



The Final Concert of Mills Dance MFA Thesis Candidates

April 8th & 9th

7pm

Marilyn McArthur Holland Theater

Welcome everyone to tonight's program. As many of you know, we come to this with a heavy heart for two reasons. Recently we lost our beloved alumna and faculty emerita Rebecca Fuller. Also, this is the last group of Mills MFA students to share their dance thesis work in a concert format. But we are here to celebrate Becky, these students, and a department that has been granting master's degrees in dance since the mid 1950's. For 70 years, Mills College has upheld that dance is extraordinarily significant as both a site for research and creative activity. Tonight, we will witness the work of one of the department's first graduate students as well as the concert work from four of our final five grads (our fifth grad, Brittany Mathis, will present her work in June).

Thank you and have a wonderful evening!

Sheldon Smith

Chair of the Department of Dance and Theater Studies

***Tonight's performance is dedicated to Mills alumna and Professor Emerita
Rebecca Fuller.***

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Oakland and Berkeley sit in the territory of Huichin, part of the stolen land of the **Chochoeno Muwekma Ohlone**, the successors of the historic and sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County.

We acknowledge the land and labor of the Ohlone people, whose connection to this land we remember, and whose presence - past, present, and future - we respect. As part of Mills' mission of supporting and fostering learning through the generation and dissemination of knowledge, we acknowledge that the land we are meeting on today is the original homeland of Ohlone people.

Roof and Fire (excerpts) (1973)

Choreography: Rebecca Fuller (adapted from score by Trisha Brown)

Music: Created collaboratively by spring 2022 DNC 157 Music & Dance class

Filmographer: unknown

Performers: John Daley, Brooke Myers, Neala J. Haze, Annelise Rothman, Ellen R. Langan, Stan Osofsky, Helen G. Oldfield, Nancy Lyons, Rebecca Fuller, Marcia M. Olson, J. Angela Eidinoff, Judy Scalin, Carolyn Arankh Graessle

This video contains brief excerpts from a 45 minute filmed documentation of the work Roof and Fire. The score was originated by Trisha Brown and her company to be performed on rooftops and fire escapes in New York City. The work saw many iterations but originally, dancers transmitted improvisational phrases from rooftop to rooftop across long distances in Manhattan. This version was adapted by Rebecca Fuller with Brown's permission for public performances outside and inside the recently built Haas Pavilion on the Mills Campus.

Overload

Choreography: Tawni Pizzagoni

Music: Tawni Pizzagoni

Lighting and Projection: Chris Griffin

Costumes: Tawni Pizzagoni

Performers: Faith Alexis, Sofia Amador, Moriah Costa, Stacey Fong, Hsiaohuey Ivy Lee, Brittany J. Mathis, Mikaili Thomas, Steph Tobon

If the working world continues to overwork, overload, and overwhelm, the bodies and minds of their people suffer.

I would like to thank the faculty and students in the Mills Dance Department, you are my biggest inspirations, and together, we have created the best supportive community of people that I could have asked for in my life.

Alternate

Choreography: Caitlin (Cat) Vanderveen

Videographer: Ben Estabrook

Production Assistant: Faith Alexis

Field Recordings: Sheldon Smith

Costume Credit: Adidas

Performer & Editor: Caitlin (Cat) Vanderveen

“Alternate” is a social commentary on American sports culture, spectatorship, and nationalism benefiting the community at the cost of athletes’ mental, physical, and emotional well-being.

...and i climb

Choreography: Wade Reynolds

Sound: Jose Solares Jimenez, Wade Reynolds

Lighting: Chris Griffin, Wade Reynolds

Costumes: Wade Reynolds

Dancers: Arielle Cole, Moriah Costa, Alexandra Tiscareno, Steph Tobon

Music: The Commodores, Murcof

Text: Adrienne Rae Ash, Rachel Brady, Mare Lemongelli, John Purfield, Melissa Reynolds, Amy Thurmond

Thank you to my beautiful cast for your dedication to this process.

Work 19 – Journey

Choreographer & Dancer: Ye Feng

Music: Live Sound

Guqin: Zeng Xiaogang

Lighting Designer: Chris Griffin

Poetry: “*Things We Carry on the Sea*” by Wang Ping

Poetry Reading: Ye Feng

Costume Designing: Xiaofan Wang

This work is an exploratory and experimental one, based on my own experience as an immigrant to the United States, and by making use of what I use in my daily life as props, such as my suitcase, bowls and chopsticks, and rice paper, to create sounds, and to explore the relationship between my body and time and space.

Life is a journey. Everyone of us is on a journey.

Carrying with me the soil of my motherland, the smell and memories of my family, I have set foot on a new soil; and here on this new soil, I will leave my mark.

Thank you to Sheldon Smith for engineering the live soundscape

THE CHOREOGRAPHERS

Professor Rebecca Fuller first arrived at Mills as a graduate student of the Dance Department in 1952 and was one of the first students ever to receive an MA in Dance. She stayed on as faculty, became department chair in 1982 and retired in 1988.

Raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan, Becky came to Mills after completing her bachelor's degree at Michigan State University. She also sought out and studied with Martha Graham, Louis Horst, Doris Humphrey and Anna Halprin among others. She joined the Dance faculty in 1955 and taught until her retirement in 1988, leading the Dance Department as its chair from 1982-1988. With her colleagues, Eleanor Lauer, Mary Ann Kinkead and Doris Dennison, they made Mills a powerhouse in dance education leading the way in teaching generations of students how to think about, perform, make and teach dance. Mills graduates became teachers at secondary schools and universities throughout the United States, as well as prominent choreographers including such luminaries as Trisha Brown, Molissa Fenley, Deborah Vaughn, Nora Chipaumire and many others.

In addition to teaching the entire dance curriculum, Becky choreographed over twenty works, including 'Adame Miroir (1963), L'homme et son desire (1967), Frieze/Run (1978), Rainbow Run/Golden Sunset (1978) and Mourning of the Golden Moon (1982), working with many collaborators including Darius Milhaud and Trisha Brown. She was a co-author with another Mills grad, Nancy Lyons, of "The Moving Box", an interactive exercise kit used by dance teachers all over the country.

Becky will be remembered as a dedicated teacher, exemplary artist and good friend to many.

Tawni Pizzagoni holds degrees in math and dance from San Jose State University. Her work, "Overload," aptly describes the existential and material conditions of the working world. The idea for this work, "came after news that Mills would be merging with Northeastern University, but prior to knowing that the department would no longer be in existence." Her interests lie in how movement can heal in the physical, mental, and spiritual spaces of one's body. This is explored in her written thesis and touched on in her choreographic work.

Cat Vanderveen is a choreographer, dancer, and performance artist. She received her degree in Dance and Theater from UC Davis before arriving at Mills. Her screendance, "Alternate," filmed in the historic Greek Theater, "is a commentary on American sports culture—in particular, US Gymnastics—and the disposability of its athletes." She places the audiences' perspective in bleacher seats, thus commenting on the nature of spectatorship. She says her interest "recently turned towards the capacities of screendance and expanding [her] work via the ever-present screens around us."

Wade Reynolds presents "...and I climb," a work that "explores the inevitable shift into adulthood and the human struggle to find balance between reality and nostalgia." Wade received her BFA in Dance & Choreography from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2012. While at VCU, Wade had the opportunity to study with the DAH Theater in Belgrade, Serbia, and performed in Urban Bush Women's American Masterpiece "Shelter", when it was restaged on VCU Dance students in 2011. Wade's choreography was chosen to represent VCU in the 2012 Mid-Atlantic American College Dance Festival, where it was then chosen for the gala performance. In 2012, Wade attended the American Dance Festival, where she performed in a world premiere work by Helen Simoneau. Upon graduating from VCU, Wade worked with choreographers in New York and Philadelphia, including Von Howard Project, Olive Prince Dance, Sharp Dance Company, Alchemy Dance Company, and Ellie Goodie-Averill. In 2015 Wade relocated to Denver, Colorado, where she danced with Whitney Waugh Dance Company. While in Denver, Wade created DNR, a collaborative project bringing modern dance and local punk and hardcore bands together as a channel for social commentary and change, with a focus on exposing youth to multiple facets of counterculture art. She continued this exploration through her written thesis during her MFA candidacy at Mills College. In 2021, Wade received the award for "Exemplary Work on Stage" from the Mills College Dance Department.

Feng Ye is a "National First-Class Dancer " in China and originally from Xinjiang. She presents "Work 19: Journey." "Life is a journey," she said, "and everyone of us is on a path and will leave marks in the soil." Before she set out to discover new forms of dance and dance making at Mills, she was a seasoned professional, serving as Artistic Director and President of the dance company in the China National Song and Dance Troupe. As performer, choreographer, and artistic director, her works were presented in the Olympic opening & closing ceremonies three times in 2004, 2008, 2014 respectively. In the South Bay Area, Feng Ye

launched the Feng Ye Dance Studio and Feng Ye Dance Troupe. The Feng Ye Dance Studio and the Feng Ye Dance Troupe successfully produced and performed a grand annual gala entitled "ENCOUNTER" at the San Jose Art Center Montgomery Theater in 2018 and "DANCE WITH NATURE" at the Cowell Theater in San Francisco in 2019. For two consecutive years, the Feng Ye Dance Troupe was selected as the only representative of Chinese dance to participate in the San Francisco Ethnic Dance Festival. She made the decision to return to school so she could dive into new modes and cultures of dance. Feng Ye has emerged as an important figure in the region, promoting the integration of dance cultures from multiple ethnic groups.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Mills Performing Arts, Executive Director: Alexander Zendzian

Mills Performing Arts, Audio Director: Brendan Glasson

Lighting Designer: Chris Griffin

Lighting Console Operator: Sadja Jannah

Production Coordinator & Stage Manager: Trevor Polcyn

Stage Crew: Asher Quinn

DANCE & THEATER STUDIES DEPARTMENT FACULTY

Sheldon Smith, *Department Chair*

Robert Moses

Victor Talmadge

Ann Murphy, *Professor Emerita*

Dance Wellness

Dr. Cicely Hart

Visiting Professors and Adjuncts

Abby Crain

Alisa Rasera

Suhaila Salimpour

Stephanie Sherman

Administrative Staff

Arielle Cole

Accompanist

Miles Lassi

The Future of Dance at Mills

As of midnight on June 30th, 2022, Mills College will cease to exist in its current form and so too will the Department of Dance and Theater Studies. But you should know that we will have an opportunity to put forward a revitalized dance program to hopefully be approved by the new institution. This will take some time and a lot of hard work and we invite anyone that is interested to be included in program design conversations.

While this is a sad moment, this is also an exciting opportunity. As we lunge deeper into the 21st century, what should dance education prioritize? What role does dance play in a world that is being pushed closer and closer to a non-embodied “metaverse?” Can dance heal the wounds of war, pandemics and divisive politics? What legacies do we hang on to from the past? What can we let go? And ultimately—what do students want in a dance degree?

We hope to be putting forward a proposal for a BA in Dance early next academic year. If approved, we will then need an additional year to fully build out the program, advertise and accept incoming students. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons it may be years before we can propose a new MFA program.

There will be many challenges ahead, not the least of which is the shift in identity that our overall institution will face. No matter the challenges though, we affirm that we will continue to be an anti-racist department and safe space for our lgbtqia+ students and that we will continue to commit to the ideal of decolonizing and decentering whiteness in dance education.