

October 8, 2020

## **MERCE CUNNINGHAM TRUST EXPANDS BOARD TO BROADEN THE DIRECTION AND REACH OF CUNNINGHAM'S LEGACY**

Dancer/educator **Shayla-Vie Jenkins** and arts administrator/consultant **Georgiana Pickett** have joined the **Merce Cunningham Trust**, bringing the number of Trustees to nine. The expansion adds new voices and expertise to leading the pioneering choreographer's legacy into the future.

Jenkins, who performed in *Night of 100 Solos: A Centennial Event* at BAM, danced professionally with Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, for which she also stages work. She has also performed with artists including Susan Marshall and Yara Travieso and has presented her own work in numerous New York venues. Jenkins is an Assistant Professor in the School of Dance at the University of the Arts and regularly teaches at the American Dance Festival and NYU's Summer Dance intensive. She is a graduate of the Fordham Ailey Dance program.

Jenkins said of her appointment to the Board of Trustees, "I was fortunate to be asked to perform in the Merce Cunningham *Night of 100 Solos*, which gave me the opportunity to inhabit and witness up-close the remarkable movement. As a new Trust member, I am excited to bring an outside perspective and Black female voice to an ongoing conversation of how to imagine the Cunningham legacy into the future."

The arts consultant Georgiana Pickett was Executive Director of Baryshnikov Arts Center for eight years (2011-2019), during which time she oversaw major initiatives including the establishment of the Cage-Cunningham Award and the Cage-Cunningham Studio. Pickett has extensive leadership experience, having previously served as Artistic Director of Miami-Dade College's Cultural Affairs Department and Executive Director of 651 Arts in Brooklyn. She has been a panelist and/or consultant for many organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford and Doris Duke Charitable Foundations, and the New York State Council for the Arts.

Pickett said, "I am looking forward to digging into this dynamic phase of the Cunningham Trust's work that will continue its already impeccable record of carrying the Cunningham legacy forward, while now broadening its programs to include new students, scholars, dancers and communities."

The Trust also announces today that **Trevor Carlson**, a Trustee since 2011 and, previously, the final executive director of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, has stepped down. While at the helm of the company, Carlson was the driving force behind the design and implementation of its groundbreaking legacy plan. Over the past decade, he played an active role in building the Trust's activities, culminating in his pivotal role as producer of last year's Cunningham Centennial and as creative producer of its centerpiece, *Night of 100 Solos: A Centennial Event*. With that production, staged in London, New York, and Los Angeles on Cunningham's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday (April 16, 2019), the Trust set out to broaden the performance of Cunningham choreography to include dancers from a wide range of backgrounds, practices, and companies.

**Ken Tabachnick, Executive Director of the Merce Cunningham Trust**, said, "We are thrilled to welcome new Trustees Shayla-Vie and Georgiana. Their experience and perspective will greatly

enrich our ongoing conversation about how to continue the Cunningham legacy into the future with relevance and value to the public. We are also deeply grateful to Trevor, who has made an immeasurable contribution to this work.”

### **About the Merce Cunningham Trust**

The Merce Cunningham Trust was established by Merce Cunningham in 2000 and recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation in 2002. The Trust serves as the custodian of the work of Merce Cunningham and its mission is to preserve, enhance, and maintain the integrity of that choreographic and other artistic work, and make such works available for the benefit of the public. In 2012, the Trust established headquarters at New York's City Center.

The Trust offers a program of classes and activities, including daily classes in Cunningham Technique® at New York's City Center and the Cunningham Fellowship, awarded to former Company members to reconstruct a Cunningham work during a multi-week intensive workshop. The Trust licenses Cunningham works to leading dance companies and educational institutions worldwide, and partners with cultural institutions to mount special projects, performances, and exhibitions that celebrate Cunningham's artistic achievements.

From September 2018 through the end of 2019, the Trust celebrated the 100th anniversary of Merce Cunningham's birth, honoring a century of artistic expression through events, presentations, and discussions about Cunningham, dance, and his influence on culture.

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