



Martha Hill (1900-1995)
Educator, administrator, artistic director,
and visionary for dance as a performing art

MARTHA HILL DANCE FUND LIMITED
WAS ESTABLISHED TO HONOR,
PERPETUATE, AND REWARD MARTHA HILL'S
COMMITMENT TO DANCE EDUCATION
AND PERFORMANCE INTERNATIONALLY.



Gerri Houlihan, Martha Myers and son
Curt Myers



Elsa Hardy, Mary Hinkson's grand-
daughter, with parents Jonathan and
Jennifer Hardy



Joan Finkelstein, John-Mario Sevilla
and Vernon Scott,
President of the MHDF board



Danielle Robin Reinstein



Martha Myers and Lance Westergard - Gala 2014

Gala Photos: Steven Spiliotis & Reiko Yanagi

Miss Hill: Making Dance Matter

The MHDF board is delighted to say that 2014 has been a year of celebrations and rewards. Our documentary *Miss Hill: Making Dance Matter* has been featured at festivals across the country and abroad to critical acclaim. The response and feedback from friends has been overwhelmingly positive. We thank everyone who supported us in the long journey of completing the movie and we are grateful for having shared the result with our community at several very special screenings, from the opening at Lincoln Center, the screenings at The Juilliard School and the NDEO conference in Chicago, to the commercial release at the Quad Cinema in January 2015. As wonderful as it was to celebrate *Miss Hill* with family and friends it was also incredible, almost amazing, to have it playing at a regular movie house in the Village. We were all so pleased and proud that the one week screening at the Quad was extended to two weeks due to popular demand!

Currently the DVD of the documentary is only available to educational institutions but we expect that it will be available for individual purchase in June. We have spent countless hours looking through footage in order to choose the bonuses which will be included in the home video edition. Please, check our web site www.misshillfilm.com for all information regarding sales and latest updates.

We were back at the elegant Manhattan Penthouse for Gala 2014. The attendance broke all records and the happy spirit of the party seemed to lift the space ever higher over the rooftops of Union Square. Perhaps the large attendance was due to the recovering economy or to the many friends of our honorees, but it was certainly in large part due to the desire to get together and celebrate the completion of the movie. *Miss Hill* was on everyone's mind, in every conversation. We all shared a deep sense of accomplishment.

Once again, we extend our congratulations to Martha Myers and Mary Hinkson recipients of the Lifetime Achievement Award for their contributions to the field of dance; to John-Mario Sevilla, Mid-Career Honoree, for his innovative leadership at the 92nd Street Y; and to Danielle Reinstein, Young Professional Honoree, for outstanding promise. Ms. Reinstein was selected by the School at Jacob's Pillow, and is currently a senior in the Ailey/Fordham program.

A big thank you to Mark Haim, our Master of Ceremonies who flew in from Seattle to join us. He led us through the evening with charm and aplomb. We are also very grateful to our presenters J.R. Glover, Joan Finkelstein, Laura Delano and Gerri Houlihan. Their words graced the occasion with humor and affection in loving tributes to mentors, colleagues and students. Memorable for her candor was Elisa Hardy, accepting the award in the name of her grandmother Mary Hinkson. Although Ms. Hinkson could not attend, we were told that she awaited happily for news from the Gala, only days before passing away on November 26th.

Our evening ended with a spontaneous burst of Hula Dance led by Mr. Sevilla and Joan Finkelstein. The beautiful leis were provided by Mr. Sevilla's Hawaiian family.

Looking ahead, the MHDF would like to shape new projects and goals, to keep building on Martha Hill's legacy while creating an active presence in the dance community. Now that the movie is completed, we must take care of distribution and PR, but we can start looking for new ways of honoring Martha Hill and of contributing in her name to the dance field at home and abroad.

Warm wishes, the MHDF board.

Elizabeth McPherson - In the Pursuit of Dance and History Interview by Ernesta Corvino



Elizabeth McPherson at Montclair State University

Photo: Mike Peters

Elizabeth McPherson is an associate professor and coordinator of the BA in Dance at Montclair State University. She received her BFA from Juilliard, followed by an MA from The City College of New York, and a PhD from New York University. The author of *The Bennington School of the Dance: A History in Writings and Interviews* and *The Contributions of Martha Hill to American Dance and Dance Education, 1900-1995*, she has also written articles and reviews for Ballet Review, Dance Teacher Magazine, Attitude: The Dancers' Magazine and The Journal of Dance Education. Dr. McPherson is the Executive Editor of the international Dance Education in Practice. The focus of her research is teaching and learning in dance education with an emphasis on history. She has particular expertise in oral interviews, which make up significant portions of both of her books. Dr. McPherson has staged numerous 20th century dance works from Labanotation and other sources. Recent projects include Antony Tudor's *Continuo* and excerpts from Anna Sokolow's *Scenes from the Music of Charles Ives*. She is a board member of the Martha Hill Dance Fund (since 2005) and on the professional advisory committee of the Dance Notation Bureau. Performance credits include: Ernesta Corvino's Dance Circle Company, Avodah Dance Ensemble, and the Louis Johnson Dance Theatre.

EC: What is your connection to Martha Hill and what inspired you to write about her?

EM: When I entered Juilliard in 1986, Miss Hill had already moved into the position of Artistic Director Emeritus, however she was still very much involved with students. I remember she did our Freshman Orientation session conveying such important information as, "Never set anything on the pianos," and "Read the board!" She was wonderfully impressive with her commanding voice and just her sense of presence. She was always at our juries, and would frequently drop in on an audition or a rehearsal. She also taught our Senior Seminar course. This was largely Miss Hill telling us about the "greats" in 20th century dance history, but the astounding part was that these people were her friends and colleagues. It made dance history extremely personal.

EC: As a young, performing dancer, were you already interested in dance history?

EM: Yes, I was always interested in dance history. My mother often gave me dance books as gifts, and I was an avid reader, so I had a good knowledge of dance history before I ever took a formal course. I grew up in Tennessee, and had the great fortune of dancing in *The Nutcracker* with the Atlanta Ballet who performed it in Nashville, using Nashville children. I was a party child for 3 years. It was a formative experience, Atlanta Ballet was doing the Balanchine choreography because the director Robert Barnett had danced with NYCB. I learned and performed fantastic ballet repertory with my teens including the Wilis from *Giselle*, 2nd Act of *Swan Lake*, the fairy variations from *Sleeping Beauty*, excerpts from *Napoli*, *Kingdom of the Shades* from *La Bayadère*, and several versions of *The Nutcracker*. At Juilliard, I performed some of the great modern repertory of the 20th century including works by Martha Graham, Paul Taylor, José Limón, Anna Sokolow, and Donald McKayle. Some of these were jury pieces and some main stage productions.

EC: Is it important for young dancers to study dance history and what is the best approach to make it meaningful to them?

EM: When I teach dance history today, I draw on my physicalized knowledge of dance history as well as my intellectual knowledge. I structure my course so that one day a week, we are learning dance repertory because dancers are conditioned to learn through their bodies. We learn choreography and it "sticks," often better than reading about dance history or watching videos. I teach everything from a Pavane to Yvonne Rainer's *Chair Pile Dance*.

EC: Can you share some experiences you've had in staging historical dance works?

EM: I have had some incredible experiences staging historical dance works from Labanotation. When I staged Donald McKayle's *Games* at Montclair State University (2009-2010), Mr. McKayle himself came in

to coach the work. I drove him back and forth between NYC and NJ, and it was wonderful to get to know him personally. I often put such dance "legends" on a pedestal, but being in close contact meant that I got to know him as a person. More often I have been staging a work by a choreographer who is no longer living, and people designated as *repetiteurs* by the choreographers' trusts have come to coach the dances. Jim May worked with us on Anna Sokolow's "Central Park in the Dark" from *Scenes from the Music of Charles Ives* last year. This year we had the opportunity of having Amanda McKerron and John Gardner come and coach Antony Tudor's *Continuo*, which I had staged from the Labanotation score. I have learned so much from these experiences, but more importantly, my students have learned so much. By embodying dance history in live performance they bring the dances back to life for themselves and the audience. These are experiences they will not quickly forget.

EC: How did you settle on the topic of your book *The Bennington School of the Dance: A History in Writings and Interviews*?

EM: When I started my PhD program at NYU, I was expecting to write my dissertation on something to do with Labanotation. Well, Martha Hill had passed away the year before I started the program, and there was a memorial/tribute to her. My mind kept returning to all of the people who got up and spoke about her as a mentor and teacher. She had changed so many lives and nurtured so many people through their careers. I decided to write my dissertation on her. I eventually turned this into my first book, *The Contributions of Martha Hill to Dance and Dance Education*. In the process of researching my dissertation and book, I came across the beginning of a manuscript about the Bennington School of the Dance by Martha Hill and Mary Jo Shelly, the directors of the school. Their book was never published for many reasons including threats of a lawsuit, loss of a grant, and then ultimately Shelly's death. I wanted the material to be out in public. It was just the start of a book, but I began interviewing everyone I could find who attended the Bennington School of the Dance summer program (1934-42), and looking for already existing writings and interviews about the school. I gathered all of these materials together to create my second book *The Bennington School of the Dance: A History in Writings and Interviews*. In this book, I tell the story of the school through the participants' eyes and voices, a different approach from looking back at the school through my own eyes and 21st century perspective. I met some wonderful people along the way, largely through email and phone, but these include: Charles Woodford, Doris Humphrey's son; David Lloyd, Norman Lloyd's son; Jeanne Hays Beaman; Joseph Gifford, and Anna Halprin. I am slowly beginning to work on a book on Helen Tamiris who was not asked to be part of the Bennington School of the Dance faculty. So one book project has seemed to lead me into the next.

EC: In the recently premiered documentary film, *Miss Hill: Making Dance Matter*, you and Janet Soares are credited as being "historical consultants and advisors". What did that entail and what kind of an experience was it for you?

EM: To begin with, I gave Greg Vander Veer, the director of the film, a copy of my Martha Hill book, as well as photos and documents that I was using or had used in my own research. I directed him to various libraries and individuals to obtain photos and film of Martha Hill. He often emailed me to check facts, and we spoke about what crucial points should be made about Miss Hill in the film. I have a wide perspective on her life because of my research, and a personal perspective from having known her. I gave feedback on various versions of the film over the 3 years we were working on the documentary. Film is such a different medium than text. Greg had to make choices about what to include and how best to tell her story cinematically. He interviewed me on film a couple of times, asking me to fill in some of the details of Hill's life, particularly regarding NYU.

EC: The making of the film was a primary goal of MHDF and took several years to accomplish. Now that it is a finished product, what is the future of the film?

EM: I hope every dancer, dance student, dance administrator, dance teacher, and dance aficionado will see it! Her life spans the 20th century, and she was intrinsically connected to dance from 1920 to the end of her life in '95. She was a one-of-a-kind, larger than life personality who lived through incredible transformations in dance from Isadora Duncan, to the Ballets Russes, to the modern dance greats, to post modern dance, and the gradual blending together of ballet and modern which she encouraged and fostered. She lived dance in the 20th century in such an influential and fundamentally pervasive manner that dance today would not be the same without her.

EC: And what do you see as the future of the Martha Hill Dance Fund?

EM: We will continue to promote the film, and continue giving awards at our annual gala. And we will begin to examine where we go to from here. My generation is the last to have known Miss Hill personally. Who will carry her legacy into the future? This is a big question for us.

February 2015

PLEASE NOTE THAT DUE TO FUND-RAISING EFFORTS FOR THE DOCUMENTARY NO AWARDS WERE GIVEN IN 2010 AND IN 2013 ONLY THE YOUNG PROFESSIONAL AWARD WAS GIVEN

Lifetime Achievement Award 2014 Mary Hinkson and Martha Myers, 2012 Gemze De Lappe and Yuriko Kikuchi, 2011 Daniel Lewis, 2009 Beverly Blossom, 2008 Ethel Winter, 2007 Pearl Lang, 2006 Mary Anthony, 2005 Ruth Grauert, 2004 Donald McKayle and Doris Rudko, 2003 Francis Mason, 2002 Doris Hering and May O'Donnell, 2001 Alfredo Corvino
Mid-Career Award 2014 John Mario Sevilla, 2012 Dian Dong & H.T. Chen, 2009 Virginia Johnson, 2008 Janet Panetta, 2007 David Dorfman, 2006 Doug Elkins
Young Professional Award 2014 Danielle Robin Reinstein, 2013 Christian Griggs-Drane, 2012 Lissa Nicole Smith, 2011 Patricia Karoly, 2009 Jacqueline Green, 2008 Lilli-Anne Tai, 2007 Levi Marsman, 2006 Katie Dorn, 2005 Christopher Vo, 2004 Mollie Mae MacGregor

Student Choice Award 2012 Kazuko Hirabayashi **Special Citation** 2009 Hortense Zera **Carl Walz Award** 2003 Mira Kim

FLASH NEWS

Patricia Carby (Young Professional Honoree, 2011) Premiered her first one woman show, *Money Talks*, in December 2014. The show was selected by and presented at Dixon Place this February.

Andra and Ernesta Corvino (Board Members) Received the *Flame Award* by the New Jersey Dance Theatre Ensemble for their teaching and stewardship.

Jacqueline Green (Young Professional Honoree, 2009) Received the 2014 *Princess Grace Award* in Dance.

Molly Mae MacGregor (Young Professional Honoree, 2004) Continues teaching and performing in NYC. She was Program Assistant for the 2014 *Young Dancemakers Company* summer program, directed by Alice Teirstein, and is currently in her sixth season with *The Median Movement*, the creative project of Doug Varone and Dancers', Alex Springer

and Xan Burley. She appears in Noah Baumbach's film *Frances Ha* and in the web series *Winners*.

Janet Panetta (Mid-Career Honoree, 2009) Wrote an essay for *The Dance Enthusiast* on the high cost of studio rental and the repercussions within the NYC dance community. She continues to teach at Gibney Dance Center in NYC and in Europe for Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, Ballet Culberg, and Impulstanz, Vienna.

Christopher Vo (Young Professional Honoree, 2005) Is currently performing on Broadway in the hit revival of *On the Town*!

Megan Williams (Board Member) Will be graduating with an MFA in Dance from Sarah Lawrence College in May '15. Later in the summer she will premiere a new work commissioned by 10 Haury Legs.

IN LOVING MEMORY

Mary Anthony (Lifetime Achievement Honoree, 2006) November 11, 1916 – May 31, 2014

Beverly Blossom (Lifetime Achievement Honoree, 2009) August 28, 1926 – November 1, 2014

Doris Hering (Lifetime Achievement Honoree, 2002) April 11, 1920 – October 15, 2014

Mary Hinkson (Lifetime Achievement Honoree, 2014) March 16, 1925-November 26, 2014

Marian Seldes (M.C. 2008) August 23, 1928 – October 6, 2014

Hortense Lieberthal Zera (Founding Board Member) November 3rd, 1916 – March 2, 2014

MHDF BOARD We welcome new board members Elizabeth Gerring Radke and Dr. Allen Maniker!
Vernon Scott - President, David K. Manion - Chairman, Hudon Liff - Vice President, Ani Udovicki - Vice President,
Andra Corvino - Correspondence Secretary, Ernesta Corvino - Treasurer, Elizabeth McPherson - Secretary,
Henning Rübsum, Rebecca Stenn, Yasuko Tokunaga, Lance Westergard, Megan Williams.

Newsletter designed and edited by Ani Udovicki