



PRESENTS

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

AND MUSIC ENSEMBLE

Ted Shawn Theatre

July 23-27, 2014

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR Mark Morris

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Nancy Umanoff

DANCERS Chelsea Lynn Acree

Sam Black

Rita Donahue⁺

Domingo Estrada, Jr.

Benjamin Freedman ^{**}

Lesley Garrison ⁺

Lauren Grant

Brian Lawson

Aaron Loux

Laurel Lynch ⁺

Stacy Martorana

Dallas McMurray

Maile Okamura

Brandon Randolph^{*}

Billy Smith

Noah Vinson

Jenn Weddel

Michelle Yard

MMDG MUSIC ENSEMBLE Colin Fowler

Christine Lamprea

Tessa Lark

Todd Palmer

^{*}Apprentice

⁺Alumni of The School at Jacob's Pillow

PROGRAM

CROSSWALK (2013)

CHOREOGRAPHY Mark Morris

MUSIC "Grand Duo Concertant, for clarinet and piano, Op.48"
Allegro con fuoco, Andante con moto, Rondo: Allegro
by Carl Maria von Weber

COSTUME DESIGN Elizabeth Kurtzman

LIGHTING DESIGN Michael Chybowski

MUSICIANS Todd Palmer, *clarinet*; Colin Fowler, *piano*

DANCERS Chelsea Lynn Acree, Domingo Estrada, Jr., Benjamin Freedman, Brian Lawson,
Aaron Loux, Laurel Lynch, Stacy Martorana, Dallas McMurray, Brandon Randolph,
Billy Smith, Noah Vinson

Premiere: April 3, 2013 – James and Martha Duffy Performance Space,
Mark Morris Dance Center, Brooklyn, New York

A WOODEN TREE (2012)

CHOREOGRAPHY Mark Morris

MUSIC AND WORDS "Here's A Health For Simon"; "Stick Out Your Chest"; "The Market Place";
"Rubber Toy"; "Trouble, Trouble"; "Little Black Buzzer"; "I Got No Common Sense";
"Deedle, Deedle, I Pass"; "A Wooden Tree"; "Phonic Poem"; "I'm Going In A Field";
"I Love You But I Don't Know What I Mean"; "Beautiful Cosmos"; "Cockadoodledon't"
by Ivor Cutler

COSTUME DESIGN Elizabeth Kurtzman

LIGHTING DESIGN Michael Chybowski

DANCERS Sam Black, Rita Donahue, Lesley Garrison, Aaron Loux, Dallas McMurray,
Maile Okamura, Jenn Weddel, Michelle Yard

Premiere: October 4, 2012 – Merrill Wright Mainstage Theater, On the Boards, Seattle, Washington

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- INTERMISSION -

JENN AND SPENCER (2013)

CHOREOGRAPHY Mark Morris

MUSIC "Suite for Violin and Piano"

Largo, Allegretto, Andante tranquillo, Allegro marcato, Andante calmato, Presto
by Henry Cowell

COSTUME DESIGN Stephanie Sleeper

LIGHTING DESIGN Michael Chybowski

MUSICIANS Tessa Lark, *violin*; Colin Fowler, *piano*

DANCERS Sam Black, Jenn Weddel

Premiere: April 3, 2013 – James and Martha Duffy Performance Space,
Mark Morris Dance Center, Brooklyn, New York

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FESTIVAL DANCE (2011)

CHOREOGRAPHY Mark Morris

MUSIC "Piano Trio No. 5 in E Major, Op. 83,"

by Johann Nepomuk Hummel

COSTUME DESIGN Martin Pakledinaz

LIGHTING DESIGN Michael Chybowski

Allegro - Waltz

Andante - March

Rondo - Polka

MUSICIANS Tessa Lark, *violin*; Christine Lamprea, *cello*; Colin Fowler, *piano*

DANCERS Sam Black, Rita Donahue, Domingo Estrada, Jr., Lauren Grant, Brian Lawson,
Aaron Loux, Laurel Lynch, Dallas McMurray, Maile Okamura, Billy Smith, Jenn Weddel,
Michelle Yard

Premiere: March 17, 2011 – James and Martha Duffy Performance Space,
Mark Morris Dance Center, Brooklyn, New York

Festival Dance was made possible by the New Works Fund with leadership gifts from
Poss Family Foundation, Suzy Kellems Dominik, Shelby and Frederick Gans, Helen and John Meyer,
Abigail Turin, and Jonathan Gans.

COMPANY

MARK MORRIS was born on August 29, 1956 in Seattle, Washington, where he studied with Verla Flowers and Perry Brunson. In the early years of his career he performed with the companies of Lar Lubovitch, Hannah Kahn, Laura Dean, Eliot Feld, and the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. He formed the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) in 1980, and has since created over 130 works for the company. From 1988 to 1991, he was Director of Dance at Brussels' Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, the national opera house of Belgium. In 1990, he founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Much in demand as a ballet choreographer, Morris has created eighteen ballets since 1986 and his work has been performed by companies worldwide, including San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, and the Royal New Zealand Ballet. Noted for his musicality, Morris has been described as "undeviating in his devotion to music" (*The New Yorker*). He began conducting performances for MMDG in 2006 and has since conducted at The International Festival of Arts & Ideas, Lincoln Center, and Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM). He served as Music Director for the 2013 Ojai Music Festival. He also works extensively in opera, directing and choreographing productions for the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, English National Opera, and The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, among others. He was named a fellow of The MacArthur Foundation in 1991 and has received eleven honorary doctorates to date. He has taught at the University of Washington, Princeton University, and Tanglewood Music Center. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, and has served as an advisory board member for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Morris has received the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement (2007), the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society (2010), the Benjamin Franklin Laureate Prize for Creativity (2012), Cal Performances Award of Distinction in the Performing Arts (2013) and the Orchestra of St. Luke's Gift of Music Award (2014). Morris opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, New York, in 2001 to provide a home for his company, rehearsal space for the dance community, outreach programs for children and seniors, and a school offering dance classes to students of all ages and abilities.

The **MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP** was formed in 1980 and gave its first performance that year in New York City. The company's touring schedule steadily expanded to include cities in the United States and around the world, and in 1986 it made its first national television program for the PBS series *Dance in America*. In 1988, MMDG was invited to become the national dance company of Belgium, and spent

three years in residence at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels. The Dance Group returned to the United States in 1991 as one of the world's leading dance companies. Based in Brooklyn, New York, MMDG maintains strong ties to presenters in several cities around the world, most notably to its West Coast home, Cal Performances in Berkeley, California, and its Midwest home, the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. MMDG also appears regularly in New York, Boston, Seattle, and Fairfax. The company made its debut at the Mostly Mozart Festival in 2002, at the Tanglewood Music Festival in 2003, and has since been invited to both festivals annually. From the company's many London seasons, it has received two Laurence Olivier Awards and a Critics' Circle National Dance Award for Best Foreign Dance Company. Reflecting Morris' commitment to live music, the Dance Group has featured live musicians in every performance since the formation of the MMDG Music Ensemble in 1996. MMDG regularly collaborates with renowned musicians, including cellist Yo-Yo Ma, pianist Emanuel Ax, mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, and jazz trio The Bad Plus, as well as leading orchestras and opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera, and the London Symphony Orchestra. MMDG frequently works with distinguished artists and designers, including painters Howard Hodgkin and Robert Bordo, set designers Adrienne Lobel and Allen Moyer, costume designers Martin Pakledinaz and Isaac Mizrahi, and many others. MMDG's film and television projects include *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, *Falling Down Stairs*, two documentaries for the U.K.'s *South Bank Show*, and PBS' *Live From Lincoln Center*. While on tour the Dance Group partners with local cultural institutions and community organizations to present Access/MMDG, a program of arts and humanities-based activities for people of all ages and abilities.

Highlights of MMDG's 2014-15 season include Morris' 20th opera production, Handel's *Acis and Galatea*; this week-long mini-festival at Jacob's Pillow; and *Excursions 2014*, a unique multi-continent tour that will split the dance group in two from October through November. This multifaceted tour will feature *Words*, a new work by Mark Morris and extensive cross-cultural community and educational programming through Access/MMDG and the U.S. State Department's DanceMotion USASM program.

The **MMDG MUSIC ENSEMBLE**, formed in 1996, is integral to the Dance Group. "With the dancers come the musicians...and what a difference it makes." (*Classical Voice of North Carolina*) The Ensemble's repertory ranges from 17th-century works by John Wilson and Henry Purcell to more recent scores by Lou Harrison and Henry Cowell. The musicians also participate in Access/MMDG – the Dance

Group's educational and community programming at home and on the road.

MATTHEW ROSE (Rehearsal Director) began his dance training in Midland, Michigan, with Linda Z. Smith at the age of 17. After receiving his B.F.A. in Dance from the University of Michigan in 1992, he moved to New York City. He was a soloist with the Martha Graham Dance Company from 1993-1996, and in 1997 began working with MMDG. After several years of performing full-time with the Dance Group, he began assisting Morris with the creation of new works. He has been the company's rehearsal director since 2006.

CHELSEA LYNN ACREE (Dancer) grew up in Baltimore, Maryland, where she began her dance training with Sharon Lerner, then continued at Carver Center for the Arts and Technology. Since receiving her B.F.A. in Dance from Purchase College in 2005 she has had the opportunity to work with a variety of artists including SYREN Modern Dance, Laura Peterson, Hilary Easton + Company, and Michael and the Go-Getters. Acree is on the faculty at The School at the Mark Morris Dance Center, where she teaches kids and adults how to move through space. She began working with MMDG in 2007 and joined the company in 2011.

SAM BLACK (Dancer) is from Berkeley, California, where he began studying tap at the age of nine with Katie Maltsberger. He received his B.F.A. in Dance from Purchase College and also studied at the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in The Netherlands. He has performed with David Parker, Takehiro Ueyama, and Nelly van Bommel, and currently teaches MMDG master classes and Dance for PD®. He first appeared with MMDG in 2005 and became a company member in 2007.

RITA DONAHUE (Dancer) was born and raised in Fairfax, Virginia, and attended George Mason University. She graduated magna cum laude in 2002, receiving a B.A. in English and a B.F.A. in Dance. Donahue danced with bopi's black sheep/dances by kraig patterson and joined MMDG in 2003.

DOMINGO ESTRADA, JR. (Dancer), a native of Victoria, Texas, studied martial arts and earned his black belt in 1994. He danced Ballet Folklórico through his church for 11 years. Estrada earned his B.F.A. in Ballet and Modern Dance from Texas Christian University and had the honor of working with the late Fernando Bujones. During his undergraduate studies he attended the American Dance Festival where he had the privilege of performing *Skylight*, a classic work by choreographer Laura Dean. He debuted with MMDG in 2007 and became a company member in 2009. Estrada would like to thank God, his family, and all who support his passion.

COLIN FOWLER (Music Director, Pianist) is a graduate of the Interlochen Arts Academy and holds bachelor's and master's degrees from The Juilliard School. He has performed and recorded throughout the world with numerous soloists and ensembles including Deborah Voigt, the American Brass Quintet, Sir James Galway, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. In addition to performing and conducting a number of Broadway shows, Fowler has been a professor at New York University and Nyack College. He is currently the organist and assistant music director at both Calvary Church and Park Avenue Synagogue in New York City. He began collaborating with MMDG in 2006 and was named music director in 2013.

BENJAMIN FREEDMAN (Dancer), from Tampa, Florida, began his dance training at Interlochen Arts Academy and North Carolina School of the Arts, where he performed in works by Martha Graham, Jerome Robbins, and Jiří Kylián. At the University of South Florida, he had the opportunity to participate in the reconstruction of Bill T. Jones' *Serenade/The Proposition*. Freedman went on to study at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts where he graduated with a B.F.A. in Dance and an intensive minor in Psychology. At Tisch, he performed in Mark Morris' *Pacific* and also choreographed multiple works for the student company. He has worked with Korhan Basaran, Chihiro Shimizu and Artists, and Danaka Dance. He joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2013.

LESLEY GARRISON (Dancer) grew up in Swansea, Illinois, and received her early dance training at the Center of Creative Arts in St. Louis, Missouri, and Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan. She studied at the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in The Netherlands and holds a B.F.A. from Purchase College, where she received the Modern Dance Faculty Award. She has performed with Erica Essner Performance Co-op, Dance Heginbotham, The Kevin Wynn Collection, Neel Verdoorn, Nelly Van Bommel's NØA Dance, Rocha Dance Theater, and Sidra Bell Dance New York. She first performed with MMDG in 2007 and became a company member in 2011. Garrison teaches at The School at the Mark Morris Dance Center and for the Dance for PD® program.

LAUREN GRANT (Dancer) has danced with MMDG since 1996. Performing leading roles in *The Hard Nut* and *Mozart Dances*, Grant has appeared in over 40 of Mark Morris' works. She is on the faculty at The School at the Mark Morris Dance Center and frequently leads classes for the company. She also teaches technique and repertory at schools and universities across the U.S. and abroad. Grant has been featured in *Time Out New York, Dance Magazine*, the book *Meet the Dancers*, and appeared in a UK documentary *The South Bank Show*, which followed the company in the making and premiere of *Four Saints in Three Acts*. Before joining MMDG, Grant moved to New York City from her hometown of Highland Park, Illinois, and earned a B.F.A. from New

York University's Tisch School of the Arts. She and her husband David Leventhal (former MMDG dancer) are proud parents of son Zev, born March 2012.

CHRISTINE LAMPREA (Cellist) is a Colombian-American, multifaceted soloist and chamber musician. Hailed a "firebrand" (*IncidentLight.com*), Lamprea took first prize at the XVI Annual Sphinx Competition (2013), and was a winner at Astral Artists' 2013 National Auditions, and the 2013 Schadt National String Competition. Lamprea has appeared as a soloist with the Houston and New Jersey Symphonies, and most recently made her debut with the Sphinx Virtuosi at Carnegie Hall. Upcoming engagements include performances with the Abilene and Costa Rica National Symphonies. In 2016 she will premiere a concerto written for her by Jeffrey Mumford with orchestras across the U.S., including the Detroit Symphony. An avid recitalist and chamber musician, Lamprea has performed in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, performing alongside such esteemed musicians as Itzhak Perlman, Roger Tapping, and Carol Wincenc. She has performed at the Kneisel Hall, Yellow Barn, and Perlman chamber music festivals. A passionate teacher, Lamprea worked with Ecuadorian youth in Quito and Guayaquil as part of a residency between The Juilliard School and Sinfonia Por La Vida, a social inclusion program modeled after Venezuela's El Sistema program. Lamprea is the recipient of The Paul and Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. She studied with Bonnie Hampton at The Juilliard School and holds a master's degree from the New England Conservatory, where she studied with Natasha Brofsky.

TESSA LARK (Violinist) is the 2012 winner of the coveted Naumburg International Violin Award and one of the most captivating artistic voices of her time. She has been consistently praised by critics and audiences alike for her astounding range of sounds, technical agility, and musical elegance. Lark, now age 25, was recently named a 2014 recipient of a career grant from the Leonore Annenberg Fellowship Fund for the Performing and Visual Arts; as a result, she will release her debut CD recording of Telemann's "12 Fantasies" for Solo Violin in the 2014-2015 season. She was also the first prize winner in both the 2008 Irving Klein International Strings Competition and the 2006 Johansen International Competition for Young String Players. At age 16, Lark was a soloist with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and has since then performed concerti with orchestras around the world and frequents the concert stage in recitals. A passionate chamber musician, Lark has performed at such summer festivals as the Steans Institute at Ravinia, Yellow Barn, the Perlman Music Program's Chamber Music Workshop, Music@Menlo, and was a top prize-winner in the 2012 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition as part of her piano trio, Modète. A native of Kentucky, Lark enjoys playing bluegrass and Appalachian music. She collaborates frequently with Mark O'Connor and is included in his CD "MOC4"

which was released in June 2014. Lark plays a Tononi violin, made in 1675, on generous loan to her from the Ravinia Festival.

BRIAN LAWSON (Dancer) began his dance training in Toronto at Canadian Children's Dance Theatre. There he worked with choreographers such as David Earle, Carol Anderson, and Michael Trent. Lawson spent a year studying at the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in The Netherlands and graduated summa cum laude in 2010 from Purchase College, where he was also granted the President's Award for his contributions to the dance program. Lawson has had the pleasure of performing with Pam Tanowitz Dance, Dance Heginbotham, and Nelly van Bommel's NØA Dance, among others. He joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2011 and became a company member in 2013.

AARON LOUX (Dancer) grew up in Seattle, Washington, and began dancing at the Creative Dance Center as a member of Kaleidoscope, a youth modern dance company. He began his classical training at the Cornish College Preparatory Dance Program and received his B.F.A. from The Juilliard School in 2009. He danced at The Metropolitan Opera and with Arc Dance Company before joining MMDG in 2010.

LAUREL LYNCH (Dancer) began her dance training at Petaluma School of Ballet in California. She moved to New York to attend The Juilliard School where she performed works by Robert Battle, Margie Gillis, José Limón, and Ohad Naharin. After graduation Lynch danced for Dušan Týnek Dance Theatre, Sue Bernhard Danceworks, and Pat Catterson. Lynch joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007. Many thanks to Gene and Becky.

STACY MARTORANA (Dancer) began her dance training in Baltimore, Maryland, at the Peabody Conservatory. In 2006 she graduated from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts with a B.F.A. in Contemporary Dance. She has danced with the Amy Marshall Dance Company, the Neta Dance Company, Helen Simoneau Danse, Kazuko Hirabayashi Dance Theater, Daniel Gwartzman Dance Company, and Rashaun Mitchell. From 2009-2011 she was a member of the Repertory Understudy Group for the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. She joined MMDG in 2012.

DALLAS MCMURRAY (Dancer), from El Cerrito, California, began dancing at age four, studying jazz, tap, and acrobatics with Katie Maltzberger and ballet with Yukiko Sakakura. He received a B.F.A. in Dance from the California Institute of the Arts. McMurray performed with the Limón Dance Company in addition to works by Jiří Kylián, Alonzo King, Robert Moses, and Colin Connor. McMurray performed with MMDG as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007.

MAILE OKAMURA (Dancer) studied primarily with Lynda Yourth at the American Ballet School in San Diego, California. She was a member of Boston Ballet II and Ballet Arizona before moving to New York to study modern dance. Okamura has been dancing with MMDG since 1998. She has also had the pleasure of working with choreographers Neta Pulvermacher, Zvi Gotheiner, Gerald Casel, and John Heginbotham, with whom she frequently collaborates as dancer and costume designer.

TODD PALMER (Clarinetist) has appeared around the world as soloist, recitalist, chamber music collaborator, educator, arranger, and presenter. A three-time Grammy Award-nominated artist, he was a winner of the Young Concert Artist International Auditions and grand prize winner in the Ima Hogg Young Artist Auditions. He has made solo appearances with the Atlanta, Houston, and BBC Scotland orchestras; St. Paul, Cincinnati, Montréal, and Metamorphosen chamber orchestras. His recital performances include Weill Hall and 92nd St. Y in New York, the Kennedy Center, and Suntory Hall in Tokyo. He has collaborated with some of the world's finest string ensembles such as the St. Lawrence, Brentano, Borromeo, and Pacifica quartets; and sopranos Kathleen Battle, Renée Fleming, Elizabeth Futral, Heidi Grant Murphy, and Dawn Upshaw. Palmer has championed Osvaldo Golijov's klezmer clarinet quintet *The Dreams and Prayers of Isaac the Blind*; premiered David Bruce's *Gumboots* at Carnegie Hall with the St. Lawrence Quartet; and commissioned Ricky Ian Gordon's theatre work, *Orpheus and Euridice*. He was awarded the Leonard Bernstein Fellowship by the Tanglewood Institute. He appeared in Lincoln Center's revival of *South Pacific* and was also soloist in Robert Lepage's staging of Stravinsky's *The Nightingale and Other Fables* at Brooklyn Academy of Music (BAM), dressed as a Cossack. Palmer has recorded for DG, EMI, Koch, Naxos, and Ghostlight.

BRANDON RANDOLPH (Dancer) began his training with the School of Carolina Ballet Theater in Greenville, South Carolina, under the direction of Hernan Justo. At age 14, he was accepted into the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, where he studied with Stanislav Issaev and Bobby Barnett. Randolph received his B.F.A. in Dance from Purchase College in 2012. There he had the opportunity to perform with Dance Heginbotham as well as repertory by Stephen Petronio, Lar Lubovitch, Paul Taylor, and George Balanchine. Randolph began his apprenticeship with MMDG in 2013.

BILLY SMITH (Dancer) grew up in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and attended George Mason University under a full academic and dance talent scholarship. He graduated magna cum laude in 2007 and received achievement awards in performance, choreography, and academic endeavors. While at George Mason University he performed the works of Mark Morris, Paul Taylor, Lar Lubovitch, Doug Varone,

Daniel Ezralow, Larry Keigwin, Susan Marshall, and Susan Shields. Smith's own piece, *3-Way Stop*, was selected to open the 2006 American College Dance Festival Gala at Ohio State University and his original choreography for a production of *Bye Bye Birdie* garnered much critical praise. An actor as well, Smith's regional theater credits include Tulsa in *Gypsy*, Mistoffelees in *CATS*, and Dream Curly in *Oklahoma!*. Smith danced with Parsons Dance from 2007-2010. He joined MMDG as a company member in 2010.

NOAH VINSON (Dancer) received his B.A. in Dance from Columbia College Chicago, where he worked with Shirley Mordine, Jan Erkert, and Brian Jeffrey. In New York, he has danced with Teri and Oliver Steele and the Kevin Wynn Collection. He began working with MMDG in 2002 and became a company member in 2004.

JENN WEDDEL (Dancer) received her early training from Boulder Ballet Company near where she grew up in Longmont, Colorado. She holds a B.F.A. from Southern Methodist University and also studied at Boston Conservatory, Colorado University, and The Laban Center, London. Since moving to New York in 2001, Weddel has created and performed with RedWall Dance Theatre, Sue Bernhard Danceworks, Vencl Dance, Rocha Dance Theater, TEA Dance Company, and with various choreographers including Alan Danielson and Ella Ben-Aharon. Weddel performed with MMDG as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007.

MICHELLE YARD (Dancer) was born in Brooklyn, New York. She began her professional dance training at the NYC High School of the Performing Arts and continued her studies as a scholarship student at The Ailey School. She graduated with a B.F.A. from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Yard teaches Pilates as well as master classes for Access/MMDG programs. She joined MMDG in 1997. Mom, thank you.

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP STAFF

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Thanks to Maxine Morris.

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work.

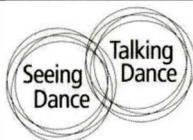
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**Let these questions about today's performance fuel your discussions,
and keep an eye out for additional questions around the Pillow grounds:**

- How does having live music influence your experience of the works performed?
- All of the works in this program were created by Mark Morris. How would you describe the common characteristics of these four dances?
- How do the elements of dancing, music, set design, and costumes design work together in this performance?

Seeing Dance, Talking Dance is a new Pillow program encouraging different ways of seeing, discussing, and appreciating dance, supported by Engaging Dance Audiences, administered by Dance/USA, and made possible with generous funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation

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PILLOWNOTES

by Maura Keefe

The PillowNotes series comprises essays commissioned from our Scholars-in-Residence to provide audiences with a broader context for viewing dance.

Mark Morris has created an extraordinary body of work with an unparalleled devotion to music. At first people weren't so sure about Mark Morris. Morris's charismatic off-stage personality and bold dance works led writers to refer to him as "the bad boy of modern dance." Morris is no less relentless in his assertive presence, both on and off the stage, but audiences and critics alike long ago recognized that this man's intelligence and corporeality are anything but boyish. Morris has choreographed more than 160 modern dances, operas, and ballets, opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, and continues to be a leading artistic voice for dance and music.

In 1992, Mark Morris's dancers crawled out of the wings of the stage at the Manhattan Center Grand Ballroom. Mark Morris Dance Group was back in the United States after three years as the resident company of the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels, Belgium. Michael Feldman was there, conducting the Orchestra of St. Luke's and the New York Virtuoso Singers. A lot of critics were there; ready to witness the new maturity of the artist who had been in exile and in ecstasy in Europe. And there was a large audience of dance lovers and Morris fans. It was an unusual theater for a major company to perform in, as audience members climbed several flights of stairs to enter the lushly appointed ballroom. The organization of the undertaking, the sheer number of performers, and the anticipation of the event, caused a frisson in the air. And Morris delivered.

To the magnificent sound of Antonio Vivaldi's "Gloria in D," the dancers crawled, rose to their feet, lifted themselves slightly higher by linking their fingers between their legs and then returned to the floor. In a gloriously awkward manner, the dancers seem to evolve and yet feel no remorse about returning to the crawl in the primordial ooze. This was not the first time the dancers had performed *Gloria*. It premiered in 1981, and was revised in 1984. Nor would it be the last time it was performed; in fact, for a long time it was considered Morris's signature work. Rather, this episode of dancers crawling, standing, lifting, and crawling again serves as a metaphor. This one moment in the performance, that one day in April, can be seen as a part that sums up the whole. This section of the dance, like Morris's choreography at large, is at once unwieldy and graceful, sacred and profane, reverent and repellent. In this movement phrase, as in so many of Mark Morris's dances, the dancers launch from and are bound to the earth, in a beautiful struggle explicitly and profoundly human. Morris's choreography nourishes and sustains us, just as it startles, antagonizes, and steals our breath.

With *Gloria*, Morris displayed his thorough understanding of structure—both musical and choreographic, his sense of movement invention, and a demonstration of the beauty displayed through form. This dance served notice, foreshadowing dances to come like *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* (1988), *Mosaic and United* (1993), *V* (2001), and *Jenn and Spencer* (2013). In 2006, Morris and his masterpiece *Gloria* once again had audiences and critics aflutter. When Morris entered the Brooklyn Academy of Music one March evening that year, people in the house had to shift their perspective and maybe even crane their necks—Morris was about to make his debut as a conductor. As he raised his baton to lead the MMDG Music Ensemble and the Juilliard Choral Union in the by-now virtually trademarked Vivaldi score, Morris delivered again.

The rich choreographic investigation imbuing Morris's work has been inspired by multiple sources. There is no limit to what becomes source material for a dance—essays by French literary theorist Roland Barthes (*Mythologies*, 1986), American square dancing (*Going Away Party*, 1990), a remote-controlled car (*Deck of Cards*, 1983), poetry by Ivor Cutler (*Wooden Tree*, 2012), folk dance (*Polka*, 1992; *Grand Duo*, 1993)—all of these have merited Morris's choreographic attention.

Mostly Morris is influenced by music—he has an insatiable appetite for it, with incredibly wide-ranging taste. He has made dances for his company to the music of The Violent Femmes (*Lovey*, 1985), Harry Partch (*Greek to Me*, 1998), Zakir Hussain (*Kolam*, 2003), Henry Purcell (*Dido and Aeneas*, 1989), Franz Schubert (*Bedtime*, 1992), Erik Satie (*Peccadilloes*, 2000), Stephen Foster (*Someone's Coming to See Me Tonight*, 1995), and Prokofiev (*Romeo and Juliet*, 2008) among many, many others. He demonstrates a rich appreciation for and facility with the more familiar Mozart to the more esoteric Lou Harrison. Rare among modern dance companies, Mark Morris Dance Group tours and performs exclusively with live music. His understanding of music presents a kinesthetic interpretation of the rhythmic structure, the overall form, and relationships between melody and harmony. He knows the music and in turn, he teaches us to see it, feel it, and hear it as we never have before.

On any given evening with the Mark Morris Dance Group, the dancers gesture and posture in ways that feel like the ways we move. Morris is not interested in presenting images of otherworldly creatures; these dancers are deeply real in their humanity. We hear and see the feet measuring out complex rhythms with simple walking and running patterns. The dancers give in to gravity and then challenge it. They leap into the air, decorating the space with precisely articulating feet. In partnering sections, Morris allows different pairs to perform the same material with variations that come from their individuality. Unlike ballet, which often works to erase the differences between dancers, Morris finds those differences intriguing. Dancers emerge from the wings, perform an exquisite leap or turning sequence and return to the wings. One wonders how much happens off the stage. No matter how abstract the dance, they move and we are moved.

This summer at Jacob's Pillow, Mark Morris Dance Group and Music Ensemble form a festival within a festival, and even a *Festival Dance* (2011). Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, "Life is a festival only to the wise," and this one is full of life, and wisdom, and joy.