

SGT. PEPPER AT 50

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

# PEPPERLAND



GOGUE  
PERFORMING  
ARTS  
CENTER

AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

2023-24

Dance & Movement Series



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Wednesday, November 29

7 p.m.

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Wednesday, February 7

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**BROADWAY SERIES**

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Wednesday, February 14

7 p.m.

**BROADWAY SERIES**



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THE JAY AND SUSIE GOGUE PERFORMING ARTS CENTER  
AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY

*presents*

SGT. PEPPER AT 50

**MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP**

**PEPPERLAND**

Tuesday, November 14, 2023

7 p.m.

Walter Stanley and Virginia Katharyne Evans

Woltosz Theatre

*Presented as part of our 2023-24 Dance & Movement Series*

This evening's program will be performed without an intermission.

**Performance Sponsors**

*David & Cheri Paradise*

**2023-24 Season Sponsors**

*Walt & Ginger Woltosz*

SGT. PEPPER AT 50

**MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP**

**PEPPERLAND**

**Mark Morris Dance Group**

Mica Bernas • Karlie Budge • Brandon Cournay • Domingo Estrada, Jr.  
Sarah Hillmon\* • Courtney Lopes • Aaron Loux • Taína Lyons • Alex Meeth  
Griffin Massey\* • Matthew McLaughlin • Dallas McMurray • Brandon Randolph  
Nicole Sabella • Christina Sahaida • Billy Smith • Joslin Vezeau\* • Noah Vinson

\*APPRENTICE

**MMDG Music Ensemble**

Clinton Curtis • Josh Dion • Colin Fowler • Jacob Garchik  
Ethan Iverson • Sam Newsome • Rob Schwimmer

**Artistic Director**

Mark Morris

**Executive Director**

Nancy Umanoff

**Official Tour Sponsor**

**Bloomberg  
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## Pepperland

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“Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts  
Club Band”\*

“Magna Carta”†

“With a Little Help from My Friends”\*

“Adagio”†

“When I’m Sixty-Four”\*

“Allegro”†

“Within You Without You”\*

“Scherzo”†

“Wilbur Scoville”†

“Penny Lane”\*

“A Day in the Life”\*

“Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts  
Club Band”\*

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This evening’s program will be  
performed without an intermission.

Original music by The Beatles.  
All rights reserved. Used by permission  
from Sony Music Publishing.

### MUSIC

Original songs by The Beatles,  
arr. by Ethan Iverson\*

Original compositions by  
Ethan Iverson†

### CHOREOGRAPHY

Mark Morris

### SET DESIGN

Johan Henckens

### COSTUME DESIGN

Elizabeth Kurtzman

### LIGHTING DESIGN

Nick Kolin

### MUSICIANS

Clinton Curtis, vocals

Sam Newsome, soprano saxophone

Jacob Garchik, trombone

Rob Schwimmer, theremin

Ethan Iverson, piano

Colin Fowler, keyboard

Josh Dion, percussion

### DANCERS

Karlie Budge

Domingo Estrada, Jr.

Sarah Hillmon

Courtney Lopes

Aaron Loux

Taina Lyons

Matthew McLaughlin

Dallas McMurray

Alex Meeth

Brandon Randolph

Nicole Sabella

Christina Sahaïda

Billy Smith

Joslin Vezeau

Noah Vinson

## It was Fifty Years Ago Today ...

### “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band”

The original album ended with an unprecedented effect, a very long chord. Fifty years later, perhaps a similar chord is a good place to begin.

### “Magna Carta”

This is a formal invocation of personalities from the LP cover.

### “With a Little Help From my Friends”

When Ringo sang it, he was on top of the world. Our version is more vulnerable.

### “Adagio”

In the age of Tinder, a Lonely Heart advertisement might seem hopelessly quaint. But everyone has always needed to find a match.

### “When I’m Sixty-Four”

In between 6 and 4 is 5. All three (counts to the bar) are heard beneath the music-hall scuffle.

### “Allegro”

A single offhand line of trombone from “Sgt. Pepper” germinates into a full-fledged sonata form.

### “Within You Without You”

George Harrison’s sincere study of Indian music aligns easily with another Harrison interested in bringing the East to the West: the great composer Lou Harrison, one of Mark Morris’s most significant collaborators. The hippie-era sentiment of the lyric remains startlingly fresh and relevant today.

### “Scherzo”

Glenn Gould said he preferred Petula Clark to the Beatles. Apparently, Gould, Clark and a chord progression from “Sgt. Pepper” all seem to have inspired this mod number.

### “Wilbur Scoville”

The first thing we hear on the LP is a guitar blues lick, here transformed into a real blues for the horns to blow on. Wilbur Scoville invented the scale to measure heat in hot sauce: The original Sergeant Pepper?

### “Cadenza”

After seeing Bach’s Brandenburg 2 on the telly, Paul McCartney came into the studio and told George Martin to add piccolo trumpet to “Penny Lane.” Indeed, detailed references to European classical music are one reason so many Beatles songs still stump the average cover band.

### “Penny Lane”

It was not on *Sgt. Pepper*, but nonetheless was originally planned to be, and of course is especially relevant to the city of Liverpool.

### “A Day in the Life”

Theremin nocturne, vocal descant, apotheosis.

### “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band”

Another unprecedented effect on the original LP was a reprise of the first theme, which is part of why it is called the first “concept album.” Our later vantage point enables us to project into the next decade, the 70s, and conjure a disco ball. Thank you, Beatles! Thank you, *Sgt. Pepper*!





PHOTO: GARETH JONES

*Pepperland* is a Mark Morris Dance Group production in association with American Dance Festival, Durham, North Carolina; BAM, Brooklyn, New York; Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity with the Sony Centre, Toronto, Canada; Cal Performances, UC Berkeley, California; Celebrity Series of Boston, Massachusetts; The City of Liverpool, England, U.K.; Dance Consortium UK; Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; International Festival of Arts & Ideas, New Haven, Connecticut; The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.; Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; La Jolla Music Society, La Jolla, California; Meyer Sound, Berkeley, California; Seattle Theatre Group, Seattle, Washington; Segerstrom Center for The Arts, Costa Mesa, California; UCSB Arts & Lectures, Santa Barbara, California; and White Bird, Portland, Oregon.

*Pepperland* is supported in part by Friends of MMDG, the Howard Gilman Foundation, PARC Foundation, and New Music USA. Music is commissioned by the Charles and Joan Gross Family Foundation. The premiere engagement was supported by funding from the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation through USArtists International in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Howard Gilman Foundation.

“ **The Mark Morris Dance Group has long been ahead of all other dance companies in the flow and detail of its dancers’ response to music. And their qualities of focus, stillness, ease are ones that most actors would envy.**”

— *Financial Times*

## Creative Team & Company

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**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. Morris formed the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) in 1980 and has since created more than 150 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 22 ballets since 1986, and his work has been performed by companies worldwide, including San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Ballet am Rhein, Dusseldorf, 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 Tanglewood Music Center, 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 11 honorary doctorates to date. He has taught at the University of Washington, Princeton University and Tanglewood Music Center. A Doris Duke Artist, Morris is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society and has served as an advisory board member for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. He has received the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement, the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society, the Benjamin Franklin Laureate Prize for Creativity, the International Society for the Performing Arts' Distinguished Artist Award, Cal Performances Award

## Creative Team & Company

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of Distinction in the Performing Arts, the Orchestra of St. Luke's Gift of Music Award and the 2016 Doris Duke Artist Award. In 2015, Morris was inducted into the Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Dance in Saratoga Springs, New York. Morris opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, New York, in 2001 to provide a home for his company, subsidized rental space for local artists, community education programs for children and seniors, and a school offering dance classes to students of all ages and levels of experience with and without disabilities. Morris' memoir, *Out Loud*, co-written with Wesley Stace, was published in paperback by Penguin Press in October 2021.

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. In New York, the company has performed at New York City Center's Fall for Dance Festival, regularly performs at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts' Mostly Mozart and White Light Festivals, and collaborates yearly with BAM on performances and master classes. From the company's many London seasons, it has received two Laurence Olivier Awards and a Critics' Circle Dance Award for Best Foreign Dance Company. Reflecting Morris' commitment to live music, the Dance Group has featured live musicians in every performance



PHOTO: Matt Hayward

## Creative Team & Company

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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 pianist Ethan Iverson, 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 Robert Bordo and the late Howard Hodgkin, set designers Adrienne Lobel and Allen Moyer, costume designers Isaac Mizrahi and the late Martin Pakledinaz, 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*. In 2015, Morris' signature work *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* had its national television premiere on PBS' *Great Performances*. While on tour the Dance Group partners with local cultural institutions and community organizations to present arts and humanities-based activities for people of all ages and abilities.

**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 and 18th century works by John Wilson and Henry Purcell to more recent scores by Ethan Iverson, Lou Harrison and Henry Cowell. The musicians also participate in MMDG's educational and community programming at home and on tour. The MMDG Music Ensemble is led by Colin Fowler, who began to collaborate with MMDG in 2005 during the creation of *Mozart Dances*.

## Creative Team & Company

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**COLIN FOWLER (music director, keyboard)** began his musical study at the age of 5 in Kansas City, went on to study at the Interlochen Arts Academy, and continued his education at The Juilliard School, where he received a Bachelor of Music in 2003 and a Master of Music in 2005. While at Juilliard, he studied piano with Abbey Simon, organ with Gerre Hancock and Paul Jacobs, harpsichord with Lionel Party and conducting with James dePriest and Judith Clurman. A versatile musician and conductor, Fowler works in many areas of the music scene in New York City. He is a veteran conductor and keyboardist of many Broadway shows, including *Jersey Boys*, *In the Heights*, *Wicked* and the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*. As a classical soloist and collaborative artist, he has performed and recorded with many world-renowned musicians and ensembles, including Deborah Voigt, Renée Fleming, The Knights and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He has arranged and conducted for numerous TV and film productions, including *Yellowstone* and Greta Gerwig's *Little Women*. He began to collaborate with MMDG in 2005 and has performed more than 60 pieces with the company on almost every keyboard instrument possible, including the harmonium and toy piano. He has conducted performances of *Mozart Dances*, *Acis and Galatea*, *The Hard Nut* and *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, and helped edit and create more than 15 videodances with Mark Morris during the pandemic. Hailed by *The New York Times* as “invaluable” and “central to Morris’ music,” he was appointed music director in 2013.

## Creative Team & Company

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**SAM BLACK (company director)** is originally from Berkeley, California, and received a B.F.A. in dance from SUNY Purchase. He first appeared with MMDG in 2005 and danced with the company until 2019, when he became the rehearsal director. He was promoted to company director in 2021.



**MICA BERNAS**, originally from Manila, Philippines, received her training at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Dance School. She later joined Ballet Philippines as a member of the corps de ballet and rose up the ranks to soloist. While at Ballet Philippines, Bernas also studied at De La Salle University and graduated with a bachelor's degree in organizational communication in 2006. Upon graduating, she moved to New York and joined Carolyn Dorfman Dance. She was a guest artist with the Limón Dance Company and worked with Karole Armitage, Gallim Dance, Marta Renzi and Connecticut Ballet. As an educator, Bernas has taught all levels of dance, including after-school programs, pre-professional and master classes. She has taught at the Limón Institute and formerly ran the dance program at BIMA at Brandeis University. She joined MMDG as a company member in 2017.



**KARLIE BUDGE** grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee, training and performing with the Tennessee Children's Dance Ensemble. She attended Case Western Reserve University on a full scholarship from the department of dance, graduating magna cum laude with a B.A. in dance and a B.S. in statistics in 2016. Budge has performed with Graham 2, Merce Cunningham Trust, and in her own solo and duet choreography. Budge joined MMDG as an apprentice in September 2018 and became a company member in November 2019.

## Creative Team & Company

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**BRANDON COURNAY** is a Brooklyn-based dancer, producer, choreographer and educator. Originally from Walled Lake, Michigan, he received a B.F.A. in dance from The Juilliard School. His eclectic performance career has taken him around the globe as a dancer with the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*, The Metropolitan Opera Ballet, Morphoses, KEIGWIN + COMPANY and more. He has been the associate choreographer and répétiteur on numerous creative projects in theatre, TV/film, opera and dance. Offstage, Cournay is the founder and executive artistic director of Dance Device Lab, a company offering innovative educational experiences for dance studios nationwide, and general manager and co-producer of Dance Heginbotham. He joined MMDG as a company member in 2018.  
[@brandon\\_cournay](https://twitter.com/brandon_cournay) / [brandoncournay.com](http://brandoncournay.com)



**CLINTON CURTIS (vocals)** is a multi-genre singer, musician and songwriter originally from Key West, Florida. As a choral singer he has worked with many of the world's luminary conductors and orchestras, most recently including engagements with the New York Philharmonic, Berlin Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony. March 2016 marked Curtis's operatic debut in *Curlew River* for MMDG. As a popular songwriter and front man for The Clinton Curtis Band, he has toured internationally as a cultural ambassador with the U.S Department of State. Curtis has released five original studio albums available at [music.clintoncurtis.com](http://music.clintoncurtis.com)

## Creative Team & Company

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**JOSH DION (drums)** is a Brooklyn-based drummer, singer, songwriter and producer. He is one half of the synth duo *paris\_monster*, which features a unique setup incorporating drums and synth while singing. Aside from *paris\_monster*, Dion's solo performances have been featured in online videos such as Tam Tam drum festival, Little Big Beat and Drumeo. He has also performed with John Scofield, Jim Campilongo, Wayne Krantz, Esperanza Spalding, Lucius, NPR's *Live from Here* featuring Chris Thile and has been a guest drummer on *Late Night with Seth Meyers*. *Modern Drummer* has praised Dion for his "highly skilled, soulful and rare musical voice."



**DOMINGO ESTRADA, JR.**, 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 a 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 was a company member from 2009 to 2023. Estrada would like to thank God, his family and all who support his passion.



**JACOB GARCHIK (trombone)** is a multi-instrumentalist and composer. Since moving to New York in 1994, he has been a vital part of the Downtown and Brooklyn scenes, playing trombone with the Lee Konitz Nonet, Ohad Talmor/Steve Swallow Sextet, Mary Halvorson Octet and the John Hollenbeck Large Ensemble. He has released four albums as a leader, including *The Heavens: The Atheist Gospel Trombone Album*. He co-leads Brooklyn's premiere Mexican brass band, Banda de los Muertos. Since 2006, Garchik has contributed dozens of arrangements and transcriptions for Kronos Quartet of music from all over the world. His arrangements were featured on *Floodplain*, *Rainbow* and *A Thousand Thoughts*. He composed the score for Kronos for the documentaries *The Campaign* and *Green Fog* directed by Guy Maddin.

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He has created arrangements for vocalists Anne Sofie von Otter, Angelique Kidjo, Laurie Anderson, Rhiannon Giddens, kd lang, Natalie Merchant, Tanya Tagaq and Alim Qasimov. As a trombonist, Garchik has worked with many luminaries of the avant-garde, including Henry Threadgill, Laurie Anderson, Anthony Braxton, Anthony Coleman, Joe Maneri, Frank London, James Tenney, Terry Reilly and George Lewis. He has also played in ensembles led by emerging artists Mary Halvorson, Darcy James Argue, Dan Weiss, Miguel Zenon and Steve Lehman, and has been named a “Rising Star” in the *Downbeat* Jazz Critics Poll.



**SARAH HILLMON** was born and raised in Rochester, New York. There she trained with Garth Fagan and Timothy M. Draper and was a member of the Rochester City Ballet. She graduated with a B.F.A. in dance from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where she had the privilege of performing works by talented artists including Sidra Bell, Lucinda Childs, Gus Solomons Jr. and Charles Weidman. After college, she became a member of Lucinda Childs Dance Company, where she toured the world performing classic works. While in New York City, she has also had the honor to perform with artists such as Solange Knowles as well as several dance companies including Robert Mark Dance, Suzanne Beahrs Dance, BodyStories: Teresa Fellion Dance, DanceBoissiere and the Daniel Gwirtzman Dance Company. Hillmon joined MMDG as an apprentice in September 2023.

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MMDG artistic director Mark Morris with *Pepperland* composer and arranger Ethan Iverson



Pianist, composer and writer **ETHAN IVERSON (composer, arranger, piano)** first came to international prominence as a founding member of The Bad Plus (TBP), a game-changing collective with Reid Anderson and David King. *The New York Times* called TBP “Better than anyone at melding the sensibilities of post-60’s jazz and indie rock.” During his 17-year tenure with the group, TBP performed in venues as diverse as the Village Vanguard, Carnegie Hall and Bonnaroo; collaborated with Joshua Redman, Bill Frisell and MMDG; and created a faithful arrangement of Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring* and a radical reinvention of Ornette Coleman’s *Science Fiction*. Since leaving TBP, Iverson has kept busy. In 2017, he co-curated a major centennial celebration of Thelonious Monk at Duke University and premiered the evening-length *Pepperland* with MMDG. In 2018, he premiered an original piano concerto with the American Composers Orchestra and released a duo album of new compositions with Mark Turner on ECM. In 2019, he released *Common Practice* with Tom

## Creative Team & Company

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Harrell on ECM, standards tracked live at the Village Vanguard. In 2021, he released the big band work *Bud Powell in the 21st Century* and was featured on the March cover of *DownBeat*. In 2022, he released *Every Note is True* on Blue Note records, an album of original music with Larry Grenadier and Jack DeJohnette. Iverson has also been in the critically acclaimed Billy Hart Quartet for more than a decade and occasionally performs with elder statesmen like Albert “Tootie” Heath or Ron Carter, or collaborates with noted classical musicians like Miranda Cuckson and Mark Padmore. For almost 20 years, Iverson’s website Do the Math has been a repository of musician-to-musician interviews and analysis. *Time Out New York* selected Iverson as one of 25 essential New York jazz icons: “Perhaps NYC’s most thoughtful and passionate student of jazz tradition—the most admirable sort of artist-scholar.” Iverson has also published articles about music in *The New Yorker*, NPR, *The Nation*, and *JazzTimes*.



**COURTNEY LOPES** is originally from Bermuda and attended the University of North Carolina School of the Arts for her high school education. She graduated magna cum laude with a B.F.A. in dance from SUNY Purchase in 2012 and studied in Taiwan at the Taipei National University of the Arts. As a student, she performed works by Paul Taylor, Jessica Lang, Lar Lubovitch and Huang Yi of Cloud Gate Dance Theater. In addition to performing with Dance Heginbotham for more than nine years, she has worked as a freelance artist with Megan Williams, Sameena Mitta, Kathryn Alter, Sue Bernhard and Robert Mark Burke. As an educator and répétiteur, she has worked with the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, Ballet Tech, 92Y Harkness Dance Center, Dance for PD® and the José Limón Institute. Lopes first performed with MMDG in 2018 and became a company member in 2023.

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**AARON LOUX** 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 a B.F.A. from The Juilliard School in 2009. Loux danced at the Metropolitan Opera and with Arc Dance Company before joining MMDG, where he was a company member from 2010 to 2022. He is currently pursuing a B.A. at Columbia University's School of General Studies and is on the faculty of Gibney Dance and the Dance for PD® program.



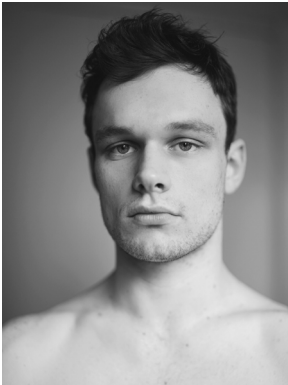
**TAÍNA LYONS** is a San Pedro, California, native who began her dance training at the San Pedro Ballet School at the age of 4. Her professional dance training started at the Debbie Allen Dance Academy, eventually being mentored by Debbie Allen herself. Lyons graduated from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts with a B.F.A. in dance and a minor in Spanish in 2020. There she performed in guest works by Ronald K. Brown, Wayne McGregor and Lar Lubovitch. In the spring of 2019, she also had the pleasure of studying abroad at the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague, Czech Republic. Since graduating, Lyons has had the honor of being a founding member of the Limón Dance Company's Limón2 (L2) company, an apprentice with Ronald K. Brown's Evidence, as well as performing and touring with Kyle Marshall Choreography. She joined MMDG as a company member in 2022.

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**GRIFFIN MASSEY** was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma. After training in Oklahoma and Texas, he moved to New York City where he earned a B.F.A. in dance in 2023 from The Juilliard School under Alicia Graf Mack, dean and director of the dance division, and Mario Alberto Zambrano, associate director. While at Juilliard, Massey had the opportunity to perform works by Sonya Tayeh, Donald McKayle, Ohad Naharin, Aszure Barton, Spencer Theberge, Jermaine Spivey and Hofesh Shechter. He has also studied at Springboard Danse Montréal under the direction of Alexandra Wells. Massey joined MMDG as an apprentice in August 2023.



**MATTHEW McLAUGHLIN** discovered movement at age 1 and danced hula in Hawaii until age 4. As a child with parents in the military, he moved and traveled frequently and explored many different sports and art forms. McLaughlin graduated from SUNY Purchase with a B.F.A. in dance. During this time, he performed works by Aszure Barton, Kevin Wynn, Kyle Abraham, George Balanchine and Doug Varone. In 2018, he had the opportunity to perform in the Lar Lubovitch Dance Company's 50th anniversary celebration. He joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2019 and became a company member in 2021. McLaughlin would like to thank his family for their love and inspiration.



**DALLAS McMURRAY**, from El Cerrito, California, began dancing at age 4, studying jazz, tap and acrobatics with Katie Maltsberger 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.

## Creative Team & Company

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**ALEX MEETH** grew up in Dousman, Wisconsin, and began his dance training with Eddy Bray at the age of 13. After graduating from the Kettle Moraine School for Arts and Performance, he was accepted on scholarship to the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where he graduated with a B.F.A. in contemporary dance performance (emphasis in choreography) in 2022. While at the Boston Conservatory, he performed works by Mark Morris, Catherine Coury, José Limón, Daniel Pelzig and Bradley Shelver. Since 2019, Meeth has additionally danced with the Boston Early Music Festival under the direction of Kathleen Fay and Melinda Sullivan.



**SAM NEWSOME (saxophone)** works primarily in the medium of solo saxophone, an approach through which he gained world-wide critical acclaim with the release of his 2009 recording *Blue Soliloquy: Solo Works for Soprano Saxophone*, which received a five-star review in *Downbeat* magazine. Newsome sees himself more along the lines of a visual artist who paints with notes and sounds rather than shapes and colors. “My music,” says Newsome, “is a type of improvisatory art music in which jazz functions more as a resource than a musical genre to be interpreted with stylistic specificity.” Even though Newsome’s approach is unorthodox, it has proven to be very fruitful—musically and critically. Newsome’s creative efforts have earned him such recognition as receiving the 2016 NYFA Artist’s Fellowship for the Music/Sound category; being selected as a nominee for Soprano Saxophonist of the Year by the 2016 Jazz Journalist Association; and placing fourth in the Soprano Saxophone category in the 64th Annual *Downbeat* Jazz Critics Poll.

## Creative Team & Company

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**BRANDON RANDOLPH** 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 a 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 working with MMDG in 2013 and became a company member in 2014.



**NICOLE SABELLA** is originally from Clearwater, Florida, where she studied at the Academy of Ballet Arts and the Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School under Suzanne B. Pomerantzeff. In 2009, she graduated from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, earning a B.F.A. in modern dance performance and the "Outstanding Performance in Modern Dance" Award. She was a performer with Zane Booker's Smoke, Lilies, and Jade Arts Initiative. Sabella first performed with MMDG in 2013 and became a company member in 2015.



**CHRISTINA SAHAIDA** grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and began her early dance training at the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School. In 2012, she graduated with honors from Butler University, receiving a B.F.A. in dance performance. She has worked with Ballet Quad Cities, Texture Contemporary Ballet and most recently the Big Muddy Dance Company in St. Louis, Missouri. Sahaida joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2017 and became a company member in 2019.

## Creative Team & Company

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**ROB SCHWIMMER (theremin)** is a composer-pianist/keyboardist, thereminist and Haken Continuumist. He has worked with Simon & Garfunkel, Wayne Shorter, Antônio Carlos Jobim, Bobby McFerrin, Willie Nelson, Paul Simon, Gotye, The Boston Pops, Chaka Khan, Laurie Anderson, Arif Mardin, Stevie Wonder, Adam Guettel, Paul Bley, T-Bone Walker, Sam Rivers, Christian Marclay, Matthew Barney, Ang Lee, Maria Schneider, The Klezmatics, Bernie Worrell, Annette Peacock, Gwyneth Paltrow, Mabou Mines, Geoffrey Holder, John Cale, Steve Buscemi, Iva Bittova, Theo Bleckmann, John Stubblefield, The Roches, Jack Quartet, Teo Macero, Hal Willner, Vernon Reid, The Everly Brothers, Kurt Vonnegut, Odetta, Joseph Jarman, Alwin Nikolai/Murray Louis Dance Company, Marc Ribot, Frank London and Sammy Davis Jr. As a world class thereminist, Schwimmer has been featured on *CBS Sunday Morning*, *The New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*. A founding member and former co-director of the NY Theremin Society, his credits as theremin soloist include The Boston Pops, The Orchestra of St. Luke's (which included his theremin arrangement of Bernard Herrmann's "Scene d'Amour" from *Vertigo*), Bobby McFerrin at Carnegie Hall, Gotye's Ondioline Orchestra and Simon & Garfunkel's world tours. In addition to his album *Theremin Noir* (with Uri Caine and Mark Feldman), Schwimmer played on Trey Anastasio's album *Traveler*, Matthew Barney's epic movie *Cremaster 3* and A&E's *Breakfast with the Arts*.

## Creative Team & Company

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**BILLY SMITH** 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, 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.



**JOSLIN VEZEAU** is from St. Louis, Missouri, where she trained at the Center of Creative Arts. She graduated magna cum laude from the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. program in dance performance in 2018 and while there was awarded the Denise Jefferson Memorial Scholarship. During her senior year in college, Vezeau joined Peridance Contemporary Dance Company in New York and danced with that company for six seasons. When not dancing, she is a personal trainer and loves rock climbing, volunteering at Brooklyn farmers markets and taking care of dogs. Vezeau joined MMDG as an apprentice in August 2023.

## Creative Team & Company

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**NOAH VINSON** is originally from Springfield, Illinois, and received a B.A. in dance from Columbia College Chicago. He was named a *Dance Magazine* “Dancer on the Rise” in 2009 and assisted Mark Morris in the creation of *The Letter V* for Houston Ballet. He began dancing with MMDG in 2002 and became a company member in 2004.

**JOHAN HENCKENS (set design)** became the director of technical production of MMDG in 1989, during the company’s three-year residency at the Koninklijke Muntscouwburg in Brussels, Belgium.



**NICK KOLIN (lighting design)** has designed *Whelm*, *Words*, *A Forest*, *Numerator*, *Pure Dance Items*, *Little Britten*, *The Trout* and *Sport* for MMDG and tours with the group as lighting supervisor. Recent dance projects include new works for Philadanco!, Art of Fugue with Syren Modern Dance, many collaborations with the Joffrey Ballet School and lighting supervisor for Daniil Simkin’s *Intensio*, Wendy Whelan’s *Restless Creature*, the Apollo Theatre’s *Get on the Good Foot*, Dance Heginbotham, Lincoln Center Festival and New York City Center’s Fall for Dance Festival. Other projects include productions with the Cincinnati Ballet, Gotham Chamber Opera, Asolo Repertory Theater, Castillo Theater and Signature Theatre. Kolin is an adjunct faculty member at Hunter College, where he is the resident lighting designer for the M.F.A. playwriting program. He holds an M.F.A. from New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts.



PHOTO: GARETH JONES

## Creative Team & Company

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Pepperland costume sketches by Elizabeth Kurtzman



**ELIZABETH KURTZMAN (costume design)** began her career in the fashion industry after attending the Parsons School of Design. She has designed textiles and accessories for numerous New York design houses. Kurtzman has added costume design and book illustration to her list of vocations, designing numerous pieces for MMDG including *Dancing Honeymoon*, *Sang-Froid*, *The Argument*, *Greek to Me*, *Four Saints in Three Acts*, *Empire Garden*, *Visitation*, *The Muir*, *Crosswalk*, *Petrichor*, *Pure Dance Items* and *Sport*. She also designed *L'Isola Disabitata* for the Gotham Opera Company, under Mark Morris's direction. Kurtzman is currently active in providing art and music programs for children with autism in New York City, where she lives and works.

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PHOTO: Robert Torres

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PHOTO: Mat Hayward

## Investing in Dance: The Support That Makes *Pepperland* Possible

by Ryan Wenzel

It takes a long time to bring a work like Mark Morris's *Pepperland* to the stage. The steps are many: composing and arranging the music; choreographing the movement; rehearsing the dancers and musicians; designing the décor, lighting, and sound—seldom mentioned is the funding required to set it all in motion.

Dance companies often rely on support from foundations and individual donors to fund new works, and only after the premiere convinces presenters to schedule performances. Mark Morris Dance Group, however, has developed a model that is unusual in the dance world, whereby multiple arts institutions join together to commission a piece—often years before it will reach their stages.

This approach began with *Mozart Dances* (2006), a three-way commission, and grew over time with *Romeo and Juliet* (2008), *Acis and Galatea* (2014) and *Layla and Majnun* (2016). It reaches unprecedented scale with *Pepperland*, which received advance funding from no fewer than 17 institutions. They span the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom; are based in towns, cities and on university campuses; and include both non-profit and for-profit entities.

“The support provided by these institutions sustains us and shows a unique understanding of the hidden costs involved with creating dance works of this size,” says Nancy Umanoff,

executive director of Mark Morris Dance Group.

This funding model serves the commissioning partners well, too, and is based largely on Morris's importance and the trust they have in his work. "Like all arts organizations, we need to be careful about how we marshal our resources. But the excellence that Mark represents is at the heart of what we do, so we support it wholeheartedly," says Matías Tarnopolsky, former executive and artistic director of Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley, which has worked with Morris and his dancers for three decades.

Mike Ross, director of the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, echoes Tarnopolsky and adds that the Dance Group's offstage outreach has also been crucial in furthering their close-knit relationship. "In addition to annual performances, they have brought workshops and other activities to our campus, and to the local population at large," says Ross. "Because they have become part of our community, it is easy for us to support them and their work on this level."

A separate community—one with a reputation for supporting superior new work—has coalesced around the commissioning organizations themselves, enticing others to join. *Pepperland* marks the Banff Centre's first commission of a Morris work, yet there are no plans for the piece to be performed on its stages in Alberta, Canada; it will instead, by arrangement with the Banff Centre, play

at the Sony Centre in Toronto, more than 2,000 miles away. "We wanted to support Mark and his company, of course, but also for audiences to know that we support work of this caliber alongside other great organizations," says Janice Price, the Banff Centre's president. "It is incredibly rewarding to be seen as part of the ecosystem that makes this happen."

And if history is any indication, that ecosystem will only continue to strengthen and grow.

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**Ryan Wenzel is a New York-based writer and editor.**

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