

April, 28-29, 2023

MorDance Celebrates 10th Anniversary With Two World Premieres

Company: MorDance
Venue: Gerald W. Lynch Theater
Location: New York, NY

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MorDance celebrates its tenth anniversary performance season with two groundbreaking world premiere ballets centering themes of activism and humanity. Performances are April 28-29, 2023 at 7:30pm at the Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College (524 W 59th St., NYC) as part of the CUNY Dance Initiative. Tickets are \$30 for adults, and \$20 for students and seniors. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit <https://mordance.ticketleap.com/mordance/>.

The program's premieres are committed to dancemaking that embodies artistic excellence while promoting civic engagement and social awareness. Choreographer Morgan McEwen joins forces with composer Polina Nazaykinskaya to create a new work inspired by Emily Dickinson's poem *They Shut Me Up In Prose*, with live music by Konstantin Soukhovetski and Jesus Rodolfo. An additional partnership with composer Josh Knowles is influenced by visual artist Chris Jordan's film *Albatross*. The much-anticipated revival of McEwen's 2018 ballet *Stabat Mater* will round out this triple bill.

Program

The first ballet will take flight from Chris Jordan's critically acclaimed documentary, *Albatross* (World Premiere), which depicts a vulnerable albatross population incurring the impact of mass consumption, global industry, and human unconsciousness. "I look to articulate this challenging narrative through choreography of avian movement and breathtaking wingspans," said choreographer Morgan McEwen. "I collaborated with composer and experimental violinist Josh Knowles on a spacious arrangement that expresses both soaring heights and the ominous weight of dire circumstances. Josh composed and recorded this piece on a single violin looped and layered through multiple distortion pedals."

Inspired by Emily Dickinson's transcendent and radically outspoken poem of the same title, *They Shut Me Up In Prose* (World Premiere) evokes a young woman overcoming sexism in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society. The choreography will blend a classical ballet vernacular with contemporary movement. Polina Nazaykinskaya will create a contemporary score to be played on classical instruments. Polina's unique experiences as an internationally renowned female composer will bring extraordinary artistry and meaningful perspective to the themes portrayed.

Stabat Mater is a 13th-century Christian hymn to Mary, which portrays her suffering as Jesus Christ's mother during his crucifixion. This work is set to Arvo Pärt's score of the same name and navigates themes of mourning and shared sorrow. With focused lighting and raised structures, the illusion of silhouettes and shadows will create a dramatic vision of dancers while finding moments of rebirth and joy amidst the deep sense of grieving that the music portrays.

MorDance's residency and performances at the Gerald W. Lynch Theater at John Jay College are supported by the CUNY Dance Initiative.

About the Artists

Morgan McEwen (Choreographer), a New York City native, is the founder, artistic director, and choreographer of MorDance, a trailblazing dance company celebrated for creating original collaborative works that push the boundaries of classical ballet. Through her extensive career as a

professional ballet dancer at the Richmond Ballet, BalletMet, and the Metropolitan Opera, McEwen discovered she had limited opportunities to pursue her passion as a female choreographer. Driven to create a positive work environment that champions exploration and opportunity for all, Morgan is committed to empowering a strong roster of female creatives to elevate the experience of ballet for the modern age, both from an artist and audience perspective. McEwen has been heralded by The New York Times as having, "an eye for shaping the arc of a dance as carefully as the transitions and details within it," Morgan has presented works on stages throughout New York City, including Baryshnikov Arts Center, Aaron Davis Hall, and Symphony Space. She received a CUNY Dance Initiative Residency and Kaatsbaan Upstream Residency in 2018. Ms McEwen's work was selected to be performed at Battery Dance Festival in 2021. She has recently been granted a residency on Martha's Vineyard through the Vineyard Arts Project. Additionally, she will be working with BalletX to generate new work during a choreographic incubator in 2023.

The music of award-winning composer Polina Nazaykinskaya has become a staple of orchestral, chamber and solo repertory in the United States, Russia, and Europe. Her first symphonic poem "Winter Bells" is in high demand every season by orchestras such as The Minnesota Orchestra and The Russian National Orchestra among others. Her latest symphonic poem "Fenix", premiered by The Albany Symphony is programmed for multiple performances in the 2021-2022 concert season. This season Polina's music will be performed by The Eastern Connecticut Symphony Orchestra, The Salina Symphony, The Florida Orchestra, Orchestra of the Southern Finger Lakes, The Metropolitan Symphony Orchestra and The Portland Youth Philharmonic. In October 2021 Polina's recent ballet "Reverse Perspective" was performed at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow and the Jaani Kirik in Saint-Petersburg. In March 2022 San Francisco Ballet premiered a new piece based on Polina's composition "The Rising", choreographed by Yuri Possokhov. In Spring 2022 MorDance premiered Polina's new ballet "Encounters" at Symphony Space in New York City. Polina's collaborators include internationally renowned choreographers Pascal Rioult, Jonah Bokaer, and Ulyana Bochernikova. Polina works closely with the world's leading conductors, such as Osmo Vänskä, Teodor Currentzis, Fabio Mastrangelo, Sarah Hicks, Toshiyuki Shimada, Lawrence Loh, and Hannu Lintu. Polina's compositions are actively performed by internationally acclaimed soloists such as trombonist R. Douglas Wright, violinist Elena Korzhenevich, and pianist Anton Nel. Polina earned her Masters' and Artist Diploma in composition at the Yale School of Music with Christopher Theofanidis and Ezra Laderman. Currently, Polina is a Doctorate Candidate at The Graduate Center CUNY under the mentorship of Tania León. Many of Polina's honors and awards include Charles Ives Scholarship from The American Academy of Arts and Letters and the Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans. Polina is an Adjunct Lecturer of Composition at Brooklyn College Conservatory and a Teaching Artist at the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven.

Josh Knowles (Composer) is a violinist, singer/songwriter, and composer based in Boston, MA. Formerly educated at Berklee College of Music, he brings an eclectic array of influences to his work. He has trained from the age of four as a classical violinist and is continually striving to fuse his traditional foundation with a myriad of contemporary styles. Knowles is also a musical artist and poet for Cirio Collective and Boston Ballet, with whom he has appeared on stage for historic runs at the Boston Opera House and the Lincoln Center in New York. He first collaborated with the Collective in 2015, and shortly after was asked to arrange the music and perform alongside violist Anna Stromer for Cirio Collective's piece, "Efif Ym Fo Flah", which premiered at the Vineyard Arts Project in the summer of 2016. He currently resides as a Community Luminary at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, where he performs regularly. In February of 2018, Knowles released "Spin Without A Sound," his debut album of instrumental solo electric violin pieces. Largely recorded live, each of the original compositions is built on loops and improvisations spawned entirely from sounds created by the violin, manipulated by multiple effect pedals. Riding the line somewhere between contemporary new age and alternative classical, the result is both symphonic and electronic, unique in its combination of melodic foundation and technical prowess.

Becky Heisler McCarthy (Lighting Designer) is a New York City based lighting designer primarily in theater, dance, and opera settings. She aims to create striking pictures and experiences through nuance and subtlety. Her work has appeared in Las Vegas, Denver, The Spoleto Festival USA, Harrisburg, and across New York City. She began her artistic studies with the Pennsylvania Governor's School while in high school, and holds a BFA in Technical Theater with an Emphasis in Lighting Design from Penn State University. Heisler has participated in the International Stage Design Students Works Exchange hosted by the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing and organized by OISTAT. In New York City, she was a part of the Wingspace Mentorship Program and was a member of the finalist team for Opera America's Director/Designer showcase. This will be Becky's sixth season with MorDance.

Emily Cardea (Dancer) is elated to be making her debut with MorDance! Born and based in New York City and raised in a performing artist family, Cardea's first introduction to the stage was as a child singer with the Metropolitan Opera. At age seven, she was accepted into the School of American Ballet where she trained for eight years. Cardea's performing background also includes eight years of professional performance experience at Lincoln Center where she earned roles with both New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theatre, in ballets including Swan Lake, A Midsummer Night's Dream, George Balanchine's The Nutcracker, Coppelia and Le Corsaire. At age eighteen, she became a member of Orlando Ballet, where her repertoire included featured roles in The Nutcracker, Giselle, Carmen, A Midsummer Night's Dream, Swan Lake, The Sleeping Beauty, and Peter and the Wolf. She has also performed and acted Off-Broadway, and in numerous dancing guest roles in both theater and television. Cardea has since developed her own voice as a choreographer, performing pieces with Cafe Telephone, an international artist collective. Most recently, Cardea made her directorial debut with her dance film "Dos" (2020) which was screened at the High Line Nine Galleries' "Females in Film" Showcase in 2021.

Claire van Bever (Dancer) is a New York based performer and teacher. Originally from Portland, OR she trained at the School of Oregon Ballet Theatre, The Rock School for Dance Education and the SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance. Claire started her career with American Repertory Ballet where she had the privilege of performing at City Center and Jacob's Pillow, and dancing the works of Kirk Peterson, Patrick Corbin and Gerald Arpino. After moving to New York, Claire graduated summa cum laude from The New School with a BA in Liberal Arts and began freelancing in New York. She has worked with Jillian Peña, Robert Longbottom, Alice Gosti, and Neglia Ballet. She has had the honor of appearing on the World Tour of the Phantom of the Opera and is now thrilled to join MorDance.

Lauren Treat (Dancer) is a dancer and freelance Artist in New York City and is thrilled to be joining MorDance for her first season! She has danced professionally with BalletMet Columbus, Milwaukee Ballet, Carolina Ballet, Charlotte Ballet, Connecticut Ballet, Lydia Johnson Dance, and as a Soloist Guest Artist for Neglia Ballet, American Circus Theater, and Artek Ballet. Additionally, she has performed at Sony Hall and for the NY Botanical Garden's Holiday Show. Originally from upstate New York, Lauren majored in Dance at Walnut Hill School of the Arts in Natick, MA. Following training at local studios, she studied at Manhattan Youth Ballet, where she danced in both the school and Youth Company, in addition to attending summer intensives at The School of American Ballet, Miami City Ballet, The Washington School of Ballet, Joffrey Ballet Chicago, Ellison Ballet, Dmanagement, Ajkun Ballet Theater, and Saratoga Regent Ballet. Lauren also teaches dance to students of all ages in the greater New York area, and is a Movement and Play Educator at Union Square Play.

David Hochberg (Dancer) is from New York, where he trained at Studio Maestro/Manhattan Youth Ballet under Francois Perron, Nadege Hottier, and Ellison Ballet under Edward Ellison. In 2012 David joined Sarasota Ballet under director Iain Webb. He then joined Nevada Ballet Theater in 2014, where he danced for five seasons under James Canfield and Roy Kaiser. Since returning to New York in 2019 he has worked as a freelance dancer for Movement Headquarters, The Chase Brock Experience, Guggenheim Works & Process, Graham Lustig at The Princeton Festival, XAOC Ballet, and Margo Sappington.

Tevin Johnson (Dancer) is a Syracuse, New York native who began his training at 15. Johnson attended the Alvin Ailey's Professional Division Summer Dance Intensive on a scholarship in 2013 and attended again in 2014. Here he had the opportunity to work with Christian Von Howard, Freddy Moore and Pedro Ruiz Jr. graduating Montclair State University with a BFA in dance; where he has been featured in works such as "Running Spirits" and "Wild and Free" (Draft5) by Fredrick Earl Mosley, Larry Keigwin, Christian Von Howard, Stacey Tookey and Camille A. Brown. He soon joined "Roxey Contemporary Ballet" company in New Jersey for two seasons and worked alongside their outreach programs. In 2020, Tevin became adjunct faculty for 'City College of Manhattan' theater department, while teaching at various studios in New Jersey. Since the pandemic, he has been teaching in New Jersey as well as joined a few video projects and companies such as 'Creative Outlet' by Jamel Gaines and 'Mckoy Dance Project' by Derek Mckoy. Tevin is thrilled to be joining MorDance this season.

Joe LaLuzerne (Dancer) is a dance artist originally from Brooklyn Park, Minnesota. Joe graduated from Texas Christian University in the Spring of 2021 where they obtained a BFA in Ballet and a BA in Political Science. After the completion of his undergraduate studies Joe attended Milano Contemporary Ballet's International Training Program in Milan, Italy. He joined the TU Dance Project in St. Paul, Minnesota with choreographer Marcus Jarrell Willis, in the evening length work entitled "Sensible Existence." Joe has also danced at Jacob's Pillow Contemporary Ballet Program (Beckett, MA) under the direction of Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, Orsolina 28 (Moncalvo, Italy) with choreographers Juliano Nunes and FLOCKWORKS, taken b12 workshops (Berlin, Germany) with Laja Field and Alessandro Marzotto, as well as attended Springboard Danse Montréal performing in works by Crystal Pite, and Carlos Kerr. Most recently, Joe has moved to New York to continue his professional dance journey and is excited to join MorDance for their Spring season.

Dustin James (Dancer) Dustin James was born in New Orleans and grew up in Houston, TX. He received his training from the High School for the Performing Arts and Visual Arts and Houston Ballet where he was a member of Houston Ballet II. He has performed professionally with Dance Theater of Harlem, Sumin Ballet, BalletMet Columbus, Sierra Nevada Ballet, and Midland Festival Ballet. James' repertoire includes works by Anabelle Lopez Ochoa, Darrell Grand Moultrie, Michael Smuin, Stanton Welch, Jiri Killian, Helen Pickett, Dwight Rhoden, Ma Cong, Ulysses Dove, David Nixon, and Robert Garland. He is excited to be joining MorDance for the 10th Anniversary Season.

Camila Rodrigues (Dancer) is a Brazilian ballet dancer based in New York City. She trained at Escola Estadual de Dança Maria Olenewa where she performed with the main ballet company of Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro. In Brazil, Camila also trained at Centro de Movimento Deborah Colker with the ballet master Nora Esteves. After graduation, Camila joined the Joffrey Ballet Concert Group in New York, where she performed soloist roles from Joffrey, Arpino, Balanchine and Africa Guzman's choreography in NYC, Florida and in international tours to Canada and China. She won 1st place at World Ballet Art Competition Grand Prix (Niagara Falls, Canada) and Best Interpretation of the Contemporary Compulsory at Valentina Kozlova International Ballet Competition (NYC). She currently performs with companies based in New York, such as Movement Headquarters, MorDance and Neglia Ballet. Camila also gives speeches in Brazil and Portugal, where she talks about positivity, mindset and what it takes to achieve your personal life goals. She has already impacted many people and especially the young dance generation to find strength to follow their dreams. The artist recently finished her first National Tour, where she performed as the female lead, Lise Dassin, in the musical An American In Paris.

About MorDance

MorDance is a trailblazing, women-led ballet company striving to innovate, elevate, and diversify the ballet landscape to convey a true reflection of our contemporary world. Over the past decade, we have embodied our mission to break free of ballet's historically homogenous structures by creating groundbreaking original works, centering underrepresented voices and narratives, and leading workshops for thousands of students in under-resourced communities across New York City. With a firm belief that world-class ballet should be available to audiences of all backgrounds, we work to break down barriers of social, movement-based, and gender-based inequalities in dance to cultivate empowered environments for artistic expression.

Over nine seasons, MorDance has produced and staged over twenty original ballets at prominent New York venues including Battery Dance Festival, Dance at Socrates, Counterpointe Project, and Sounds of the City. MorDance is a proud recipient of funding from Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, CUNY Dance Initiative, New York State Council On The Arts, The NEA, and the Joan and Charles Gross Family Foundation, among others. MorDance has held residencies at the Silo at Kirkland Farm, Mana Contemporary, Kaatsbaan Upstream, and Vineyard Art Projects; and was named resident dance company of the Sheen Center in 2016.

Our tenth anniversary season in 2023 will epitomize the breadth of our commitment to furthering accessibility, diversity, and creativity in the field of ballet. MorDance creates work that challenges ballet's fraught legacies and navigates complex contemporary issues surrounding race, gender, and the environment through the universal language of the body. This season's repertoire will transform themes of activism and humanity into captivating movement as we strive to inspire audiences to embrace more civic engagement, empathy, and social responsibility.

For more information, visit www.mordance.org.

About the Presenters

MorDance's residency and performances at the Gerald W. Lynch Theater are part of the CUNY Dance Initiative (CDI), a transformative incubator that secures two vital yet scarce resources—rehearsal time and performance space—for New York City choreographers and dance companies across the five boroughs. Housed within the City University of New York (CUNY)—the nation's largest public urban university system—CDI is a residency program that supports local artists, enhances the cultural life and education of college students, and builds new dance audiences at CUNY performing arts centers.

CDI receives major support from The Mertz Gilmore Foundation and Howard Gilman Foundation. Additional support is provided by the Jerome Robbins Foundation, SHS Foundation, Harkness Foundation for Dance, the National Endowment for the Arts, and public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council. CDI is part of Dance/NYC's New York City Dance Rehearsal Space Subsidy Program, made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. CDI is spearheaded by The Kupferberg Center for the Arts at Queens College. www.cuny.edu/danceinitiative

John Jay College of Criminal Justice of The City University of New York, an international leader in educating for justice, offers a rich liberal arts and professional studies curriculum to upwards of 15,000 undergraduate and graduate students from more than 135 nations. In teaching, scholarship and research, the College approaches justice as an applied art and science in service to society and as an ongoing conversation about fundamental human desires for fairness, equality and the rule of law. For more information, visit www.jjay.cuny.edu.

Since opening its doors in 1988, the Gerald W. Lynch Theater has been an invaluable cultural resource. The Theater is a member of CUNY Stages, a consortium of 16 performing arts centers located on CUNY campuses across New York City and the CUNY Dance Initiative. The Theater is home to the Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival & White Light Festival, as well as the New Yorker Festival, Mannes Opera, the World Science Festival, and the revival of Mummunschanz. The Theater has hosted live and recorded events including David Letterman's My Next Guest Needs No Introduction, Inside the Actor's Studio, Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concerts, Comedy Central Presents one-hour specials, the American Justice Summit, the NYC Mayoral Democratic Debates, and the launch of Jay-Z's REFORM initiative. The Theater welcomes premiere galas, conferences, international competitions, and graduations. For more information, and a schedule of events, please visit www.GeraldWLYnchTheater.com.

MorDance
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