

Saturday, November 5, 2022

MorDance presents Works in Progress

Company: MorDance

Venue: Martha Graham Studio Theater

Location: New York, NY

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MorDance presents Works in Progress on Saturday, November 5, 2022 at 7:30pm at Martha Graham Studios, 55 Bethune St, NYC. This intimate showing is an opportunity to peer into the creative process and hear from the artists themselves. Tickets are \$30 (\$25 for students and seniors) and can be purchased online at mordance.org/calendar/works-in-progress.

MorDance, a trailblazing female-led dance company celebrated for creating original collaborative works that push the boundaries of classical ballet, invites audience members to peek into the inspirations and creation of two new ballets and engage in a stimulating discussion with artistic director Morgan McEwen and her collaborators about the creative process. This is a thrilling opportunity to dive inside these ballets before they premiere at Gerald Lynch Theater in the Spring of 2023.

Work 1: The first ballet will take flight from Chris Jordan's critically acclaimed documentary, ALBATROSS, which powerfully depicts a vulnerable albatross population incurring the impact of mass consumption, global industry, and human unconsciousness. I look to articulate this challenging narrative through a choreography of avian movement and breathtaking wingspans. I will collaborate with composer and experimental violinist Josh Knowles on a spacious arrangement that expresses both soaring heights and the ominous weight of dire circumstances. Josh will compose and record this piece on a single violin looped and layered through multiple distortion pedals.

Work 2: Inspired by Emily Dickinson's transcendent and radically outspoken poem of the same title, our second ballet, They Shut Me Up In Prose, will likewise evoke a young woman overcoming sexism in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society. This piece will interlace modern movement and classical ballet vernacular across styles and histories. Appropriately, Polina Nazaykinskaya will create a contemporary score to be played on classical instruments. Polina's unique experience as an internationally renowned composer and a woman will bring extraordinary artistry and meaningful perspective to the themes portrayed. The arrangement will eventually be performed live by five musicians: a pianist alongside a classical string quartet.

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. In 2023, her work will be presented by John Jay College's Gerald Lynch Theater as part of a CDI residency. Additionally, she will be working with BalletX to generate new work during a choreographic incubator in 2023. ,

The music of an 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, "Efil 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.

Shaquille Charles (Dancer) is an Afro-Caribbean solo artist-choreographer who obtained his B.F.A in dance at Marymount Manhattan College with a concentration in ballet. With an aptitude in numerous forums of creating art; photography, film, and choreography-- Shaquille orchestrates intimate moments drawn on human connection and the external factors of the world which connects us all. Hailing from Atlanta, Georgia Shaquille focuses his efforts on utilizing the physicality of his ballet technique incorporated with his body's history to extend a sui generis experience for the audience. He gives credence to the body as an individual source of history and proceeds to pull from these histories and experiences to connect the audience with his movements. Based in New York, Shaquille has choreographed at La Biennale de Venezia 15th international contemporary dance festival under the direction of Wayne McGregor, and performed with Mark Morris dance group, Dianne McIntyer, Chattanooga Ballet as well as having an artist spread in Gaytimes magazine pride issue.

Sasha Gologorskaya (Dancer) was born in Kiev, Ukraine and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area. She trained at the San Francisco Ballet School and later went on to study at the Conservatory of Dance at SUNY Purchase, graduating summa cum laude with a BFA in Dance and a concentration in Ballet Performance. She has attended intensive training programs around the United States and abroad, including Springboard Danse Montreal and a semester abroad at the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Sasha has performed repertory by Greg Amato, Marika Brussel, Marco Geocke, Margo Sappington, Bettijane Sills, Michelle Thompson-Ulerich, Norbert de la Cruz, Merce Cunningham, and George Balanchine, and has danced in theaters around San Francisco, New York, and Hong Kong. During her senior year at Purchase, Sasha was featured in the NY Times for performances at BAM Fisher, where she danced in Luca Veggetti's reimagined version of Jerome Robbins' Watermill. Sasha was a featured artist with Peninsula Ballet Theatre in their productions of the Nutcracker, Guys and Dolls, and Cinderella and has been a part of several creations with em(body) dance project and choreographer Marika Brussel, including the world premiere of Brussel's dance film House of Names. She recently relocated back to New York City and is currently dancing with the Eglevsky Ballet.

Ethan Schweitzer-Gaslin (Dancer) is from Massachusetts where he began studying ballet at the age of 5 at Amherst Ballet. He then trained on scholarship at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, as well as at summer programs at schools around the country. After graduating from the UNCSA high school boarding program, he spent 2 years as an apprentice with Oregon Ballet Theatre before joining Ballet Idaho in 2014. He also performs with Arc Dance Company, Halcyon Dance Project and Project Flux Dance. He has been a semi-final Silver and Bronze medal winner and a two-time finalist at Youth America Grand Prix, and has appeared in the Men In Dance Festival, the Sweet Pea Festival, and Treefort Music Festival. He is known for his performances in the roles of Peter Pan and the Nutcracker Prince, and in works choreographed by George Balanchine, Daniel Ojeda, Lauren Edson, Peter Anastos, Anne Mueller, Edwaard Liang, Alejandro Cerrudo, Danielle Rowe, Penny Saunders, Alex Ketley, Wen Wei Wang, Christopher Stowell, James Kudelka, and Ethan Stiefel. He has choreographed for dancers from Boston Ballet School, Houston Ballet II, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Northwest Dance Theatre, Idaho Fine Arts Academy, and Ballet Idaho. He has been a guest instructor at Ballet Idaho Academy, Echo School of Dance, Dance Unlimited, Northwest Dance Theatre and Amherst Ballet.

Thierry Blannchard (Dancer) began his dance training at the age of 8 in São Paulo Brazil at Elizandra Bellotto School, in 2016 he won a scholarship to study at Bolshoi Theater School in Brazil, during this time, he had a vast program of studies in contemporary dance, character dance, dance history, art history, theatre, pas de deux and piano. Galina Kravchenko, Vladimir Vasiliev, Dennys Nevidomnyy, Pedro Carneiro and Rostlav Dzaabaeve were some of the great names in dance who had the opportunity to work and be rehearsed. In addition to having contact teaching classical dance classes to primary school grades at Bolshoi Theatre School in Brazil. Had the opportunity and experience to dance great ballets renowned as "The Nutcracker", "Dom Quixote", "Raymonda", Swan Lake" and others, by great essayists. In addition to contemporary ballets by choreographers such as Cassi Abranches (Grupo Corpo), Binho Pacheco, Carol Segurado, Amarildo Cassiano. International experience (2020): Dutch Ballet, Ballet of Leipzig, Ballet of Nuremberg, Flensburg Ballet of Salzburg, Sodre Ballet. (classes and workshops).He joined Basileu França Junior Company in 2021/2022 as soloist and now he is a member at Eglevsky Ballet, NY.

Camila Schaefer Rodrigues (Dancer) - Driven to expand the vocabulary of classical ballet and challenge its traditional structures, I work to spur new concepts that broaden the possibilities of ballet as an art form. I am committed to elevating the experience of ballet for our modern world, fostering a true reflection of diverse perspectives from contemporary artists and audiences. My work centers narratives that have been historically suppressed by ballet's fraught lineage and promotes unrepresented voices, communities, and identities. As with any mode of artistic expression, I believe ballet has the capacity to negotiate complex social issues including questions surrounding race, gender, and the environment. In addressing these themes through a genre that has perpetually contributed to injustice, breaking the mold becomes that more impactful.

As both dancer and choreographer, my practice is attuned to the subtle intricacies within form and sound. My dancemaking focuses on precise musicality and highlights the unique artistry and athleticism of each dancer. I strive to craft the overall arch of ballets as carefully as the details and transitions within each movement. In recent work, I have collaborated closely with composers to develop choreography and music in tandem. This has welcomed a new sense of exploration and fluidity as musical and choreographic structures intertwine.

I view dance through an expansive creative lens and as a space to nurture personal inspiration into grander concepts. Among myriad influences, my experiences as a mother, engagement with social activism, love of nature, and admiration for feminist icons past and present channel into my artistic vision. As I continue to innovate, I find balance and beauty in ballet's intrinsic shapes. I see my choreography as harnessing ballet's inherent dynamism in pursuit of a more inclusive and progressive future for the genre.

About MorDance

MorDance is a trailblazing, women-led ballet company striving to advance accessibility, diversity, and creativity in ballet by fostering empowered environments for artistic expression. Since our launch in 2013, we have embodied our mission to break free of ballet's historically homogenous structures by creating groundbreaking original works, centering underrepresented voices and contemporary narratives, and leading youth outreach initiatives serving thousands of students in under-resourced communities across New York City.

Following a successful decade-long career as a ballet dancer, Morgan McEwen founded MorDance in January 2013 with less than one third of U.S. ballet companies being led by women. Over ten years performing with the Richmond Ballet, BalletMet, and the Metropolitan Opera, McEwen bore witness to widespread social, gender-based, and movement-based inequality throughout the ballet industry, including limited opportunities to pursue her passion as a female choreographer. McEwen established MorDance with a firm commitment to promoting and uplifting underrepresented leadership, artists, and audiences. In doing so, she has embraced an encompassing dedication to pushing artistic and social boundaries in pursuit of a more equitable and dynamic future for ballet.

Throughout nine successful seasons, MorDance has produced over twenty original works and performed at prominent New York stages including Battery Dance Festival, Dance at Socrates, Counterpointe Project, and Sounds of the City. We have received support from the CUNY Dance Initiative, the O'Donnell-Green Foundation, Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and National Endowment for the Arts, among others. MorDance has held residencies at Vineyard Arts Project,, Mana Contemporary, and Kaatsbaan Upstream; and was named resident dance company of the Sheen Center in 2016. We have 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." MorDance has been presented by several notable theaters to include Aaron Davis Hall, Symphony Space, and Gerald Lynch theater in 2023.

MorDance continues to be driven by majority women and by artists representing a cultural spectrum. The organization is contingent on collaborative work between our artistic director/lead choreographer, cast of dancers, composers, musicians, lighting designers, and community partnerships. We are committed to employing artists who reflect the diversity of the communities we serve, including artists of color, immigrant artists, women artists, and members of the LGBTQIAP+ community. Not only world-class performers, our dancers stand as advocates for communities who have been historically excluded from the field of ballet. The visibility of cultural pluralism amongst MorDance artists is an embodiment of the company's mission. It has cultivated indispensable connections with our audiences as we strive to inspire new precedents for the ballet industry and overarching dance community.

For more information, visit www.mordance.org.

MorDance
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