Center Will Not Hold*, which welcomes Michelle Dorrance and Ephrat Asherie back to Jacob's Pillow. Revered artists Omari Wiles and his mother Marie-Basse Wiles will also return to share their special blend of West African dance and club dance styles. And the richly theatrical Prehistoric Body Theater will give audiences something totally unique: a surprising exploration of dinosaurs and our changing world on a stage that calls for up to 120 pounds of clay."

Jacob's Pillow will offer a free PillowTalk on Saturday, June 28 at 4pm with Ephrat Asherie, Michelle Dorrance and collaborators, in a behind-the-scenes conversation about the inspirations, practices, and lineages informing *The Center Will Not Hold*. And on Sunday morning, June 29, Jacob's Pillow will offer families and young visitors the opportunity to explore vibrant rhythms and movement of West African culture in Dance to the African Drums: A Family Experience.

All performances are now on sale. Tickets to *The Center Will Not Hold* begin at \$65. Tickets to all three outdoor engagements this week are Choose What You Pay, allowing ticket buyers to set the price of their purchase. Rain or Shine tickets, priced at \$40 each, allow outdoor ticket holders access to an indoor venue at Jacob's Pillow, which will host outdoor performances in the event of inclement weather. For tickets and reservations, visit jacobspillow.org.

ABOUT *THE CENTER WILL NOT HOLD*: A DORRANCE DANCE PRODUCTION

Michelle Dorrance and Ephrat Asherie offer a lively celebration of street, club, and vernacular dances, born from their many years of creating together. Originally crafted in 2022 as a short duet, *The Center Will Not Hold* premiered as a 30-minute piece at New York City Center's 2023 Fall For Dance Festival. In the fall of 2024, Dorrance and Asherie had a residency at Jacob's Pillow to develop their ideas, and in February of this year, a technical residency at MASS MoCA co-sponsored by the Pillow enabled the work to be refined for an audience. Now, in this reimagined evening-length work, Dorrance and Asherie offer an eclectic ensemble of 11 performers, each deeply rooted in regional music and movement, from tap dance and hip-hop to breaking, house, Chicago footwork, Detroit jit, litefeet, Memphis jookin', and body percussion. *The Center Will Not Hold* features original music composed by Donovan Dorrance with live percussion by world-class drummer and percussionist John Angeles.

Jacob's Pillow has long been an artistic home for Michelle Dorrance, a tap performer, choreographer, teacher, and the Artistic Director of Dorrance Dance, which has headlined at the

festival nine times, most recently in 2021 and 2023. An artist “with a transcendent strength of spirit” (*The Washington Post*), Dorrance received the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award in 2013 and a MacArthur “Genius” Award in 2015. Ephrat Asherie is a b-girl dancer and choreographer whose works are hailed as “a magnificent celebration of movement and art” (*Charleston City Paper*). She has performed at Jacob’s Pillow numerous times since 2013, and her company, Ephrat Asherie Dance, developed its break-out work *Odeon* in the Pillow Lab in 2017 and had its world premiere at Festival 2018. Both based in New York City, Dorrance and Asherie have also served as Program Directors at The School at Jacob’s Pillow.

Watch clips from Michelle Dorrance and Ephrat Asherie on Jacob’s Pillow Dance Interactive:
Dorrance Dance, 2023: <https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/dorrance-dance/soundspace/>
Ephrat Asherie Dance, 2018: <https://danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org/ephrat-asherie-dance/odeon/>

ABOUT PREHISTORIC BODY THEATER

In their performance that opens Festival 2025, Prehistoric Body Theater—an experimental dance theater collective from Indonesia—channels dinosaurs as they explore themes of mass extinction, climate crisis, and evolutionary ancestry through movement. The group creates “deep-time animal dance” by fusing paleontology with traditional dance and experimental Javanese percussion. Prehistoric makes its U.S. debut in association with New York’s Asia Society with *Ghosts of Hell Creek: Stone Garuda*, a mesmerizing work that eulogizes the raptors who perished in the Chicxulub asteroid impact 66 million years ago, while celebrating the survival of our earliest primate ancestors in a world born anew.

Praised as “an innovative form of global public outreach for paleontology” (Oxford University Press), Prehistoric Body Theater collaborates with Indigenous Indonesian performing artists as well as international scientists—uniting art, science, and a deep commitment to nature conservation.

ABOUT *DJAPO*: MARIE BASSE-WILES AND OMARI WILES

Omari Wiles—a force in New York’s ballroom and dance scenes—joins his mother, Marie Basse-Wiles, a revered figure in African diasporic dance, for *Djapo*, a vibrant new work commissioned by Works & Process, bringing together their companies Les Ballet Afrik and Maimouna Keita School of African Dance.

Rooted in the rhythms of Senegal and Mali, this electrifying performance blends traditional West African dance with contemporary African club culture, Afrobeats, and live percussion, shaped through the duo's intergenerational collaboration. Company dancers come together for an in-process performance of *Djapo*, exploring the evolution of movement, music, and community, celebrating the deep ties between past and present while amplifying the visibility of African cultural traditions in today's global dance landscape.

Djapo's development is supported by Works & Process LaunchPAD residencies at Bethany Arts Community, Watermill Center, Pocantico Center, and Prior Performing Arts Center at the College of the Holy Cross. Music commission made possible by the Charles and Joan Gross Family Foundation. Additional support provided by the New York State Council on the Arts.

ABOUT THE SCHOOL AT JACOB'S PILLOW CONTEMPORARY BALLET PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE

The School at Jacob's Pillow Performance Ensembles highlight the next generation of the dance world, offering a glimpse into the future of the art form. Their performance marks the culmination of an intensive two-week Contemporary Ballet Program and features world premiere works created by renowned choreographers who serve as Artist Faculty.

Dancers from The School at Jacob's Pillow include apprentices, trainees, pre-professionals, and early-career professionals from around the globe. Held on campus during the Festival, The School's professional advancement programs are dedicated to nurturing the distinct artistic voice and growth of each dancer. This summer on the outdoor Henry J. Leir Stage, Program Director Annabelle Lopez Ochoa will present her world premiere of *Blazevich*, and Guest Choreographer Durante Verzola will debut his new original work, *Soirées Musicales*.

PERFORMANCE & TICKET DETAILS

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

The Center Will Not Hold: A Dorrance Dance Production

June 25-29; Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 7:30pm; Friday, Saturday, and Sunday at 2pm
Ted Shawn Theatre | Tickets from \$65

Prehistoric Body Theater

June 25-26; Wednesday and Thursday at 5:30pm

Henry J. Leir Stage | Choose What You Pay; Rain or Shine tickets from \$40

Djapo: Marie Basse Wiles and Omari Wiles

Friday, June 27 at 5:30pm

Henry J. Leir Stage | Choose What You Pay; Rain or Shine tickets from \$40

The School at Jacob's Pillow: Contemporary Ballet Performance Ensemble

Saturday, June 28 at 5:30pm

Henry J. Leir Stage | Choose What You Pay; Rain or Shine tickets from \$40

Livestream: Saturday, June 28 at 5:30pm

Encore Stream: Sunday, June 29 at 8pm through Monday, June 30 at 8pm

ADDITIONAL EVENTS

Morning Classes

June 24-27; Tuesday through Friday, 9-10am

Open to all dance experience levels, ages 16+. Offered weekly through the summer in Sommers Studio. \$15 per class; \$60 for 5 class card. Pay via online pre-registration or cash/card at the door.

- **Ballet** with Isadora Wolfe: Tuesdays through August 19
- **Modern/Contemporary** with Sayer Mansfield, Ryoko Kudo, Sarah Zehnder, and Barbie Dieward: Wednesdays through August 20
- **West African Dance & Spiritual Well-Being** with Truth Hunter, Tara Murphy, and Noel Staples-Freeman, with live drumming by Aimee Gelinis and Daniel Cohen: Thursdays through August 21
- **Zumba® or The Quilombo Experience** with Luana Dias David: Fridays through August 22

PillowTalk: The Center Will Not Hold

Saturday, June 28 at 4pm

Blake's Barn | FREE

In this behind-the-scenes conversation, Ephrat Asherie, Michelle Dorrance, and collaborators share the inspirations, practices, and lineages informing *The Center Will Not Hold*, including tap dance, hip-hop, breaking, house, Chicago footwork, Detroit jit, litefeet, Memphis jookin', and body percussion.

Dance to the African Drums: A Family Experience

Sunday, June 29, 11am-12pm

Sommers Studio | Registration required

Join artist Noel Staples-Freeman for a joyful West African dance class for families of all ages. Explore the vibrant rhythms and movement of West African culture while connecting with each other through dance. This fun and playful class invites creativity, learning through play, celebrates family bonds, and offers a unique opportunity to experience the joy of movement together. We'll also explore the roots of traditional movement and the stories they tell, deepening our connection to the culture. \$30 per class, per family. Recommended for all ages. Class size will be limited to 12 families per event.

Dance Workshop with Festival Artists: Club Culture & Freestyle with Ephrat Asherie

Sunday, June 29, 10-11:30am

Open to all dance experience levels, ages 12+

Come catch some New York City club vibes with Ephrat Asherie's high energy community workshop. Participants will learn about NYC club culture, including the importance of freestyle, connecting with the music and each other! Wear comfortable clothing; sneakers recommended.

FESTIVAL EXHIBITS & ARCHIVES – ONGOING

CONNECTING THROUGH TIME: 50 SEASONS WITH NORTON OWEN

Curated by Pillow alum Wendy Perron, American dancer and choreographer, dance historian, and former Editor-in-Chief of *Dance Magazine*, this exhibit celebrates Director of Preservation Norton Owen, who for fifty seasons has delved into the past to highlight the present and look toward the future. *Blake's Barn and the Norton Owen Reading Room; open Tue-Sun, noon through final curtain. Special opening Saturday, June 14, 2pm.*

AILEY CONNECTIONS

With connections spanning more than seven decades, the Pillow and Alvin Ailey have been aligned in spirit since two of Ailey's earliest works were performed here in 1954. Encompassing such Ailey icons as Carmen de Lavallade, James Truitte, and Judith Jamison, this exhibition curated by Norton Owen highlights some of the remarkable history that these two landmark

dance institutions have shared. *Ted Shawn Theatre Lobby; open Tue-Sun, noon through final curtain. Special opening Saturday, June 14, 2pm.*

Jacob's Pillow Archives/Norton Owen Reading Room

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. *Blake's Barn; open Tues.-Sun., noon through final curtain.*

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, which celebrates its 93rd season in Summer 2025. 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.

Founded by Ted Shawn in 1933, 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 highlighted 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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