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Press Release

LANDMARK NEW THEATER FOR DANCE, DESIGNED BY MECANOO ARCHITECTS, DORIS DUKE THEATRE OPENS AT JACOB'S PILLOW, LEADING VENUE FOR DANCE IN THE UNITED STATES

- The new Doris Duke Theatre at Jacob's Pillow set to become the world's most technologically advanced theater for dance
- Theater to be fully equipped for dancemakers seeking to integrate artificial intelligence (AI), extended reality, robotics, and immersive platforms into live performance
- Opening season artists to include Faye Driscoll, Shamel Pitts, Andrew Schneider, Elle Sofe Company (Norway), Eun-Me Ahn (Korea), and Huang Yi (Taiwan)



(Clockwise, from top left) Aerial view of the Jacob's Pillow campus facing northeast with the Doris Duke Theatre, Ted Shawn Theatre, Perles Family Studio, and Henry J. Leir Stage. Copyright Iwan Baan. Courtesy of Jacob's Pillow; Doris Duke Theatre on the Jacob's Pillow campus. BOCA TUYA dancers on the roof above the west entrance. Copyright Iwan Baan. Courtesy of Jacob's Pillow; West entrance. Doris Duke Theatre on the Jacob's Pillow campus. Copyright Iwan Baan, Courtesy of Jacob's Pillow; Performance Space (east facing view into the Forest Studio), with dancers from BOCA TUYA. Doris Duke Theatre on the Jacob's Pillow campus. Copyright Iwan Baan. Courtesy of Jacob's Pillow.

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Marking the most significant moment in the recent history of Jacob's Pillow, the new **Doris Duke Theatre** opens tonight (July 9, 2025) as part of Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, America's longest-running international dance festival, located on Jacob's Pillow's beautiful destination campus in the Berkshire mountains of Massachusetts.

The landmark new theater is America's only purpose-built new dance theater to open in 2025 and is set to become one of the most technologically advanced theaters in the world dedicated to dance.

Occupying the site of the former studio theater from 1990 – which was destroyed by fire in November 2020 – the reimagined Doris Duke Theatre is designed by an international team led by **Francine Houben**, founding architect of the leading Dutch architecture firm **Mecanoo**, in partnership with architecture and landscape architecture firm **Marvel**, and theater and acoustics consultants **Charcoalblue**. The theater will provide a makerspace for artists seeking to integrate artificial intelligence, extended reality, robotics, and immersive platforms into live performance. The Doris Duke Theatre will include such capacities as a spatial audio system, infrared camera tracking of performers for interactive video content, and live performance interactions with recorded/projected dance content, among many other capabilities.

The week-long opening celebrations include an inaugural performance tonight attended by long-standing friends of Jacob's Pillow and distinguished guests. Following an honor song performed by Shawn L. Stevens and Friends of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans from Bowler, Wisconsin, the program features:

- A movement score by **Annie-B Parson**, performed by 12 renowned artists associated with the original Doris Duke Theatre: **Bebe Miller, Susan Marshall, Brian Brooks, Eiko Otake, Irene Rodríguez, David Thomson, Liz Lerman, David Dorfman, Dianne McIntyre, Dormeshia, Doug Elkins, and Jawole Willa Jo Zollar**
- An excerpt performed by **Shamel Pitts | TRIBE** of the evening-length *Touch of RED*, a work developed during the last Pillow Lab residency held in the original Duke before it burned in 2020.
- The U.S. premiere of an excerpt of *OTMO Live*, a groundbreaking duet by the UK's **Alexander Whitley Dance Company**, where motion-capture technology connects a dancer in the Doris Duke Theatre with a dancer in the Ted Shawn Theatre – performing together in real time, even while apart.

- An excerpt from the film *Superradiance* by **Memo Akten** and **Katie Peyton Hofstadter**, which interweaves dance, poetry, music, and AI generative imagery.
- A performance by body percussionist and Guggenheim Fellow **Ryan Johnson**, Artistic Director of SOLE Defined.
- The program will conclude with a dance party featuring iconic musician **JD Samson**, best known as a member of the bands Le Tigre and MEN, performing two DJ sets. The dance party will be animated by *Scuuulpt*, an interactive augmented reality piece by **Katherine Helen Fisher** and **Armon Naeini** that employs immersive camera work and dynamic projections to engage with performers and audience alike.

Audiences from around the world are invited to watch the opening night program in the new Doris Duke Theatre via livestream, highlighting the interactive and hybrid-access made possible by the technical capabilities of the venue. Registration is free at jacobspillow.org/live.

Following the multi-day opening celebrations, programming at the Doris Duke Theatre continues throughout the summer featuring dance and technology makers including interactive-electronics dance and theater artist **Andrew Schneider**, with the world premiere of *HERE*; **Shamel Pitts** (2020 Pillow Lab resident) with *Touch of RED*; the return of Korean choreographer **Eun-Me Ahn** with her innovative ensemble work, *Dragons*; and the Jacob's Pillow debut of Taiwanese dancer/choreographer and robotics inventor **Huang Yi**.

The inaugural season will also host the U.S. debut of Indigenous Sámi choreographer Elle Sofe and her **Elle Sofe Company** from northern Norway, performing *Vástáduš eana – the answer is land*, and feature **Faye Driscoll** (2022 Pillow Lab resident) and her masterpiece *Weathering*. Additionally, **Shamel Pitts** and **Andrew Schneider** will each create a digital-first work, designed to be experienced virtually and available to audiences around the world. **Grisha Coleman** will lead the first Pillow Lab residency in fall 2025 to develop *The Movement Undercommons*, a new motion capture movement project creating kinetic haiku from movement data.

Pamela Tatge, Jacob's Pillow Executive and Artistic Director, said: "Today marks a historic moment — both for Jacob's Pillow, as we reopen the Doris Duke Theatre and restore the full force of our campus, and for the field of dance at large. In a time when artists face growing challenges to create, connect, and be seen, this theater renews our commitment to possibility. Reimagined with intention, it is a space to support bold ideas, nurture artistic growth, and deepen connection with audiences here on campus and across the globe. The Doris Duke Theatre now carries forward the legacy of this

place while opening new pathways for artists and audiences to experience the work of our time.”

Francine Houben, Mecanoo’s Creative Director and Founding Partner, said: “The design of the new Doris Duke Theatre reflects a balance of Indigenous design principles connected to nature with a robust theatrical infrastructure. For the theater, we envisioned a magic wooden box which awakens the senses and deepens the connection between performer and audience, movement and space, light and shadow. Whether weaving through the dancing shadows of the veranda, opening the theater to the outdoors, or being fully immersed in technology, the new Doris Duke Theatre is an architecture of connection; one where performance becomes a shared journey.”

Shamel Pitts, performance artist, choreographer, conceptual artist, dancer, spoken word artist, teacher, and 2024 MacArthur Fellow, said: “I remember my first time being in the former Doris Duke Theatre. Working, dancing, and creating in that sacred space, I could feel the energies of all those artists and people who have come before me – those who have left their mark and made a huge impact on the history of dance and the power of dance. Being one of the first artists to be in the new Doris Duke Theatre is beyond my wildest dreams. And I dream big.

I always create work as a choreographer and artist that is collaborative by working with different artists, mediums, and technologies. It's very rare that I've been into a space – a theatre – that is so equipped to allow my collaborative creation and multi-disciplinary artworks to come into full actualization.

The Doris Duke Theatre is our future. It is a space for artists to forward think and world make and world build. It is a space that will shift the dance field and humanity forward.”

Katherine Helen Fisher, dancer, choreographer, curator, creative producer, and Emmy Award-nominated film director, said: “The work underway at the new Doris Duke Theatre signals a profound shift: a recognition that dance, as an embodied, time-based artform, has a crucial role in shaping contemporary conversations around technology, interactivity, and sensory experience. The Pillow's investment in emerging technologies sets a powerful precedent for how cultural institutions can evolve to meet the complex realities of today’s audiences, questioning life in the algorithmic age and programming at the pace of attention while expanding access to both in person and virtual audiences. Choreographers and other time-based media artists are confronting some of the most urgent questions of our time—artificial intelligence, surveillance,

autocracy, the climate crisis, and the fragility of cultural memory. Artists who build their work in conversation with technology and longer a subgenre of our field or a passing fad—their work is vital cultural practice, a frontline of social imagination. Institutions like Jacob’s Pillow are essential in sustaining this work, ensuring that tomorrow’s artists have the resources, and a trusted platform to imagine new futures. It is with this support that we can continue to come together in community as we navigate the complexities of our changing world together.”

Jonathan Marvel, Founding Principal, Architecture and Landscape Architecture Firm Marvel, said: “At our very first site visit, we fell in love with the existing outdoor dance platform that magically cantilevers into the Berkshire landscape. When our Indigenous collaborator Jeffrey Gibson gave us the design guideline ‘where the land meets the sky,’ we knew this project would be organic, borrowing from the woods and distant hills.”

Owen Hughes, Director, Theatre and Acoustic Consultant Charcoalblue, said: “It’s been an honor to be part of the design team for the new Doris Duke Theatre, a theater that honors the tremendous legacy of the original Duke, while creating a technologically cutting-edge space for the development of new vocabularies of movement. The new Duke will be a home for experimentation and the creation of more interactive, immersive and technically collaborative pieces; never replacing the human element, but amplifying it and creating new forms of expression that weren’t possible before.”

Sam Gill, President and CEO of the Doris Duke Foundation, said: “There is one constant at Jacob’s Pillow: pushing boundaries. The new Doris Duke Theatre exemplifies this tradition, making possible new forms of expression and new ways to move audiences. It’s not just a new theater—it’s a new chapter for Jacob’s Pillow and for American dance.”

The New Doris Duke Theatre

The reimaged Doris Duke Theatre designed by Mecanoo Architects is approximately 20,000 sq. ft., compared with the former Duke’s roughly 8,500 sq. ft. footprint. The design allows for multi-use flexibility, supporting performances, events, residencies, and more, sometimes simultaneously. The theater seats 220-400 patrons in the main performance space, with an array of seating and stage configurations.

The mass timber building features a thermally treated pine facade, designed to weather gracefully over time. The building transforms with the seasons, its natural materials telling a story of light and shadow, time, and change—an organic register of the dance of

nature. The design will facilitate rainwater collection in a future phase, and the generous veranda provides natural shading, a quiet gesture of harmony between sustainability and design. Through its form, function, and connection to the land, the new Doris Duke Theatre embodies the poetry of place—an enduring testament to the power of dance, nature, and human creativity intertwined.

Inspired by the region's natural beauty, the new Doris Duke Theatre's landscape designed by Marvel harmonizes with its surroundings, reflecting the rich local ecology of the Berkshires. This design not only nurtures a deep connection between the performing arts and nature but also honors the area's Indigenous history. To the west of the theater, the landscape design will create a central quad, framed by a sculptural “scramble” made from locally-sourced stone to welcome dancers and visitors and provide spaces for lounging, rehearsal, and celebration. To the east, landscapes designed by Indigenous artists Misty Cook, Kathi Arnold, and Andre Strongbearheart Gaines Jr. celebrate Indigenous knowledge, with a garden and a communal fire pit that reflect the land’s cultural traditions and recognize the original inhabitants that inform Jacob’s Pillow and its quintessential identity.

Netherlands-based architecture firm Mecanoo, led by Creative Director and Founding Partner Francine Houben, is serving as the lead architect for the new building project, in partnership with New York-based architecture firm Marvel as the local architect and landscape architect. Charcoalblue are consulting on theater and acoustic design for the project. Interdisciplinary artist, curator, and convener Jeffrey Gibson, who is a member of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and of Cherokee descent, served as a consultant on the building’s relationship to the site and Indigenous values, a key element of the building’s design.

Opening Celebrations

The opening celebration week at the Doris Duke Theatre—highlighted by a ribbon-cutting and opening performances on Wednesday, July 9, 2025—activates many of the communities and stories that have defined and shaped Jacob’s Pillow. This multi-day celebration features gatherings and pop-up performances by world-class artists, bringing the Duke and the Jacob’s Pillow campus to life from all angles. The opening-week celebration also includes open houses, community events, and a gathering to activate the communal fire pit and Indigenous garden, designed by Indigenous artists **Andre Strongbearheart Gaines Jr., Kathi Arnold, and Misty Cook** in collaboration with Marvel.

Inside, a new visual art installation by Indigenous artist **Brenda Mallory** serves as a focal point of the Jameson Family Lobby in the Doris Duke Theatre. Emmy-nominated director, choreographer, and performer **Katherine Helen Fisher** has created the inaugural exhibition in the new Duke's gallery space. The interactive exhibition, *Dancing the Algorithm*, invites audiences to experiment and play within embodied installations that challenge the perceived boundaries between performer and spectator, physical and digital, human and machine.

The boundary-pushing program of artists featured in the new Doris Duke Theatre is appearing as part of Jacob's Pillow's renowned international dance festival, now in its 93rd summer. The Festival offers nine weeks of performances on its campus in the Berkshires, as well as streaming and online events for audiences worldwide, from June 25 through August 24, 2025. The 2025 summer festival will mark the first time in six years that all three onsite performance venues are open to the public: the historic Ted Shawn Theatre, the outdoor Henry J. Leir Stage, and the new Doris Duke Theatre.

The Duke's opening date of July 9 holds a special significance to Jacob's Pillow, as this was the same date in 1942 that the dance festival opened the Ted Shawn Theatre, the first performance space in America designed exclusively for dance, which continues to serve as Jacob's Pillow's flagship venue for festival performances.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Doris Duke Theatre Supporters

Doris Duke Foundation

Lead support for Doris Duke Theatre is provided by the Doris Duke Foundation



The mission of the Doris Duke Foundation (DDF) is to build a more creative, equitable and sustainable future. The foundation works across three areas: Arts & Culture, Nature, and Health & Well-being. DDF focuses its support to the performing arts on contemporary dance, jazz and theater artists, and the organizations that nurture, present and produce them. Visit www.dorisduke.org to learn more.

Additional major support for the Doris Duke Theatre is provided by the **Arison Arts Foundation**, **Barr Foundation**, **Barbara and Amos Hostetter**, the **John S. and James L. Knight Foundation**, the **Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund**, a program of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, administered through a collaborative arrangement between **MassDevelopment** and the **Mass Cultural Council**, **Mass Leads: An Act Relative to Strengthening Massachusetts' Economic Leadership**, and funded in part by the **Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism**.



JACOB'S PILLOW

Jacob's Pillow is a National Historic Landmark, recipient of the National Medal of Arts, and home to America's longest-running international dance festival, which will celebrate its 93rd season in Summer 2025. Jacob's Pillow acknowledges that it rests on the ancestral homelands of the Muh-he-con-ne-ok or Mohican people. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors and elders past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all. In addition, we acknowledge the Nipmuc, the Wampanoag and other tribal nations who also made their homes in what is now known as Massachusetts.

Founded by Ted Shawn in 1933, each Festival includes national and international dance companies and free and ticketed performances, talks, tours, classes, exhibits, events, and community programs. The School at Jacob's Pillow, a prestigious professional dance training center, advances the careers of the upcoming generation of performers and choreographers; during the Festival, 100 international dancers evolve as artists in ballet, choreography, contemporary, musical theatre, tap, and other genres, and year round, artist faculty and accomplished alumni nurture younger dancers in a series of Jacob's Pillow 360 workshops and intensives offered in partnership with leading dance institutions worldwide. The Pillow also provides professional advancement opportunities across disciplines of arts administration, design, video, and production through its seasonal internship program. Through its community engagement programs, the Pillow serves as a partner and active citizen in its local community. The Pillow's extensive Archives, open year-round to the public and highlighted online at danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org, chronicle more than a century of dance in photographs, programs, books, costumes, audiotapes, and videos.

Notable artists who have created or premiered dances at the Pillow include choreographers Antony Tudor, Agnes de Mille, Alvin Ailey, Donald McKayle, Kevin McKenzie, Twyla Tharp, Ralph Lemon, Susan Marshall, Trisha Brown, Ronald K. Brown, Wally Cardona, Andrea Miller, and Trey McIntyre; performed by artists such as Mikhail Baryshnikov, Carmen de Lavallade, Mark Morris, Dame Margot Fonteyn, Edward Villella, Rasta Thomas, and hundreds of others. On March 2, 2011, President Barack Obama honored Jacob's Pillow with a National Medal of Arts, the highest arts award given by the United States Government, making the Pillow the first dance presenting organization to receive this prestigious award. The Pillow's Executive and Artistic Director since 2016 is Pamela Tatge. For more information, visit www.jacobspillow.org.

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Artist Biographies and Works to be Presented

Andrew Schneider (United States) is an Obie Award-winning, Drama Desk-nominated performer, writer, and interactive-electronics artist creating original works for theater, dance, sound, video, and installation. In *HERE*, commissioned by Jacob's Pillow,

Schneider joins with Berlin-based dancers and collaborators Margaux Marielle-Trehouart and Joel Suarez Gomez (Sasha Waltz & Guests, Mouvoir, Lausitz Festival) to tell the story of a single space over eons, in which innumerable lives, dreams, and travesties float through the present moment. We know what it's like to miss someone because they are not *here*, but what does it feel like to miss someone because they are not *now*? Inspired by concepts of simultaneity and quantum entanglement, and using wireless in ear technology and spatialized audio, Schneider and company explore the limits of connection and storytelling through hyper-precise attention to synchronicities of bodies in space over time—both cosmic and mundane.

To complement his week-long performance run, Schneider has been commissioned by Jacob's Pillow to create an immersive / binaural sound experience that crossfades with reality. Audiences can access this experience using their own devices and headphones as they navigate the world around them. In his words: "I can't control what's in your periphery, but I can help you notice what's there." The piece deals with the hidden choreography of the universe and casts each audience member as the mover in the work, and their world as the stage. What if everything around you was made just for you? What if it already was?

Schneider has designed off-Broadway and is a member of the arts incubator ONX in New York City, a 2020 recipient of the Foundation for Contemporary Arts Grants to Artists award, a Sundance "Art of the Practice" fellow, and has received a fellowship in 2022 from the Junge Akademie/Akademie Der Künste in Berlin. He was a 2019 Professor of the Practice and Visiting Fellow in Theater Arts and Performance Studies through the Brown Arts Initiative at Brown University.

Elle Sofe Company (Norway) make their U.S. debut to present *Vástáduš eana – the answer is land*, a critically-acclaimed performance that combines dance with yoik, a traditional singing style of the Sámi people who are Indigenous to the northern parts of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Supported by polyphonic music and costumes inspired by traditional clothing, the piece is inspired by political demonstrations, Sámi spiritual practices, and formation dance, and explores community and kinship between people, nature, and the earth. The yoik, composed specifically for the performance, serves as a musical pillar throughout a performance that reflects on the power of standing together and the awareness of the earth we all stand on and share. Company founder Elle Sofe Sara is a featured artist at the Arctic Arts Festival in Harstad and a winner of the 2019 Moon Jury Award at the Imagine Native Film Festival. *Vástáduš eana – the answer is land* has toured internationally, and received the 2021/2022 Norwegian Critics Award for Dance.

Eun-Me Ahn (Korea) is a leading artist of the Korean performing arts scene, known for her avant garde choreographic worlds and technicolor productions. In her return to Jacob's Pillow for the first time since 2000, Ahn will present the official U.S. premiere of *Dragons*, a work with tumbling and 3D holographic choreography that juggles speed, scale, and illusion. The work was conceived before the pandemic and transformed by the reality of her initial cast of pan-Asian dancers being split and isolated through it. *Dragons* incorporates the 3D holographic presence of the initially isolated cast with live choreography for eight on-stage dancers, many of whom were born in 2000—the year of the dragon on the Asian Zodiac calendar. A graduate of contemporary dance in Seoul and from NYU Tisch, Ahn is internationally renowned, with over 150 pieces in her repertoire. Her work has toured widely in Asia and Europe through invitations from the Pina Bausch Foundation in Wuppertal, Germany, and an association with Théâtre de la Ville in Paris.

Shamel Pitts (United States) is a performance artist, choreographer, conceptual artist, dancer, spoken word artist, and teacher whose company TRIBE will perform *Touch of RED* as part of the Doris Duke Theatre's 2025 season. *Touch of RED* is inspired by the rapid-fire footwork of boxing, the African-American jazz dance style Lindy Hop, Gaga movement language, and nightlife culture. Set in a stylized ring, this dance duet examines the way Black men are perceived and perceive themselves in contemporary society. This is a notable homecoming for Pitts and his company, whose Pillow Lab residency work on this piece in November 2020 was disrupted when the original Doris Duke Theatre was lost to a structure fire. Since then, TRIBE premiered *Touch of Red* in a sold-out weekend in October 2022 at MASS MoCA, co-presented by Jacob's Pillow. This will be the first time this remarkable duet is performed at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival.

To complement his week-long performance run in the Doris Duke Theatre, Shamel Pitts has also been commissioned by Jacob's Pillow to create and release a digital-first work in summer 2025 and will create a series of cinematic 3D experiences, in collaboration with TRIBE's Transmedia Artist Lucca Del Carlo, that accompany his in-person performance of *Touch of RED*. These experiences will explore the intense intimacy that virtual performances make possible, with Pitts's focus on "how can the audience feel the sweat?" Beyond witnessing the movement, viewers will also feel like they're moving through the pieces themselves.

Pitts is a 2020 Guggenheim Fellow, and recently received a 2024 MacArthur Fellowship. He is the recipient of a 2018 Princess Grace Award in Choreography and a 2019 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellowship Award winner in Choreography. Pitts's "BLACK series" has toured extensively worldwide since 2016.

Faye Driscoll (United States) is a Jacob's Pillow Dance Award and Doris Duke Award-winning performance maker who has been hailed as a "startlingly original talent" by *The New York Times* and "a post-millennium postmodern wild woman" by *The Village Voice*. She returns to the Pillow to present her piece *Weathering*, first developed in a Pillow Lab residency in 2022. *Weathering* is a multi-sensory flesh sculpture made of bodies, sounds, scents, liquids, and objects, in which ten people enact a glacially morphing *tableau vivant* on a mobile raft-like stage surging through the Anthropocene, with the audience embanking the performers. This symphonically active, luminously living work is a breathing, leaking, choreography of micro-events within a momentum thrusting from just beyond the perceivable. Driscoll received the Jacob's Pillow Dance Award in 2018 and has been presented across the U.S. and internationally at Tanz im August, Kunstenfestivaldesarts, La Biennale di Venezia, Festival d'Automne à Paris, Melbourne Festival, Belfast International Arts Festival, Onassis Cultural Centre in Athens, and Centro de Arte Experimental in Buenos Aires.

Huang Yi (Taiwan) is a dancer, choreographer, and inventor creating partnership between humans and robots. Huang will appear for his first-ever engagement at Jacob's Pillow to present *Ink*, in which Huang and audio-visual pioneer Ryoichi Kurokawa dismantle and reconstruct the lines from a hundred artworks in renowned calligrapher Tong Yang-Tze's Silent Music series. Exploring textures of movement, sound, visual art, and space, Huang and his dancers perform alongside stunning holographic projection and two industrial robots he programmed. Mixing movement with mechanical and multimedia elements to create dance that corresponds with the flow of data, *Ink* makes each performer, whether human or machine, a dancing instrument. Named by *Dance Magazine* as one of the "25 to Watch," Huang is one of Asia's most prolific choreographers. *Ink* was co-commissioned by the National Taichung Theater and National Theater, Taipei in Taiwan and had its world premiere in June 2023.