

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

August 1-6, 2000
Ted Shawn Theatre

presents

Mark Morris Dance Group

JOE BOWIE CHARLTON BOYD RUTH DAVIDSON
SETH DAVIS* MARJORIE FOLKMAN SHAWN GANNON
LAUREN GRANT JOHN HEGINBOTHAM
DAVID LEVENTHAL BRADON MCDONALD*
RACHEL MURRAY GREGORY NUBER* JUNE OMURA
MIREILLE RADWAN-DANA KIM REIS* GUILLERMO RESTO
MATTHEW ROSE JULIE WORDEN MICHELLE YARD

Artistic Director **MARK MORRIS**
General Director **BARRY ALTERMAN**
Managing Director **NANCY UMANOFF**

*apprentice

Choreography by Mark Morris

SANG-FROID (2000)

Music: Frédéric Chopin

(*Etude in a, Mazurka in a, Etude in Gb,*
Mazurka in D, Berceuse in Db, Waltz in Db,
Nocturne in f, Prelude in A, Etude in a)

Lighting: Michael Chybowski

Costumes: Elizabeth Kurtzman

ETHAN IVERSON, *piano*

JOE BOWIE, LAUREN GRANT, MARJORIE FOLKMAN,
JOHN HEGINBOTHAM, DAVID LEVENTHAL, JUNE OMURA,
MIREILLE RADWAN-DANA, MATTHEW ROSE, JULIE WORDEN

Sang-Froid has been commissioned by the American Dance Festival through the Doris Duke Awards for New Work, with additional support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Sang-Froid was also made possible by the Doris Duke Fund for Dance of the National Dance Project, a program administered by the New England Foundation for the Arts with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Doris Duke Charitable Foundations, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Phillip Morris Companies Inc. Additional support was provided by the Charles Englehard Foundation.

-PAUSE-

DECK OF CARDS (1983)

Music: *Gear Jammer* performed by Jimmy Logsdon

Say It's Not You performed by George Jones

Deck of Cards performed by T. Texas Tyler

Lighting: Michael Chybowski

MARK MORRIS, MICHELLE YARD

.INTERMISSION-

BEDTIME (1992)

Music: Franz Schubert (*Wiegenlied, Ständchen, Erlkönig*)

Lighting: James F. Ingalls

Costumes: Susan Ruddle

CLARE STOLLAK, *mezzo-soprano*

DOUGLAS SCHMOLZE, ALEXANDER THORP, *tenors*;

JACK BROWN, WILLIAM FULLER, *basses*

ETHAN IVERSON, *piano*

JOE BOWIE, CHARLTON BOYD (8/2, 8/4, 8/5),

RUTH DAVIDSON, MARJORIE FOLKMAN, LAUREN GRANT,

DAVID LEVENTHAL, MARK MORRIS (8/1, 8/3, 8/6), RACHEL MURRAY,

JUNE OMURA, MIREILLE RADWAN-DANA, KIM REIS,

JULIE WORDEN, MICHELLE YARD

-PAUSE-

PECCADILLOS (2000)

Music: Erik Satie

(*Menus propos enfantins, Enfantillages pittoresques, Peccadilles importunes*)

Lighting: Michael Chybowski

Costume: Martin Pakledinaz

ETHAN IVERSON, *piano*

GUILLERMO RESTO

-PAUSE-

DANCING HONEYMOON (1998)

Music: *Limehouse Blues; You Were Meant for Me; Do Do Do;*

Someone to Watch Over Me; A Cup of Coffee, A Sandwich, and You;

Wild Thyme; Experiment; Dancing Honeymoon;

And Her Mother Came Too; Fancy Our Meeting; Who;

Two Little Bluebirds; Goodnight, Vienna; It's Not You; There's Always Tomorrow

Transcribed and arranged by Ethan Iverson from historical recordings

of Gertrude Lawrence and Jack Buchanan.

Lighting: Michael Chybowski

Costumes: Elizabeth Kurtzman

EILEEN CLARK, *soprano* SARAH ROTH, *violin*;

ETHAN IVERSON, *piano*; JOHN HOLLENBECK, *percussion*

JOE BOWIE (8/1, 8/3, 8/5 matinee, 8/6) CHARLTON BOYD,

RUTH DAVIDSON, SHAWN GANNON,

JOHN HEGINBOTHAM, MIREILLE RADWAN-DANA,

MARK MORRIS (8/2, 8/4, 8/5 evening), JULIE WORDEN

This dance was created under the auspices of the Mark Morris Dance Group NewWorks Fund sponsored by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

MARK MORRIS was born on August 29, 1956 in Seattle, Washington, where he studied as a young man with Verla Flowers and Perry Brunson. He performed with a variety of companies in the early years of his career, including the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, Hannah Kahn Dance Company, Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians, Eliot Feld Ballet, and the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. He formed the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1980, and has since created over 100 works for the Dance Group, as well as choreographing dances for many ballet companies, including the San Francisco Ballet, the Paris Opera Ballet, and American Ballet Theatre.

From 1988-1991 he was Director of Dance at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, the national opera house of Belgium. During his tenure there, he created 12 pieces including three evening-length works: *The Hard Nut* (his comic book-inspired version of *The Nutcracker*); *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; and *Dido and Aeneas*, and founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Mr. Morris is noted for his musicality - he has been described as "undeviating in his devotion to music" - and for his "ability to conjure so many contradictory styles and emotions". He has worked extensively in opera as both a

choreographer and a director. Most recently, he directed and choreographed a Royal Opera, Covent Garden production of Rameau's *Platée* which premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in 1997 and had its New York debut with The New York City Opera in April 2000 at Lincoln Center. Mr. Morris was named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation in 1991, and he is the subject of a biography by Joan Acocella (Farrar, Straus & Giroux).

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP was formed in 1980 and gave its first concert that year in New York City. In the following years, the company's touring schedule steadily expanded to include cities both in the U.S. and in Europe and, in 1986, the Dance Group made its first national television program for the PBS *Dance in America* series. In 1988, the Mark Morris Dance Group was invited to become the national dance company of Belgium. During its three years as resident company of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, the Dance Group was the subject of several television programs, including the U.K.'s *South Bank Show*. The company returned to the United States in 1991 as one of the world's leading dance companies, performing across the U.S. and at major international festivals. The Dance Group has maintained and strengthened its ties to several cities around the world, most notably Berkeley, CA where, for the past several years, the Dance Group has performed twice annually at CalPerformances - including presentations of *The Hard Nut* each December from 1996-1999. Audiences have also become accustomed to the Dance Group's regular and frequent appearances in Boston, MA; Fairfax, VA; London, England; and at the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in Becket, MA. The Dance Group was recently named the official dance company (2000 - 2005) of the Virginia Waterfront International Arts Festival. In addition to a full international touring schedule, the Dance Group has recently completed two film projects: an Emmy Award-winning collaboration with cellist Yo-Yo Ma entitled *Falling Down Stairs* using Bach's Third Suite for unaccompanied cello and a film version of Mr. Morris' *Dido and Aeneas*. The company's British premiere performances of *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* with the English National Opera garnered the Dance Group the 1997 Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Dance Production.

JOE BOWIE, born in Lansing, Michigan, began dancing while attending Brown University. After graduating with honors in English and American Literature, he moved to New York and performed in the works of Robert Wilson, Ulysses Dove, and danced with The Paul Taylor Dance Company for two years before going to Belgium to work with Mark Morris in 1989.

CHARLTON BOYD was born in New Jersey where he studied and performed with Inner City Ensemble Theater & Dance

Company. He is a graduate of the Juilliard School and has danced with the Limón Dance Company. He appears in the José Limón Technique Video, Volume I, and other music videos. He first appeared with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1989 and became a full-time company member in 1994.

EILEEN CLARK (soprano) has sung Queen of the Night (*The Magic Flute*) and Naïad (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) with Syracuse Opera. She has also appeared in principal roles with Concert Royal, Commonwealth Opera, and others. In concert, she has guested with Syracuse Symphony, Newark Cathedral Symphony, Adirondack Festival Orchestra and Long Island Symphonic Chorale. Eileen has sung for dance companies such as the Limón Dance Company, Anita Feldman Tap and New York Baroque Dance Co. When not touring with Mark Morris Dance Group (with whom she sings works by Brahms, Purcell, Monteverdi and Vivaldi), she enjoys singing as soloist and chorister with Lilith and Ascension Music Inc, and creating unusual concerts with vocal quartet Kiitos. Eileen has recorded on Delos, Sony, Vox, Newport Classics, RCA, and appears on the sound track of *Dead Man Walking*.

RUTH DAVIDSON, a native New Yorker, has enjoyed dancing with the Mark Morris Dance Group since its first performance in 1980. She has studied consistently with Jocelyn Lorenz since 1979.

SETH DAVIS began dancing under the instruction of his mother, Victoria Shiflet, in Fredericksburg, Virginia. He attended Shenandoah Conservatory where he studied dance and photography. After receiving a full scholarship to the School of American Ballet, he moved to New York City. He has performed with bopi's black sheep, dances by Kraig Patterson, and in numerous productions with the Metropolitan Opera Ballet. He can also be seen dancing in the upcoming feature film *Still a Kiss*. He has performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group since 1998.

MARJORIE FOLKMAN graduated from Barnard College, summa cum laude. She has danced for Spencer/Colton, Kraig Patterson, Sally Hess, Sara Rudner, the Repertory Understudy Group for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, and began dancing with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1996.

SHAWN GANNON is from Dover, New Jersey, where he received his early dance training with Dorothy Wescott Rosen. He joined the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1995 after dancing with Lee Theodore's Dance Machine, Mark Dendy Dance Group, Laura Dean Dancers and Musicians, and Jane Comfort and Company.

LAUREN GRANT was born and raised in Highland Park, Illinois. She graduated with a B.F.A. from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts where she was awarded the Eric and Mark Myers Scholarship. Ms. Grant began working with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1996 and became a full-time

company member in 1998.

JOHN HEGINBOTHAM grew up in Anchorage, Alaska. He graduated from The Juilliard School's dance division in 1993 and since then has performed with artists including John Jasperse, Ben Munisteri, and as a guest artist with Pilobolus Dance Theater. He was a member of Susan Marshall and Company from 1995-1998. He joined MMDG in 1998.

JOHN HOLLENBECK (percussion), always in pursuit of new musical languages, has recently collaborated with Meredith Monk as well as many of the world's finest jazz ensembles while continuing his solo performances in such places as Brazil. In addition to his small-group jazz performances with Ellery Eskelin, Hank Roberts, Mark Dresser, and David Liebman, he is also a member of Bob Brookmeyer's New Art Orchestra and is a frequent guest with the Village Vanguard Orchestra, Maria Schneider's Jazz Orchestra and the BMI Orchestra. A student of Brazilian and Indian music, Hollenbeck also performs a variety of traditional musics from around the world. Hollenbeck is the recipient of a B.M. in percussion and a M.M. in jazz composition from the Eastman School of Music. His first recording as a leader will be issued on the CRI label in 1999. At the present, he leads two ensembles - The Claudia Quintet and Quartet Lucy.

ETHAN IVERSON (piano/music director) took his place at the feet of the Mark Morris Dance Group in January 1998. A modern jazz pianist, Iverson's latest CD (The Minor Passions, with Reid Anderson and Billy Hart) was first on Ben Ratliff's list of the Top Ten "alternative" jazz recordings of 1999 in The New York Times. This year Iverson's engagements include solo, trio, and quartet performances as a leader (his Weill Hall recital debut is next February), sideman appearances with the Dave Douglas Sextet and the Mark Turner Quartet, and his concerto debut playing the Pat Zimmerli Piano Concerto with Metamorphosen in Boston. His piano teachers are Sophia Rosoff and Fred Hersch.

DAVID LEVENTHAL, a native of Newton, Massachusetts, began his dance training at Boston Ballet School, and continued his studies with Boston-area teachers and at Brown University, where he received a B.A. with honors in English Literature. He danced with the companies of Marcus Schulkind, Spencer/Colton, Ben Munisteri and Zvi Gotheiner before joining the Mark Morris Dance Group in January of 1998.

BRADON McDONALD received his B.F.A. from the Juilliard School in 1997. After graduation he won the Princess Grace Award and joined the Limón Dance Company where, for 3 years, he performed such roles as "Eros" in Limón's *The Winged*, "Iago" in Limón's *The Moor's Pavane* and the third and fifth solos in Tudor's *Dark Elegies* as well as works by Jiri Kylian, Doug Varone, Igal Perry,

and Donald McKayle. Bradon has choreographed and presented his own works internationally and has served as choreographer for seven Juilliard Opera Company productions under the director Frank Corsaro. Recently Bradon was the choreographic assistant to Donald McKayle for his new work on the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. This is Bradon's first season with the Mark Morris Dance Group.

RACHEL MURRAY, born in New York City, began her dance training at The Temple of the Wings in Berkeley, California. Her performing career began at age 14, dancing with the African-jazz troupe Terpsichore, touring hotels and lodges throughout British Columbia. She then miraculously landed in Honolulu, Hawaii where she studied and danced with master teacher Betty Jones and her Dances We Dance company. Before joining the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1988, Ms. Murray was performing with Senta Driver's Harry of New York City.

GREGORY NUBER has appeared with the Mark Morris Dance Group since 1998 in productions of *The Hard Nut*; *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; *Platé*; and with cellist, Yo-Yo Ma, in *Rhymes With Silver*. He was delighted to join the Dance Group as an apprentice in April 2000. Gregory has also danced in New York City Opera's production of *Carmina Burana* directed and choreographed by Donald Byrd, and was a member of Pascal Rioult Dance Theatre for three years. He is a graduate of Arizona State University with degrees in theatre and dance.

JUNE OMURA spent her formative first six years in New York City and then grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, appearing in local dance and theater productions from the age of eight. She returned to New York to attend Barnard College, graduating in 1986 with honors in dance and English. She first studied with Mark Morris that summer and happily joined the Dance Group in 1988.

MIREILLE RADWAN-DANA joined in 1988. "The six Grandfathers have placed in this world many things, all of which should be happy. Every little thing is sent for something, and in that thing there should be happiness and the power to make happy. Like the grasses showing tender faces to each other, thus we should do, for this was the wish of the Grandfathers of the world." (Black Elk)

KIM REIS was raised in Vancouver, Washington, where she competed in gymnastics for eight years before leaving the sport to pursue dance at a performing arts high school. She received her B.F.A. from the University of Utah, and is certified to teach Pilates. Kim first appeared with the Dance Group in 1998 and became an apprentice in April 2000. Endless thanks to family, friends, and teachers for their belief and support.

GUILLERMO RESTO has danced with Mark Morris since 1983.

MATTHEW ROSE received his B.F.A. from the University of Michigan. He has appeared with the Martha Graham Dance Company,

Pascal Rioult Dance Theater, and Ann Arbor Dance Works. Matthew began working with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1997 and became a full-time company member in 1999.

SARAH ROTH (violin) is from the Boston area. She graduated with distinction in performance from the New England Conservatory of Music, where she began her early training in the Preparatory School. She is active as an orchestral musician, playing with the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra, and Cantata Singers. As a member of Boston's Emmanuel Music she has performed over 100 cantatas of J. S. Bach, has appeared as soloist, orchestral and chamber musician in Emmanuel's major productions of Bach, Handel, Mozart, Brahms and Schubert, and was the violinist in the Peter Sellars/Craig Smith production of *Weill/Bach: Mahagonny Songspiel; Conversations Between Fear and Death*, presented recently in Paris and Frankfurt. Her principal teacher was James Buswell, and as a Tanglewood Fellow, she coached chamber music with Joel Smirnoff, Peter Serkin, and Yo-Yo Ma.

CLARE STOLLAK (mezzo-soprano) is a native of East Lansing, Michigan and holds performance degrees from the University of Michigan and Yale University. She has most

enjoyed performing in numerous works by Edward Gorey at The American Repertory Theater, Provincetown Repertory Theater (with music by Grammy and Emmy Award winner Peter Matz) and Off-Broadway in the Drama Desk nominated "*Amphigorey: a Musicale*". In addition she has performed with many regional opera companies across the United States and has performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group in works of Brahms and Schubert across the U.S. and U.K.

JULIE WORDEN, from Naples, Florida, is a graduate of the North Carolina School of the Arts. She worked with Chicago choreographers Bob Eisen, Jan Erkert and Sheldon B. Smith. She has been dancing with Mark Morris since 1994.

MICHELLE YARD was born in Brooklyn, N.Y. She began her professional dance training at the New York City High School of the Performing Arts. Upon her graduation she received the Helen Tamiris and B'nai Brith awards. For three years she was also a scholarship student at The Alvin Ailey Dance Center. She attended New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where she recently graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts. Michelle began dancing with the Dance Group in 1997.

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP STAFF

Technical Director: Johan Henckens

Music Director: Ethan Iverson

Rehearsal Director: Tina Fehlandt

Lighting Supervisor: Michael Chybowski

Wardrobe Supervisor: Pamela Anson

Sound Supervisor: Emanuele Corazzini

Development Director: Michael Osso

Associate Managing Director: Eva Nichols

Fiscal Administrator: Lynn Wichern

Development Associate: Lesley Berson

Company Administrator: Lisa Belvin

Booking Representative: Michael Mushalla (Double M Arts & Events)

Media Representative: William Murray (Better Attitude, Inc.)

Legal Counsel: Mark Selinger (McDermott, Will and Emery)

Accountant: Kathryn Lundquist, CPA

Orthopaedist: David S. Weiss, M.D. (NYU-HJD Department of Orthopaedic Surgery)

Thanks to Maxine Morris.

Sincerest thanks to all the dancers for their dedication, support, and incalculable contribution to the work.

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BEDTIME

Music: Franz Schubert ("Wiegenlied," "Ständchen," "Erlkönig")

Author unknown

WIEGENLIED

D498 November 1816; published in 1829

Schlafe, holder, süsßer Knabe,

Leise wiegt dich deiner Mutter Hand;

Sanfte Ruhe, milde Labe

Bringt dir schwebend dieses Wiegenband.

Schlafe in dem süsßen Grabe,

Noch beschützt dich deiner Mutter Arm,

Alle Wünsche, alle Habe

Fasst sie liebend, alle liebewarm.

Schlafe in der Flaumen Schoosse,

Noch umtönt dich lauter Liebeston,

LULLABY

Sleep, dear, sweet boy,

Your mother's hand rocks you softly.

This swaying cradle strap

Brings you gentle peace and tender comfort.

Sleep in the sweet grave;

Your mother's arms still protect you.

All her wishes, all her possessions

She holds lovingly, with loving warmth.

Sleep in her lap, soft as down;

Purely notes of love still echo around you.

Eine Lilie, eine Rose,
Nach dem Schläfe werd' sie dir zum Lohn.

Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872)

STÄNDCHEN

(first version) D920 July 1827; published 1891

Zögernd leise
In des Dunkels näch'tger Hülle
Sind wir hier;
Und den Finger sanft gekrümmt,
Leise, leise,
Pochen wir
An des Liebchens Kammerthür.

Doch nun steigend,
Schwellend, schwellend,
Mit vereinter Stimme, Laut
Rufen aus wir hochvertraut:
Schlaf du nicht,
Wenn der Neigung Stimme spricht!

Sucht' ein Weiser nah und ferne
Menschen einst mit der Laterne;
Wieviel seltner dann als Gold
Menschen, uns geneigt und hold?
Drum wenn Freundschaft, Liebe spricht,
Freundin, Liebchen, schlaf du nicht!

Aber was in allen Reichen
Wär' dem Schlummer zu vergleichen?
Drum statt Worten und statt Gaben
Sollst du nun auch Ruhe haben.
Noch ein Grüsschen, noch ein Wort,
Es verstummt dir frohe Weise,
Leise, leise,
Schleichen wir uns, ja, schleichen wir uns
wieder fort!

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832)

ERLKÖNIG

(fourth version) D328 October 1815(?); published in 1821 as Op 1

Wer reitet so spät durch Nacht und Wind?
Es ist der Vater mit seinem Kind:
Er hat den Knaben wohl in dem Arm,
Er fasst ihn sicher, er hält ihn warm.

"Mein Sohn, was birgst du so bang dein Gesicht?"
"Siehst, Vater, du den Erlkönig nicht?
Den Erlenkönig mit Kron und Schweif?"
Mein Sohn, es ist ein Nebelstreif"

"Du liebes Kind, komm, geh mit mir!
Gar schöne Spiele spiel ich mit dir;
Manch bunte Blumen sind an dem Strand,
Meine Mutter hat manch gülden Gewand."

"Mein Vater, mein Vater, und hörest du nicht,
Was Erlenkönig mir leise verspricht?"
"Sei ruhig, bleibe ruhig, mein Kind:
In dürren Blättern säuselt der Wind."

"Willst, feiner Knabe, du mit mir gehn?
Meine Töchter am düstern Ort?
Meine Töchter führen den nächtlichen Reihn
Und wiegen und tanzen und singen dich ein."

"Mein Vater, mein Vater, und siehst du nicht dort
Erlkönigs Töchter am düstern Ort?"
"Mein Sohn, mein Sohn, ich seh es genau:
Es scheinen die alten Weiden so grau."

"Ich liebe dich, mich reizt deine schöne Gestalt;
Und bist du nicht willig, so brauch ich Gewalt."

A lily, a rose
Shall be your reward after sleep.

SERENADE

Softly, hesitantly,
Cloaked in night's darkness,
We have come here;
And with fingers gently curled,
Softly, softly
We knock
On the beloved's bedroom door.

But now, our emotion rising,
Swelling,
Surging, with united voice
We call out loud, in warm friendship:
'Do not sleep
When the voice of affection speaks.'

Once a wise man with his lantern
Sought people near and far;
How much rarer, then, than gold
Are people who are fondly disposed to us?
And so, when friendship and love speak,
Do not sleep, friend, beloved!

But what in all the world's realms
Can be compared to sleep?
And so, instead of words and gifts,
You shall now have rest
Just one more greeting, one more word,
And our happy song ceases;
Softly, softly
We steal away again.

THE ERLKING

Who rides so late through the night and wind?
It is the father with his child.
He has the boy in his arms,
He holds him safely, he keeps him warm.

"My son, why do you hide your face in fear?"
"Father, can you not see the Erlking?
The Erlking with his crown and tail?"
"My son, it is a streak of mist."

'Sweet child, come with me,
I'll play wonderful games with you;
Many a pretty flower grows on the shore,
My mother has many a golden robe.'

"Father, father, do you not hear
What the Erlking softly promises me?"
"Calm, be calm my child:
The wind is rustling in the withered leaves."

'Won't you come with me, my fine lad?
My daughters shall wait upon you;
My daughters lead the nightly dance,
And will rock, and dance, and sing you to sleep.'

"Father, father, can you not see
Erlking's daughters there in the darkness?"
"My son, I can see clearly:
It is the old grey willows gleaming."

'I love you, your fair form allures me,
And if you don't come willingly, I'll use force'

“Mein Vater, mein Vater, jetzt fasst er mich an!
Erlkönig hat mir ein Leids getan!”
Dem Vater grauset, er reitet geschwind,
Er hält in Armen das ächzende Kind,
Erreicht den Hof mit Mühe und Not:
In seinen Armen das Kind war tot.

“Father, father, now he’s seizing me!
The Erlking has hurt me!”
The father shudders, he rides swiftly,
He holds the moaning child in his arms;
With one last effort he reaches home;
The child lay dead in his arms.

Compilation and translations by ©Richard Wigmore(1988)
from *Schubert The Complete Texts* by Richard Wigmore

Pillow Notes

By Suzanne Carbonneau

The Pillow Notes series is comprised of essays commissioned from our Scholars in Residence to provide audiences with a broader context for viewing dance.

The American attitude toward dance has always been conflicted: even as we are seduced by its undeniable powers, still we are convinced in the murky depths of our vestigial Puritanism that an enterprise centered in the body cannot speak to the soul. All too often, dance is viewed as unattractive but lightweight. An artistic activity, maybe—but one singularly lacking in profundity.

An instant antidote to this point of view exists in the choreography of Mark Morris which, in its richness, depth, inventiveness, complexity, and insight, convincingly persuades us that dance is important. Not decorative, not diversionary. But truly momentous. Life-giving, life-affirming, life-changing.

Morris’s dances are essential additions to the corpus of artworks that we consider crucial in coming to an understanding of ourselves and our place in the universe. They are, at once, philosophical treatises on the human condition; music made corporeal; vehicles for the creation of community; essays in classical form and structure; commentary on other art forms, art works, artists, and cultures; arguments for an expanded and diversified humanism; celebrations of kinetic pleasures. The British painter Howard Hodgkin was stunned when he first saw Morris’s 1988 masterwork, *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, declaring it “infinitely more classical” than he could have imagined. “I think he is great,” Hodgkin said, “and I don’t say that easily.” Similar testimony has been pronounced over and over again by those who are converts to dance on the basis of acquaintance with the Morris repertory.

That dance is of consequence is a conviction that Morris has carried with him since he began choreographing, and it is an idea that suffuses his works, providing them with their resonance, power, scope, and sweep. Morris himself discovered the significance of dance when he was just fourteen, and a member of the Seattle-based Balkan dance ensemble Koleda. While the classical Western tradition has sought to remove dance from contact with the earth, from the natural physique, and from community concerns, Morris’s Koleda experience revealed dance as the most humanistic and germane of enterprises. The values he discovered in Koleda’s dancing—an affinity for gravity and close relationship to the earth, extraordinarily complex rhythms, and a feeling of community—he recognized as entrée to membership in the human family. Morris has cherished these concerns ever since, reinventing notions of classicism to include them, and positing them as central in his own choreography.

Morris provides an architecture of classical structures—which he has extended more inventively than any living choreographer—as scaffolding for movement that is angelic and ungainly, lived-in and screwball, homely and elegant. The dancing possesses extraordinary conviction. There seems never a false moment. We are always aware that these are real people creating this sensorily-rich choreographic world. It is dancing in which we are cognizant of skin, of bones, of sinew, of musculature, of weight. We are attuned to lungs filling with air, blood coursing through veins, hearts beating within rib cages. Always, Morris’s abstractions, metaphors, images, and ideas are grounded in palpable flesh.

And Morris makes a convincing case that, far from separating us from heaven, it is the flesh that links us with the angels. He knows what Renaissance astronomers drew from theology: that the order of the heavens can best be understood as dance patterns, that the music of the spheres joins heaven and earth. In grounding his artistic endeavors in the body, Morris makes us understand that our conception of what is godlike actually reflects what is most human in us. The phrase from Milton that recurs in *L’Allegro*, “the hidden soul of harmony,” is what Morris seeks to excavate in his dances. Through the classical ideals of harmony, order, symmetry, balance, and

grace, Morris uses the human body, linked in community with other bodies, to search out the mysteries of existence, the elusive possibility of the perfectibility of human beings. Morris employs an extraordinary understanding of spatial relationships and design to create his own music of the spheres, making the case for geometric form as a means to utopia. Spatial design becomes an essay in morality; within the heady climes of abstraction, we can find guidelines for living our lives. Geometry becomes akin to theology.

Always, Morris's consummate craftsmanship is at the service of emotional acumen. His dances plumb the soul, seeking out both the limits and terrors of human existence. They are a complex layering of image, metaphor, feeling, spatial design, group relationships, and dialogue with art history. Known for the transcendent musicality of his works which are grounded in his deep and imaginative understanding of musical structure, Morris has choreographed to seemingly every kind of music. Always there is a feeling of inevitability to his handling of the score. In addition to his choreography for the Mark Morris Dance Group and other dance companies, Morris has also directed and choreographed operas (Johann Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice*, Rameau's *Platée*, and Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts*) and musical theater (Paul Simon's *Capeman*).

A true original, Morris is impossible to categorize. Like that of the best artists, his work is instantly recognizable and impossible to replicate. He is classical and irreverent, audaciously theatrical and austere, outrageously witty and deadly serious, slyly knowing and utterly sincere. And often, all of these things at once. Proudly wearing his influences—George Balanchine, Jerome Robbins, Paul Taylor, the pioneering modern dance choreographers—Morris builds on what he has learned from them to create a thoroughly idiosyncratic vision that is, at the same time, of universal appeal. Morris's psychological insights, abstract designs, and deeply-felt humanism, seem instantly recognizable across individuals, genders, generations, cultures.

Morris's subjects are the Big Ones: life, death, love, faith, fellowship, solitude, grace, joy. Morris trusts that dance has something important to tell us about how we make our way through the world with kindness and comradeship. But Morris is no bowdlerizer: he does not flinch at showing us the obstacles to perfection. He has portrayed incest (*Lovey*), vampirism (*One Charming Night*), cataclysm (*Behemoth*), jealousy (*Jealousy*), betrayal (*Dido and Aeneas*), utter desolation (*Stabat Mater*)—even the tragedies of the quotidian (*Mythologies*). Moreover, in his happiest works, there is the acknowledgment of pain: lurking in the background are the outsider (*Going Away Party*), death (*Love Song Waltzes*), disappointment (*The "Tamil Film Songs in Stereo" Pas de Deux*). But again, we can turn to his masterwork *L'Allegro* for resolution. Certainly, what drew Morris to the Handel work were the opportunities it afforded to alternately portray both joy ("I'Allegro") and suffering ("il Penseroso"), with the added bonus of the palliative offered by librettist Charles Jennens in "il Moderato." And, of course, it is important to Morris that, at the end of this huge and complex argument, "I'Allegro" is given the last word: "Mirth, with thee we mean to live." In the pleasures they offer, Morris's dances do indeed allow us to find a home there.

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For further reading: Joan Acocella, *Mark Morris* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993)

Jacob's Pillow's presentation of new work by the Mark Morris Dance Group is funded in part by the National Dance Project of the New England Foundation for the Arts, with lead funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. Additional funding provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and Philip Morris Companies Inc. Support for this Festival presentation, including performances and free events, is also provided by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency; the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund; the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; The Shubert Foundation; the Harkness Foundation for Dance; The Prospect Hill Foundation; other private foundations; Berkshire businesses; and our Members. Residency support comes from the Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation.

Major support for the Mark Morris Dance Group is provided by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and The Howard Gilman Foundation. The Mark Morris Dance Group's performances are made possible with public funds from the National Endowment for the Arts Dance Program and the New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency. Mark Morris Dance Group *New Works Fund* is sponsored by Philip Morris Companies Inc.

Additional funding has been received from Booz Allen and Hamilton, Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust, Chase Manhattan Bank, The Aaron Copland Fund for Music, Dance Ink, The Eleanor Naylor Dana Charitable Trust, Doris Duke Fund for Dance of the National Dance Project, a program of the New England Foundation for the Arts, Charles Engelhard Foundation, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation Inc., Fund for U.S. Artists at International Festivals, The Howard Gilman Foundation, GreenPoint Bank, The Harkness Foundation for Dance, Sydney & Francis Lewis Foundation, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, MTV, N. Peal Cashmere, Philip Morris Companies Inc., The Shubert Foundation, Inc., VOGUE, Lila Wallace Theater Fund and the Friends of the Mark Morris Dance Group.



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