

Spring Dance 2020 – Danceaturgs’ Pre-Show Introductions to the Repertory – 3/6/20

Hi, my name is **Madalyn Rupprecht** and I am a senior dance major here at Montclair. I will be introducing the first piece of our program, a work by modern dance pioneer **Martha Graham**, which served as our senior piece this year.

Ritual to the Sun is the third and final section from *Acts of Light* choreographed by Martha Graham. This work had its premiere in 1981, when Graham was 87 years old. Although we seniors of Montclair are performing the work nearly 40 years later, the piece remains just as touching and heartfelt as it was first claimed to be. This is the main challenge of performing older, acclaimed repertory—keeping the work alive and exciting for the audiences of today.

Taking its title from a phrase by Emily Dickinson, a poet beloved by Graham, the dance introduced a new period in Graham’s work. Critics called it neo-classical. *Acts of Light* celebrates the exquisite expression of the dancer. The score for the ballet is by the 19th-century Danish composer Carl Nielsen. The collaboration with this composer was another divergence for Graham, who typically sought out contemporary composers for her work. *Ritual to the Sun* is notably marked by its inclusion of Graham’s highly structured and sequenced class technique, including a strong emphasis upon floor work exercises, which showcase the breadth and intensity of this breath-driven modern dance technique. After this floor section that features a large group of dancers from the cast, solos, duos, trios, and quartets cross the stage, dancing choreography marked by rigor and grace. Dressed in gold unitards, the beauty of the dancers’ bodies are highlighted and accentuated in every “contraction” and “release” throughout this piece. As the sun sets at the end of the work, an elegant ritual comes to a close.

Hello, my name is **Amelia Dawe Sanders**, and I’m a Junior BFA dance major. The piece I will be speaking about is “secret garden” by Montclair State professor **Kathleen Kelley**. “**secret garden**” was created this semester and premieres here, for Spring Dance. This piece grows and changes like vines twining and separating in a garden which is running wild. The movement is by turns explosive and flowing, delicate and intense. The piece starts with all 19 dancers onstage, and the groups seem to organically shift and morph from there, through numerous gatherings and dispersals. Kathleen collaborated with Lauren Carr, an MSU professor of animation, who provides the videos which are projected during the piece. Carr will be visible downstage as we perform the dance, manipulating the projections in real time, adding layers of complexity, like a dj of animations.

Kathleen’s initial inspiration for this piece was DNA replication and cellular reproduction. She abstracted these ideas of perpetuation, iteration, and evolution to inform a creative process rife with manipulation and variation. On the first day of rehearsals, Kathleen asked us each to create a brief solo using material we saw in an improvisation she did for us. Since that day, these solos have been highly manipulated by Kathleen. Some were layered on top of one another, picked apart and restrung, expanded, condensed, and some have become larger group sections in addition to solos and duets. Kathleen constantly asks each dancer to bring their own

interpretation to the movement, which she will then refine in an ongoing dialogue of creation. While we each have our own approach to the movement, there is also a real sense of interdependency as we perform this piece. The piece is grounded in the same movement vocabulary, and this affords a common base for unity without each dancer being exactly the same. As you watch, look out for the multiple interpretations and variations of the same movement concept.

Welcome to **Ride**, a piece about personality, partition, and unity.

Hi my name is **Alfonse Napolitano**, and I am a senior dance education and performance major here at Montclair. I first want to start off by saying thank you to Jessica DiMauro Marks for the incredible direction after the piece has been set.

Joshua Manculich's piece of the same name will be sure take you on a wild journey. From the lighting and fast percussions, to the simple costumes, Ride will zip right passed you. You are eased in to what seems to be a calm and gentle piece, but suddenly you will experience twists and turns like never before. With an ensemble of 6 VERY different dancers (more on that in a minute), be sure to look out for the different groupings and partnering. While you enjoy this expedition, think of a party like atmosphere; lights will change, attitudes will shift, and so will the music.

Are the dancers moving together as a whole, or are they competing against each other? That's up to you to decide.

Each dancer brings something special to the piece. Josh wanted us to really bring our personality into every movement we did. I am remember Josh describing me as... 'sriracha' and another dancer as... 'sassy.' This is what he saw in us and he gave us the creative freedom to play with it.

Rehearsing for Ride was definitely a journey in itself. The music comes on, your adrenaline begins to rush, and the next thing you know, the percussions begin and there's no looking back. Even though most of the piece is set, there is some improvisation, all the way down to the focus. What is the relationship with each other, what is the relationship with where we are, what is the relationship with the audience, and what is the relationship within ourselves? These are the questions that never let the same 'Ride' happen twice; each time it's done, it's new and fresh, with a different perspective and a whole bunch of attitude.

So make sure you're ready, 'cause... it's gonna be a crazy Ride!

My name is Megan Theobald and I am a junior dance major.

“Echad Mi Yodea” the closing piece in our Spring Dance Concert was choreographed by Ohad Naharin. Originally performed by the Batsheva dance Company it premiered in 1990 in Tel Aviv Israel as part of a longer work known as Deca Dance. Here at MSU, two former Batsheva company dancers, Omri Drumlevich and Zina Zinchenko set this piece on us. Since we only had about five weeks to learn the entire piece before bringing it to the stage today, we had a very intense rehearsal process. The reason for this intensive process was because the gaga movement language is the **basis for all** of Naharin's work. Gaga is a movement language that Naharin created where people explore different sensations to inform the ways in which they move. For a week and a half, we had gaga classes every morning followed by three-hour rehearsals where we learned and perfected the movement.

“Echad Mi Yodea” is a famous Jewish song sung in Hebrew most often during Passover, the holiday that begins this year on April 8th. But before any of the movement starts two other soundtracks play to set the mood. “Hava Nagila” another popular Jewish tune plays before the curtain rises. Next “Illusion of Beauty” which is a text written by Naharin himself is read aloud. Listen to these words carefully as they sum up the physicality and emotional feelings behind performing this piece. The overall message of “Echad Mi Yodea” is the impact of physical, mental and spiritual liberation of a community which we "recite" through an accumulation of movement.

On Edge, choreographed by Montclair State University MFA degree candidate Mark Harootian, premiered in 2015, and has now been reworked on Montclair State's students. With a cast of 9 powerful women, this piece captures the feeling of being On, the, Edge. Reinhard Goebel's Passacaglia XVI in G Minor plays a vital role in the piece. The music builds up the intensity and tension that the dancers portray through their movements in this short 6 minute 47 second work. The audience can see the gripping of legs, the bracing of the arms, and the falling motions throughout. The tension of the dancers hands on their legs, further leads to the burst of allegro sections, which include jumps, turns, and traveling. You will feel anxiously uncomfortable, rushed, and relate your own emotions to what is being expressed on stage. The dancers take risks in the tone of their movements, reaching the edges of their extensions. Ideas of

tension and rage are apparent, but the contrasting side is expressed as well. The dancers learn to overcome whatever they may be going through, in their own unique ways. They rely upon each other with physical touch, feel each other's energy without touch, and are aware that they have people around them to ease their minds and hearts. The work displays maturity and artistry within technical ballet movements. As a contemporary ballet piece, clear ballet movements such as arabesques, pirouettes, and ronde de jambes are shown, with the expressivity, drive, and pathways that a more contemporary piece would hold. The legato transitions and use of the floor creates a unique twist to a ballet piece. On Edge is an intense yet beautiful work, that lets the dancers and choreography shine on stage. – **Jess Lavenda**

Hello, my name is **Kristilee Maiella**, and I am a Senior BFA Dance major. Last semester, I had the wonderful opportunity to be a part of graduating senior, **Jose Baez's**, Senior Project choreographic piece entitled **Klära**. The work first premiered last fall in Life Hall's Black Box Theater as part of the senior showcase, Pause/Continuum, and is now making its next appearance in the second act of Spring Dance 2020. In Klära, Jose Baez creates a raw and honest conversation discussing what happens to humans when they are neglected, and the emotional obstacles resulting from those experiences. The work is centered around five female beings who expose how the unconsciousness of our behaviors and actions may result in consequences that are not only self-destructive, but that also cast negative effects on others. Being a cast member myself, the process of this work was not only about learning the steps and sequence of movement, but more importantly, it was about the challenge of accessing feelings of pain, hurt, and even love. Rehearsals were spent conversing about each dancer's life experiences relating to the concept, more than they were rehearsing the motions of the piece. Jose feels it is more important to genuinely connect to the movement on an emotional level than it is to execute the steps perfectly. Before each performance, the dancers spend time breathing and connecting with one another. There is a strong physical and emotional bond present amongst the performers, which fuels the truly collaborative and undivided energy of this piece. Klära may make you feel sad, but in the end, this work brings awareness to the importance of taking care of oneself and one another. It is a celebration of love.

My name is **Amanda Edore** and I am a junior pursuing the BFA dance degree. The piece entitled "**They Might Be Giants**" is a newly constructed work premiering for the first time on the Kasser stage. Choreographed by **Christian von Howard**, this piece showcases eleven dancers in a highly physical journey inspired by the image of an army of giants. This, combined with von Howard's love of the music and lifestyles of the 90's, took the piece's structural skeleton and breathed life into his artistic vision. "They Might Be Giants" is comprised of a

medley of six songs, showing dynamic range between the movement styles to ultimately characterize the enormity of the piece's origins.

When I asked him about his choreographic goal for the piece, Mr. V said this: "Dance is multifaceted to me; I wanted to blend together several stylistic movement vocabularies to make a whirlwind of dynamic connections that seamlessly unfold in an episodic journey".

For me, dancing in this piece, being a part of his process has felt exactly like that. Our first rehearsal in late December began with a handful of experimental phrases, each embodying a different style than the one before. Based upon these foundational phrases, Mr. V encouraged us to alter the choreography, elaborating on the potential of the movement and morphing them into variations of solos, duets, and trios. In what felt like no time at all, we had a seventeen-minute piece. I hope you enjoy the playful physicality of "They Might Be Giants", and encourage you to dance along with us to all the high-energy songs.

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