

Friday, October 25, 2024

Jennifer Muller/The Works Legacy Continuance: Jennifer Muller/The Works Announces a New Path Forward

Company: Jennifer Muller/The Works
Venue: Jennifer Muller/The Works
Location: New York, NY

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In celebration of Jennifer Muller/The Works' 50th birthday - exactly 50 years after the original company was formed, 19 months after Jennifer's passing, and following a successful debut performance celebrating Jennifer's 80th birthday at The Joyce Theater - JMTW presents our new leadership and company to the world.

The company has appointed new leadership across the organization. Two accomplished JMTW alumni have risen to Co-Artistic Directors, ready to spearhead the next era of Muller's work. Rosie Lani Fiedelman and Duane Gosa will take over the Artistic Leadership of Jennifer Muller/The Works. General Manager, Katy Neely, will step into the role of Executive Director. Longtime Lighting Director, Jeff Croiter, and Muller alumnus Pascal Rekoert, have both accepted roles on the organization's Board of Directors, and Brian McIver, longtime Board Member, has embraced the role of President.

Each of these leaders has extended personal and professional commitment to Jennifer Muller - her prolific, creative body of work, and her ultimate mission - to let dance impact the hearts and minds of countless people around the world. They are energized and excited to take up the mantle, ready to uphold Jennifer's legacy for future generations of dancers and audiences to experience and learn from.

In an ode to the past year of cross-seas collaboration, bi-weekly Zoom meetings about this legacy, and the outpouring of love and support from many generations of talented Muller dancers around the globe - JMTW has also enacted an Executive Artistic Council as an artistic resource for our new directors. Christopher Pilafian, Angeline Wolf Gloria, 1st Generation, John Brooks, Lana Carroll-Heylock, 2nd Generation, Maria Naidu, 3rd Generation, Tracy Kofford, Jen Peters, and Pascal Rekoert, 4th Generation will comprise this council, and will act as a soundboard for creative programming to come, as well as offer whatever guidance may be helpful to Rosie and Duane in the coming years.

These alumni have all traveled into NYC for "intensive" rehearsal periods, ranging 1-2 weeks, to help stage segments of the company's upcoming 50th Anniversary program. Some pieces presented this year haven't been performed since the late 80s or early 90s, meaning our dancers are coming back and reconstructing pieces they haven't touched for thirty years, with sometimes a frustratingly bad video for reference.

To remedy this - JMTW has adopted the mantra, "when in doubt, gather!"

During these intensives, alumni from the same era have often come together in the studio, each teaching their old part to the new dancer taking on the role, and assisting each other in the rediscovery of old motivations and movement details. At one point in this reemergence year, JMTW had 6 alumni teaching simultaneously in the same studio, each adding their own layer, memory, experience, and perception of the movement into the communal pot. Bit by bit, the pieces have re-emerged, and life is breathed back into the iconic works of the legacy.

Other pieces the company is restaging, like the beloved Speeds, have been danced, and are still deeply known, by many generations of the company. For these pieces, as well as the larger Muller Polarity Technique, our dancers have experienced a taste of hermeneutics- learning through the many interpretations and memories of our alumni, who all passionately stand by the shapes and concepts that are still deeply ingrained in their minds and muscles. JMTW dancers no longer have the opportunity to learn directly from the source, but they are now receiving an influx of knowledge and joy from the many dancers who did learn from Jennifer. An incredible spirit of the company is found in those who still passionately love the work and JMTW intends to continue this concept of gathering even after appointing new Artistic Directors, as we are stronger together.

Jennifer Muller/The Works is committed to reminding our audiences of the depth of work Muller created - her range of movement vocabulary, her point of view, as well as some timeless pieces that haven't seen the light of day in quite some time - all of which still bear incredible relevance to modern life. These iconic dances should not be left in a dropbox folder, nor should they only be accessible through a library appointment. Dance is meant to be felt, and live dance is felt like nothing else. Join us in this year of resurgence, a year of celebrating our history and embracing a future with fresh creative perspectives, maintaining an ever-strong commitment to live Muller dance.

The company will be holding a 50th Anniversary Gala on February 11, 2025 at The Hall of Lumieres in New York City and will be presenting a full 50th Anniversary Season at BAM Fisher, April 29 - May 4. Join us to celebrate the continuance of this phenomenal legacy.

Pieces to come in the 50th Anniversary Year ahead:

Speeds (1974)

Couches (1987)

City (1988)

Regards (1991)

Glass Houses (1993)

Asolo (2000)

Hymn for Her (2000)

Flowers (2004)

JMTW is self-producing this 50th Anniversary performance season, and we are turning to our friends and long-time supporters for help.

Please support this essential continuance project, and wish JMTW a Happy 50th Birthday with a donation.

Donate:

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The JMTW Continuance Project is fiscally sponsored by The Foundation for Independent Artists, Inc. Donations should be made out to: JMTW Continuance Project - FIA#5.

About our New Leadership:

ROSIE LANI FIEDELMAN grew up in Breckenridge, CO. She was in the original Off-Broadway and Broadway cast of the Tony Award winning production "In The Heights." Other theater credits include The Lion King, "Heat-Wave: The Jack Cole Project," choreographed and directed by Chet Walker, American Dance Machine for the 21st Century and "Ghost Dancer," playing Rosario. From 2003-2013, Rosie danced with Jennifer Muller/The Works where she originated several roles and was rehearsal director for Ms. Muller. Film and Television credits include: Fosse/Verdon on FX and Raising Dion on Netflix

DUANE GOSA was first introduced to the Muller Technique while studying with Lana Carroll Heylock at the University of Akron. After graduating, Duane moved to NYC to join JMTW. With the company, Duane has had the opportunity to perform and teach Muller's work nationally and internationally, assisting Ms. Muller in workshops and reproductions of her work at various institutions. Forever grateful to be a part of this family, Duane will forever cherish his time learning from an incredibly gifted, compassionate, and generous woman. Other dance credits include: Company XIV(currently), Les Ballets Trockadero, The Love Show, Ballet22, and Gleich Dances to name a few.

KATY NEELY originally hails from Cody, Wyoming. She moved to New York City to study at Columbia University where she completed degrees in English and Dance. She has danced under choreographers Boyzie Cekwana and Andrea Miller, as well as on the Bronx-based dance company, Heartbreak Crew. She has worked as Production Assistant for The Hip Hop Nutcracker, and has had the pleasure of serving as Artistic Associate of theatrical hip-hop dance company, Decadancetheatre. Katy joined Jennifer Muller/The Works in April 2016, and cherishes the time she spent professionally and personally with Jennifer Muller. Katy intends to honor Jennifer and her legacy by stepping into the Executive Director role of Jennifer Muller/The Works.

JEFF CROITER has been working with Jennifer Muller/The Works for over twenty years. He has designed on Broadway, off Broadway, regional theater, opera, dance, special events and touring productions, has received Tony, Hewes and Bass awards and has been nominated for Drama Desk, Outer Critics Circle, Lortel, Ovation, Irne and Audelco awards. Projects include the Broadway productions of Falsettos, Bandstand, Newsies, Peter and the Starcatcher, and Something Rotten; as well as Penn & Teller on Broadway and in Las Vegas, The Big Apple Circus, Freestyle Love Supreme, and The Other Josh Cohen.

After an extensive career in Europe, PASCAL REKOERT became a premier dancer and Associate Artistic Director with Jennifer Muller/ The Works, assisting Artistic Director Jennifer Muller with choreography for New York City Opera, with performances at Lincoln Center's Avery Fisher Hall and with projects in Bolivia, Thailand, China, and Brazil. Since 2000, Rekoert has also produced various international festivals and

performance series in New York City. Rekoert's choreography has been presented in theaters in Switzerland, Italy, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and the United States. Rekoert's commercial work includes PTT Dutch Royal Communications, BERENIK, Motorola, Levi's, Dockers, L'Oreal Paris, New York Fashion Week, and various celebrity designers. Described as "magnetic and intricate" (the Dutch Volkskrant, 2001), Rekoert has also collaborated with various filmmakers, creating award-winning dance films, podcast dance film festivals, and hybrid film-dance performances.

As a Lincoln Center Scholar who finished his master's degree in an inaugural partnership program between Lincoln Center Education and CUNY Hunter College, Rekoert helped revise the New York City Department of Education Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in Dance. After teaching dance professionals for two decades, Rekoert became a full-time NYCDOE dance educator in 2015. As part of his doctoral studies at Columbia University, Teachers College, his research explores the correlations between masculinity and dance within the male adolescent population in urban neighborhoods. He is currently the Dance Education Director at Central Connecticut State University.

BRIAN MCIVER began his love of the arts as a child, performing in local community theater, commercials, voiceover work and in television. While he never felt confident as a dancer, his love, respect, and appreciation for the art form led him to JMTW. First introduced to JMTW's mission in the 40th anniversary year, he immediately joined the board because of Jennifer's sheer talent, vision, and collaborative spirit. Brian is honored to have worked alongside Jennifer and will continue to "open the hearts and minds" of audiences; the way Jennifer intended.

Brian is a Senior Vice President, Public Relations, and resides in New York City

About our Founder

Jennifer Muller (October 16, 1944 - March 29, 2023) was a creative force in the modern dance world for over 50 years. She was known for her visionary approach and innovation in dance and theater, her multi-disciplinary productions incorporating both spoken word and live and commissioned music, artist-inspired decor, and unusual production elements.

Dance was Muller's passion and creative voice since childhood. Creating pieces since age 7, she began dancing professionally at age 15 as a member of the Pearl Lang Dance Company. These formative years were followed by 9 years as Principal Dancer with the José Limón Company— during which she graduated from the Juilliard School—and 7 years as Associate Artistic Director of the Louis Falco Dance Company. She founded Jennifer Muller/The Works in 1974 and served as Artistic Director until she passed away. For 45 years, she led the company to global recognition for its dynamic theatricality, virtuosity, and humanity. The company toured to 39 countries on four continents, including a State Department tour of South and Central America, performed in 30 states, and self-produced 28 seasons in New York City. Throughout her career, Muller created over 125 pieces, including seven full evening productions.

Muller was highly respected in her field. She was chosen as a founding member of the World Arts Council in 2003—selected as one of 30 artists across six disciplines and the only American drawn from the dance field. In 2009, Muller was awarded a commissioning grant from The Joyce Theater's 25@25 Initiative to create the piece, Bench. In 2010, she received the Trophy of Cultural Responsibility in recognition of her invaluable contributions to dance in South America. In 2011, she was awarded an "American Masterpieces: 3 Centuries of Artistic Genius Grant" to set her 1974 work Speeds on the UCSB Dance Company. The piece was accompanied by a scholarly conference, exhibit and publication entitled Transformation & Continuance: Jennifer Muller and the Reshaping of American Modern Dance, 1959-Present.

Muller was commissioned to create and re-stage dance works for 26 international repertory companies in nine countries. These included Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater and Ohio Ballet (USA), Tanz-Forum (Germany), Ballet du Nord and Lyon Opera Ballet (France), Aterballetto (Italy), Bat Dor (Israel), Ballet Jazz de Montreal (Canada), Ballet Contemporaneo (Argentina) and Nederlands Dans Theater, NDT3, Krisztina de Chatel and, in 2019, Introdans (Netherlands), to name a few.

Internationally renowned as a consummate teacher and mentor of creative talent, Muller was one of the only choreographers of her generation to develop an original technique, based upon principles drawn from Eastern philosophy. TanzPlan Berlin's Center for Dance chose Muller Polarity Technique as one of seven unique, contemporary dance techniques for its publication/DVD Tanztechnik 2010. In addition to teaching Muller Polarity Technique worldwide, she headlined workshops in creativity, collaboration and choreography in France, England, Switzerland, The Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Argentina and the US. Additionally, she developed unique programs in creative thinking and non-verbal communication entitled Creative Mind Workshops for dancers and non-dancers alike. Inspired by Muller's technique and philosophical tenets, company alumni have gone on to faculty positions in universities, colleges and studios across the globe.

A dramatist as well as a movement artist, Muller was recognized as a "seminal influence on dance/theater" by choreographer and co-founder of Tanzform Köln, Jochen Ulrich. Muller choreographed productions for The Public Theater, 2nd Stage Theater, NY Stage & Film, Juilliard Opera Center and the New York City Opera, and in 2011, choreographed the new musical The Spiral Show in Beijing, China. She directed the Da Capo Players' production of Peter Maxwell Davis' Le Jongleur, authored scripts for NDT3 and JMTW, designed costumes, lights and decor under the designation Stageworks, and worked with directors Gail Edwards, Des McNuff, Ken Elliot, Mark Linn-Baker and Christopher Mataliano.

Muller was also known for her history of notable collaborations: she worked with such artists as Keith Haring, Yoko Ono, Keith Jarrett, Tom Slaughter, Sandro Chia, and Julia Kent. Additionally, she established long-standing collaborative relationships with composers Burt Alcantara and Marty Beller, Tony Award-winning lighting designer Jeff Croiter, photographer Roberto Dutesco, and designers William Katz and Karen Small.

Jennifer Muller believed passionately in the importance and power of live dance. She devoted her life to this art form, which she experienced and framed as a medium of communication with the capacity to reach people from all walks of life. She encouraged dancers, creatives, students, and audiences to trust their humanity, deepen their imagination, and ultimately to connect in a shared and potentially transformative experience. From this essential mission unfurled more than 50 years of extraordinarily productive creativity and a monumental body of work that has reached countless people around the world.

Jennifer Muller/The Works has electrified world audiences with its passionate work and superb dancers in 39 countries on four continents, 30 States in the USA and produced 28 NYC Seasons at City Center, the Joyce, Cedar Lake and New York Live Arts among others. JMTW has performed at major theaters and festivals worldwide, spanning hemispheres from Buenos Aires to Montreal and circumnavigating the globe from Shanghai to Moscow, with performances in Madrid, Rio de Janeiro, Bangkok, Tel Aviv, Rome and Amsterdam to name a few.

A byword for diversity since its inception in 1974, JMTW performs work that celebrates the human spirit with the belief that dance can promote cross-cultural understanding and act as a catalyst for positive change. JMTW presents exhilarating dances that showcase emotional authenticity and social consciousness. In the US, JMTW has appeared in venues such as Lincoln Center, the Kennedy Center, Jacob's Pillow, Alice Tully Hall, Jacob Javits Center, the United Nations, Kaatsbaan International Dance Center and St. Louis' Spring to Dance Festival among many others. In New York City, festivals include Bryant and Battery Park, Hudson Valley, Fire Island, Summer in the Square and Central Park Summerstage.

Devoted to mentoring creativity in all its forms, educating youth and serving the community with vital outreach, JMTW's education programs - Faces of Wonder, Imagine That! and HATCH Presenting Series - have reached over 4,000 NYC youth and have mentored 50 emerging choreographers annually. JMTW conducts residencies throughout the US and abroad. Students have performed Muller's work at the University of Iowa, Long Island University (Brooklyn), Jacksonville University; UC Santa Barbara, Central Connecticut State University and LaGuardia Community College, with additional residencies in California, Virginia and Brazil. JMTW has developed numerous dance artists who have gone on to become directors and choreographers in their own right. These include Ronald K. Brown, Young Soon Kim, Pascal Rekoert, Michael Jahoda, Maria Naidu, Leda Meredith, Lana Carroll-Heylock, Mario Bermudez Gil, Ed Burgess and Christopher Pilafian. www.jmtw.org

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Schedule
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