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**Jacob's Pillow Director of Preservation Norton Owen
to Receive 2025 Dance Award**

**Owen's 50-Year legacy to be honored as part of
Jacob's Pillow's Season Opening Gala on June 21**

**Summer exhibit curated by Wendy Perron will honor Owen's
founding stewardship of America's premier multimedia archive for dance**

March 27, 2025 (BECKET, Mass.)—Jacob's Pillow announced today that Norton Owen, the organization's Director of Preservation and a longstanding leader in the dance field, will receive the 2025 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award in celebration of his 50th year on staff. Owen will accept this award at Jacob's Pillow's Season Opening Gala in Becket on Saturday, June 21.

The Jacob's Pillow Dance Award is presented each year to an artist of exceptional vision and achievement, and carries a cash prize which the artist can use as they choose. As a beloved archivist and mentor, and a founder of the award-winning digital archive platform Jacob's Pillow Dance Interactive, Owen has curated decades of resources, events, and creative collections for public access, providing entry points into the vast Archives at Jacob's Pillow. He is a celebrated leader in the dance field internationally, inspiring generations of scholars and dance enthusiasts.

Norton Owen joins a list of Jacob's Pillow Dance Award honorees that include Misty Copeland, Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui, Dormeshia, Ronald K. Brown, Annie-B Parson and Paul Lazar, Bill T. Jones, Merce Cunningham, Kyle Abraham, Michelle Dorrance, Camille A. Brown, Liz Lerman, and Faye Driscoll, among others. The Jacob's Pillow Dance Award was established in 2007 and is philanthropically supported by an anonymous donor.

“Norton is a national treasure,” said Pamela Tatge, Executive and Artistic Director at Jacob’s Pillow. “As the first and only Director of Preservation we’ve ever had, he has thought deeply about how to document and preserve our ephemeral artform and ensure that our Archives are truly accessible to audiences. He was one of the first dance archivists to conceive of how we might provide online access to our holdings, and he has trained and mentored archivists and scholars from around the world. On top of that, he is a living encyclopedia of dance.

“Very few people hold such extensive history with such care,” Tatge added, “but he is loved for his ability to tailor the information he shares in a way that resonates with each individual he speaks with. He is a gifted community-maker, and is truly one of the most respected people in our field. It is truly an honor to recognize the key role he has played in the advancement of Jacob’s Pillow over the past 50 years.”

Owen expressed his gratitude for receiving this year’s Dance Award with a nod to his past. “I never imagined that I would be considered for the Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award, so this comes as a remarkable surprise,” he said. “I couldn’t be more thrilled. When we first opened the Archives to the public in 1996, we had no idea how it might be received. So to see how this resource has been embraced by our visitors and artists has been truly gratifying.”

The Season Opening Gala on June 21st will include a night of celebratory performances in the Ted Shawn Theatre, followed by dinner and dancing. In addition to the presentation of the Dance Award, the Gala will feature The School at Jacob’s Pillow Contemporary Ballet Performance Ensemble performing a world premiere by Annabelle Lopez Ochoa, a performance of Talley Beatty’s *Mourner’s Bench* by New York City Ballet principal Taylor Stanley, and more. In-person tickets to the Season Opening Gala are now on sale. Additionally, the Gala performance will be livestreamed and accessible for free, with the option to donate. To learn more and reserve Gala tickets and tables, visit jacobspillow.org/gala.

This summer’s Dance Festival will feature an exhibit in Blake’s Barn and the Norton Owen Reading Room titled *Connecting Through Time: 50 Seasons with Norton Owen*. The exhibit—which is free and unticketed, and which opens Saturday, June 14—is planned by guest curator Wendy Perron, American choreographer and former Editor-in-Chief of *Dance Magazine*. Perron reflected on Norton’s legacy: “Everything he does is infused with a sense of discovery. The more I dig into his myriad contributions, the more daunting—and joyful—this assignment becomes.”

A STORIED HISTORY

Norton Owen has been associated with Jacob’s Pillow since 1976, when he first attended The School on a scholarship at 22 years old. The role of Director of Preservation was created for him

in 1990, and he has since organized what Alastair Macaulay, former chief dance critic of *The New York Times*, has called “one of the world's most remarkable dance archives.” The collection is housed in Blake’s Barn, an 18th-century building on the Pillow campus that invites visitors to explore the history of Jacob’s Pillow and the artists who have contributed to its legacy. Blake’s Barn comprises a large exhibition gallery, an outdoor area for lectures and talks called Sommerspace, and the Norton Owen Reading Room, where visitors can watch videos, learn from exhibits in the permanent collection, browse the library, and access decades of materials.

“I always hope to create meaningful connections between artists and audiences,” Owen said, “whether that happens through an exhibition, a talk, a visit to the Archives, or online engagement. The most meaningful connections occur when we can help the public feel the synergy between past and present, which is at the root of the Pillow experience.”

In addition to physical resources, Owen is also a founder of Jacob’s Pillow Dance Interactive (danceinteractive.jacobspillow.org), an ever-growing website featuring curated video highlights of Jacob’s Pillow performances from the early 1930s through today, with multimedia essays featuring talks, photos, and other exclusive content organized into themes. He has curated over 100 exhibitions in Blake’s Barn during his tenure, and he manages the creation of monthly video playlists, multimedia essays, the PillowVoices podcast, and recordings of PillowTalks and other special events on Jacob’s Pillow’s YouTube channel.

In his career beyond Jacob’s Pillow, Owen served as the director of the Limón Institute—a component of the José Limón Dance Foundation—from 1988 to 2002. He is the former chair of Dance Heritage Coalition, and served as resident curator of the National Museum of Dance in the 1990s. He currently serves as President of the O’Donnell-Green Music and Dance Foundation. He was a 2023 Dance Magazine Award Honoree, and has received other lifetime achievement awards from Dance/USA, the Dance Studies Association, the Theatre Library Association, Dance Films Association, Martha Hill Dance Fund, and the José Limón Dance Foundation.

AN ARCHIVE FOR THE PRESENT

Jacob’s Pillow recently expanded the physical footprint of the Archives, with a new addition that opened in 2021. The groundbreaking for that project—held just three days after the original Doris Duke Theatre was consumed by fire on November 17, 2020—provided a sobering reminder of the value of preserving the past. “After it happened, we began a list of all that we were grateful for,” Tatge remarked at the groundbreaking. “Grateful that no one got hurt, grateful that no other building on this campus was touched. And then we thought: thank

goodness every performance, every talk, every workshop, and every creative residency showing was captured, and it's stored right here in the Archives."

As he reflects on his years absorbed in dance, and on building innovative tools to welcome a world of onsite and online dance fans into the Archives at Jacob's Pillow, Owen said he has high hopes for the future of dance preservation. "With each passing year, the Pillow's legacy becomes richer and more robust, and I trust that will always be true," he said. "As long as we can continue documenting our activities, preserving these resources, and sharing them widely, the future of the Archives will be assured."

In his five decades at Jacob's Pillow, Owen has conceived of a remarkably diverse array of free events—including more than 100 on-campus exhibits and hundreds of PillowTalks with dance luminaries and leaders in the field, many of which he has moderated himself—that have welcomed and entertained hundreds of thousands of visitors to Jacob's Pillow. "I try to keep my ear to the ground, to make the Archives and our programs feel as timely as possible," Owen said. "It is immensely satisfying to see people engaging with something that I had a hand in making. But it's not about me. When they are pulled in by the subject matter, and can find their own points of interest in it, that's how it should be."

Owen has found that warmth, welcome, and a sense of friendly discovery is what most entices visitors and audiences into the Archives and its programming. "There is education in what we do," he said, "but more than anything, I want our PillowTalks to simply feel like a conversation with people that you're interested in. We give you information, but we don't tell you what to think. I feel a responsibility to make the unseen parts of the dance world into something that is easily seen and enjoyed. That's a high bar, to make sure that we show people a good time. But when it comes to how audiences engage with dance, I don't want anyone left out in the cold."

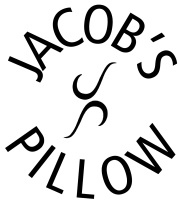
ABOUT THE JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE AWARD

The Jacob's Pillow Dance Award was created in 2007 by an anonymous donor whose commitment to an ongoing annual gift to Jacob's Pillow is generous and far-reaching in support of the Jacob's Pillow Dance Award as well as research and development funds for the creation of new work.

The Award, presented each year to an artist of exceptional vision and achievement, carries a cash prize of \$25,000 which the artist can use in any way they wish. In commemoration, the honoree also receives a custom-designed glass award sculpture by Berkshire-based artist Tom Patti, whose work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and other major arts institutions around the world.

The remaining funds support the Pillow's commitment to the research and development of new work in the Pillow Lab. Year-round residencies at the Pillow Lab offer funding for artists, free housing, unlimited use of studio space, and access to the Pillow's rare and extensive Archives and resources.

ABOUT 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 celebrates 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 seasonal internships and a year-round Administrative Fellows 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.

MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR JACOB'S PILLOW IS GENEROUSLY PROVIDED BY: Arison Arts Foundation, Barr Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Doris Duke Foundation, Ford Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency, Mellon Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and The Shubert Foundation. *As of January 28, 2025.*

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