

# Jacob's Pillow *Dance*

2003  
Season

now a  
National  
Historic Landmark





# Welcome

# Chairman's Letter

WELCOME

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Ella Baff.  
Photo by Mike van Sleen.

In 2003 we celebrate a glorious moment in the life of Jacob's Pillow: we have been named a National Historic Landmark by the federal government. The Pillow is the first dance institution ever to achieve this recognition.

In 2001 the Pillow was named to the National Register of Historic Places. Of the 73,000 sites on the Register, only 3 percent are considered eligible to become National Historic Landmarks. We share this distinction with emblematic places such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall, the Empire State Building and the U.S. Capitol.

Becoming a National Historic Landmark is a signal moment for Jacob's Pillow—and an especially welcome one during a very difficult time for the arts. Please know that every one of you reading this plays a role in our achievements. We are powerful in what we care about. Together we accomplish great things and write our own history.

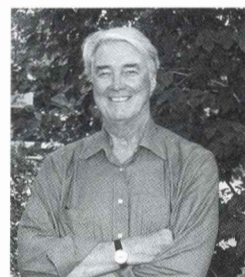
With thanks and good wishes,

Ella Baff  
Executive Director

Dear Friends and Supporters:

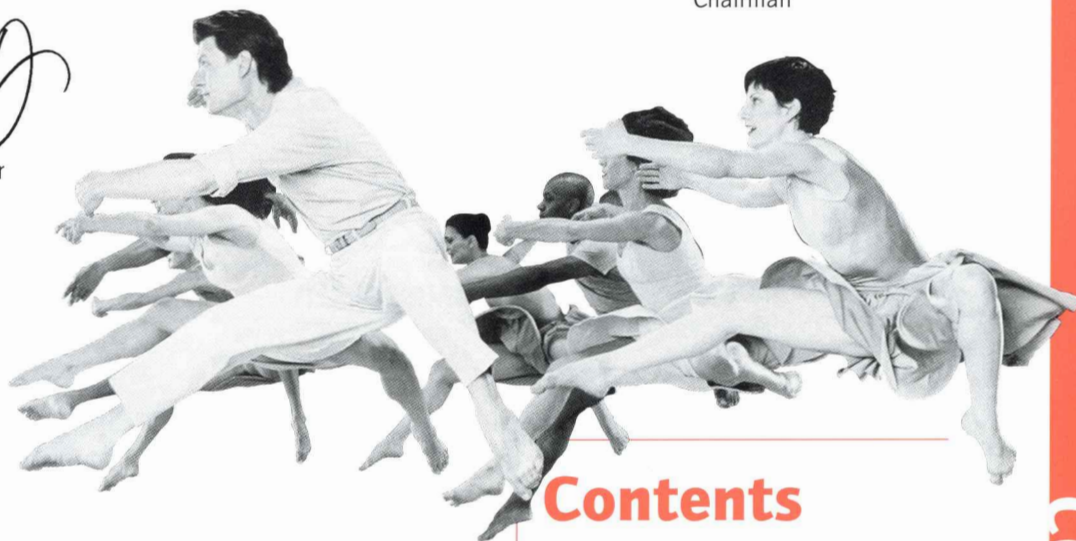
This year we, as Americans, are being tested in ways most of us have never experienced. We each face and react to these challenges in our own personal ways. Many institutions are also facing pressures which have forced them to retrench dramatically — at a heavy cost to their artistic integrity or even to their survival.

Our Board is working diligently to meet these challenges, and with a loyal and growing body of supporters we are hopeful of staying the course. We are dedicated to continuing to provide a special haven for artistic creativity and expression— as we have for over 70 years. With our recent designation as a National Historic Landmark, we are inspired to strive even harder. With your help we will succeed. Thank you for your continued support.



Neil Chrisman.  
Photo by Mike van Sleen.

Neil D. Chrisman  
Chairman



Mark Morris Dance Group. Photo by Mark Royce.

## Contact Info

### Tickets

[www.jacobspillow.org](http://www.jacobspillow.org)  
Ph: (413) 243-0745  
Fax: (413) 243-0749

### Box Office Hours

12-5 daily & until curtain up

## Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, School, Archives & Community Programs

358 George Carter Road, Becket MA 01223  
PO Box 287, Lee, MA 01238

Administrative Office: (413) 637-1322  
Community Dance Hotline: x57  
Membership and Donations: x25

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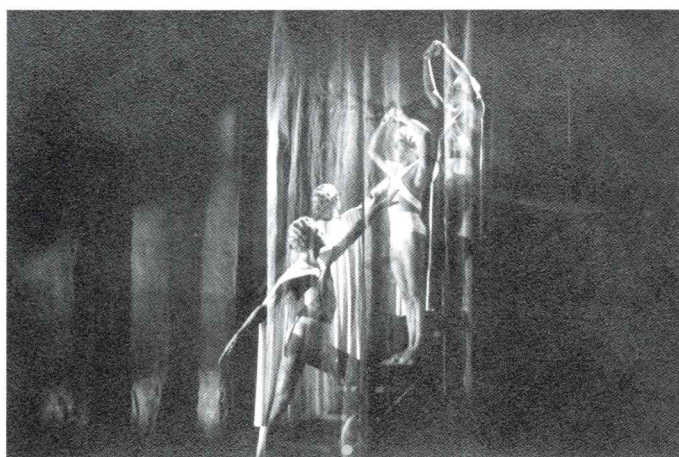


# A Landmark History

Jacob's Pillow has a unique background that has earned it a place on the Dance Heritage Coalition's list of America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures, on the National Register of Historic Places and designation as a National Historic Landmark by the federal government. But the story begins long before dance arrived on the scene. Jacob's Pillow was first settled in 1790 as a mountaintop farm at the crest of a twisting, climbing stagecoach road between Boston and Albany. Local folk viewing the zig-zagging road from the bottom of the hill thought it resembled the rungs of a ladder, so these biblically-minded New Englanders dubbed it "Jacob's Ladder." Boulders dotted the farm pastures, among them a curiously-shaped one located behind the farmhouse. Given the rock "pillow" and the farm's

proximity to "Jacob's Ladder," the Carter Family who settled the property furthered local allusions to the Book of Genesis (which tells of Jacob laying his head upon a rock and dreaming of a ladder to heaven) by giving their farm the name "Jacob's Pillow."

In 1931, modern dance pioneer Ted Shawn bought the farm as a retreat. At the time, Shawn and his wife, Ruth St. Denis, were America's leading couple of the dance. Their Denishawn Company had popularized a revolutionary dance form rooted in theatrical and multi-cultural traditions rather than those of European ballet. Their trailblazing work and cross-country tours paved the way for the next generation of legendary dance pioneers; Martha Graham, Charles Weidman, Doris Humphrey and Jack Cole were all Denishawn



Ted Shawn's *The Dreams of Jacob*. Photo by John Van Lund.

members. But Shawn and St. Denis had recently separated, personally and professionally, and in the fall of 1931, Shawn conducted the last rehearsals of the Denishawn era at Jacob's Pillow.

Shawn had long harbored a dream of legitimizing dance in America as an honorable career for men. In 1933, he recruited

dancer Barton Mumaw and several physical education students from Springfield College for his new company. The tall and burly Shawn and his athletic dancers were intent on challenging the image of men in the dance; they forged a new, boldly muscular style and in their "off-time," they constructed buildings still used today at Jacob's Pillow.

## A Timeline of Landmark Firsts

### July 14, 1933

Jacob's Pillow presents its first performance, becoming the first dance festival established in this country that continues to this day.

### 1933 to 1939

Most of the works created by Ted Shawn for his company of Men Dancers are premiered at Jacob's Pillow.

### 1941

At the Pillow, Antony Tudor conducts the first rehearsals of a new ballet that would become his classic, *Pillar of Fire*.

### 1942

Asadata Dafora, the first artist to perform African dance on the concert stage, is part of the inaugural season of the Ted Shawn Theatre.

### 1942

Agnes de Mille first hears Aaron Copland's score for her to-be-famous ballet, *Rodeo*, when it is played for her by the composer and Leonard Bernstein in the Pillow studio.

### 1945

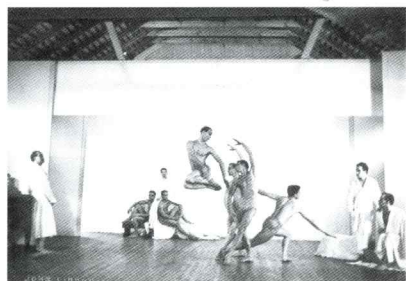
Tanaquil LeClerc, later one of Balanchine's leading ballerinas, gives her first professional performance at Jacob's Pillow.

### 1949

The first performance of Ted Shawn's *The Dreams of Jacob*, with music by Darius Milhaud commissioned by Elizabeth Sprague Coolidge.

### 1950

Shawn invites Jack Mitchell to take his first dance photographs at Jacob's Pillow, launching the career of one of America's pre-eminent performing arts photographers.



Ted Shawn and His Men Dancers. Photo by John Lindquist, © Harvard Theatre Collection.



Asadata Dafora.  
Photo by Eileen Darby



Agnes de Mille in Antony Tudor's *Judgment of Paris*. Photo by John Lindquist, © Harvard Theatre Collection.



Ruth St. Denis. Photo © Jack Mitchell.



In July 1933, Shawn and his Men Dancers started giving public "Tea Lecture Demonstrations" to promote their work — and to pay the grocer. The first audience of 45 curiosity-seekers expanded weekly so that by summer's end, people were being turned away at the door. During a period Shawn termed "seven magic years," Shawn and his Men Dancers toured throughout the United States and to Canada, Cuba, and England, performing more than 1,250 times in 750 cities, and continued the summer "Tea Lecture Demonstrations" at the Pillow. With the Selective Service Act of 1939, Shawn felt his personal and professional crusade had been a success — public, press, and educators were accepting dance as an honorable profession for men. In May 1940, The Men Dancers disbanded and joined the armed forces.



Deep in debt, Shawn proposed selling Jacob's Pillow to Mary Washington Ball, a dance teacher who leased the property and produced the Berkshire Hills Dance Festival on site in 1940. Shawn credited Miss Ball for beginning the diverse programming that was forever after the Pillow's hallmark, but the summer was a financial disaster. Shawn leased the Pillow again in 1941, this time to British ballet stars Alicia Markova and Anton Dolin. Their International Dance Festival was so successful that local

supporters formed the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Committee, raised \$50,000 to buy the property and to build a theatre (performances had been held in the barn studio), and made Shawn director. Despite wartime hardships, such as gasoline and tire rationing, audiences climbed the hill on foot and horseback to attend a wide array of programs: ballet, modern dance, mime, ballroom dance, and folk and classical dance of many cultures.

On July 9, 1942, the Ted Shawn Theatre, the first theatre



Photo by John Van Lund.



Audience in The Tea Garden, ca. 1935.

in the United States designed specifically for dance, opened its doors. Architect Joseph Franz, who also built The Music Shed at Tanglewood, had agreed with Shawn that the theatre exterior must harmonize with the existing farmhouse and barns. Franz also handcut the weathervane atop the theatre, which depicts Barton Mumaw, Shawn's leading dancer. Inside the theatre on either side of the stage are life-size portraits of Shawn in his *Hopi Indian Eagle Dance* and Ruth St. Denis in *Kwannon — the Japanese Goddess of Mercy*, painted during the Denishawn era by Albert Herter.

Other than a year sabbatical for an Australian tour in 1947, Shawn remained at the helm of the Pillow until his death at the age of 80 in 1972. For a time the

## 1954

The first time the work of 19<sup>th</sup> century choreographer Auguste Bournonville is seen in the U.S., when Danish ballerina Inge Sand appears at the Pillow.



Inge Sand. Photo © Jack Mitchell.

## 1956

Merce Cunningham & Company gives the first performance of *Nocturnes* at the Pillow, with décor and costumes by Robert Rauschenberg.

## 1959

Both Les Grands Ballets Canadiens and Ballet Rambert give their first U.S. performances at Jacob's Pillow.



The National Ballet of Canada's Celia Franca. Photo © Jack Mitchell.

## 1960

John Butler's popular duet, *Portrait of Billie*, premieres at the Pillow, performed by Carmen de Lavallade and the choreographer himself.



Carmen de Lavallade. Photo by John Lindquist. © Harvard Theatre Collection.

## 1962

Balasaraswati, one of India's most famous and revered dancers, makes her first American appearance at the Pillow.

## 1964

The first performance of a new dance, *Siddhas of the Upper Air*, marks the last time that Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis perform together. This is in celebration of the couple's 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

## 1970

The first professional appearances by Dance Theatre of Harlem take place at Jacob's Pillow.

## 1973

Dame Margot Fonteyn makes her Jacob's Pillow debut in the first performance of a commissioned solo, Peter Darrell's *In Nightly Revels*.



Photo by John Van Lund.



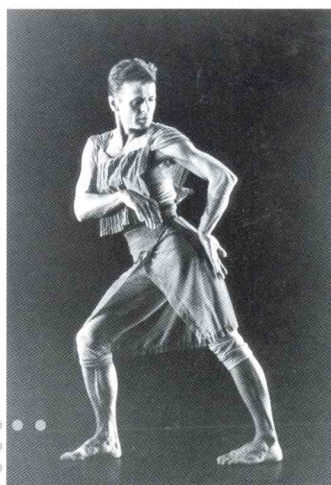
survival of Jacob's Pillow seemed uncertain. Shawn's designated successor, John Christian, was unable to serve more than one year (1972) due to illness. Next was dance critic Walter Terry (1973), but a huge deficit sent the Pillow's Board of Directors searching again, and in the interim Charles Reinhart took on the Pillow in addition to the American Dance Festival (1974). A measure of stability came with the appointment of Norman Walker (1975-79), who revamped and upgraded the Pillow's educational and presentational standards.

Liz Thompson (1980-90) initiated an artistic resurgence by welcoming new artists and audiences. Her innovations, such as the popular "Inside/Out" presentations and open access to the grounds and studios, are today an integral part of the Pillow's personality, and

Thompson was also the catalyst for the construction of the Doris Duke Studio Theatre. Samuel A. Miller, who had worked in partnership with Thompson since 1986, followed (1990-94) with the sorely needed renovation and enlargement of the Ted Shawn Theatre and the installation of Blake's Barn.

From 1995 through 1997, Sali Ann Kriegsman led the Pillow through a difficult period, eliminating a potentially disastrous \$4.8 million debt, orchestrating a range of new projects, and ending her successful tenure with a celebration of the 65th anniversary season. The Board then launched an extensive nationwide search and selected Ella Baff to guide Jacob's Pillow into the 21st century.

Ella Baff's record-breaking



Mikhail Baryshnikov in Dana Reitz's *Unspoken Territory*. Photo by Tom Brazil.

seasons have confirmed that her adventurous ideas and wide-ranging knowledge of the field are perfectly at home at the Pillow. She is now leading the organization in new directions while honoring the traditions that have made the Pillow a unique institution for seven decades: to create, present and

preserve an unparalleled variety of dance forms, to educate artists and community, and to engage audiences — a diversity unique among international dance festivals.

*An illustrated history, A Certain Place: The Jacob's Pillow Story, by Norton Owen, the Pillow's Director of Preservation, is available at The Pillow Store.*

The Ted Shawn Theatre.  
Photo by Jessica Wickham.



## 1984

Martha Graham brings her company to the Pillow for the first time, coming full circle nearly 70 years after beginning her dance studies with Ted Shawn.

## 1985

New York City Ballet principal dancer Nikolaj Hübbe is a Pillow student and gives his first American performance here.

## 1987

The first activities of David Parsons' new company take place at the Pillow.

## 1994

The first film collaboration of choreographer Mark Morris and cellist Yo-Yo Ma, *Falling Down Stairs*, is created at the Pillow.

## 1995

Mikhail Baryshnikov premieres works by Mark Morris and Dana Reitz in his first appearance at the Pillow.

## 1999

The controversial production of the Chinese opera *The Peony Pavilion* makes its first stop at the Pillow, where the cast assembles for several weeks to rehearse and perfect the work prior to its New York premiere produced by Lincoln Center.

## 2000

Jacob's Pillow is one of the First 100 of America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures, selected by the Dance Heritage Coalition.

## 2003

Jacob's Pillow is named a National Historic Landmark for its importance in America's culture and history by the federal government.

Nikolaj Hübbe and Laura Bernasconi.  
Photo by Stephan Driscoll.



Photo by Lois Greenfield.



Photo by Kim Walls.



All photos in this article from the Pillow's Archives.





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