

# MorDance

## Press Kit 2023



[www.mordance.org](http://www.mordance.org)  
New York, NY

203-313-4300  
[morgan@mordance.org](mailto:morgan@mordance.org)  
[marylouise@mordance.org](mailto:marylouise@mordance.org)

# MD

"...every once in awhile you come across a program by an emerging company which is not only good, but which demonstrates convincingly that that small company has already graduated to "Big-Time" status.

This is the case with MorDance, a New York-based, female-run, and ballet-oriented company founded by dancer and choreographer Morgan McEwen in 2013. Its New York season, scheduled for two nights last week at Symphony Space on the Upper West Side, was, to put it mildly, a knockout."

-Jerry Hochman, *Critical Dance*

"equipped with essential tools: an eye for shaping the arc of a dance as carefully as the transitions and details within it."

-Siobhan Burke, *The New York Tim*

"...stayed true to classical roots while smoothly blending contemporary form."

- Layla Mcoran, *The Examiner*



In The Press

# About

MorDance is a trailblazing, women-led ballet company striving to innovate, elevate, and diversify the ballet landscape to convey a true reflection of our contemporary world. Over the past decade, we have embodied our mission to break free of ballet's historically homogenous structures by creating groundbreaking original works, centering underrepresented voices and narratives, and leading workshops for thousands of students in under-resourced communities across New York City. With a firm belief that world-class ballet should be available to audiences of all backgrounds, we work to break down barriers and inequalities in ballet to cultivate empowered environments for artistic expression.

Over ten seasons, MorDance has produced and staged over twenty original ballets at prominent New York venues including Battery Dance Festival, Symphony Space, Aaron Davis Hall, Gerald Lynch Theater, and Baryshnikov Arts Center. MorDance has held residencies at the Silo at Kirkland Farm, Mana Contemporary, Kaatsbaan Upstream, and Vineyard Art Projects; and was named resident dance company of the Sheen Center in 2016.

Our 2023-24 season will epitomize the breadth of our commitment to furthering accessibility, diversity, and creativity in the field of ballet. This season's repertoire will transform themes of activism and humanity into captivating movement as we strive to inspire audiences to embrace more civic engagement, empathy, and social responsibility.

"Based on those pieces I've seen, McEwen doesn't choreograph to music for the sake of choreographing to music. While her dances may, and usually do, amplify whatever score is being used, they're more than efforts to visualize it. Her choreography usually has an apparent purpose beyond that, one that she often makes quite clear even before the dance begins. She's not on a crusade as much as she's fulfilling a sense of mission."

-Jerry Hochman, Critical Dance





# Emily

runtime 17min

**About:** Inspired by Emily Dickinson's "They Shut Me Up In Prose," this work resonates as a testament to female resilience in patriarchal societies. McEwen, herself familiar with censorship, passionately explores challenges faced by young women seeking authentic voices. Blending classical and modern ballet, McEwen collaborates with composer Polina Nazaykinskaya, enhancing emotional depth through live piano and viola accompaniment. Each movement encapsulates stages of a woman's journey from youth to self-awareness, defiance, action, and peace. It's an ode to women triumphing over adversity, finding voice amidst storms. The choreography offers transformative storytelling, highlighting the ongoing struggle for self-expression. The ballet underscores the need to amplify women's voices, inspiring action against oppression and nurturing an inclusive platform for all voices to be heard.

## Credits:

**Composer** Polina Nazaykinskaya

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

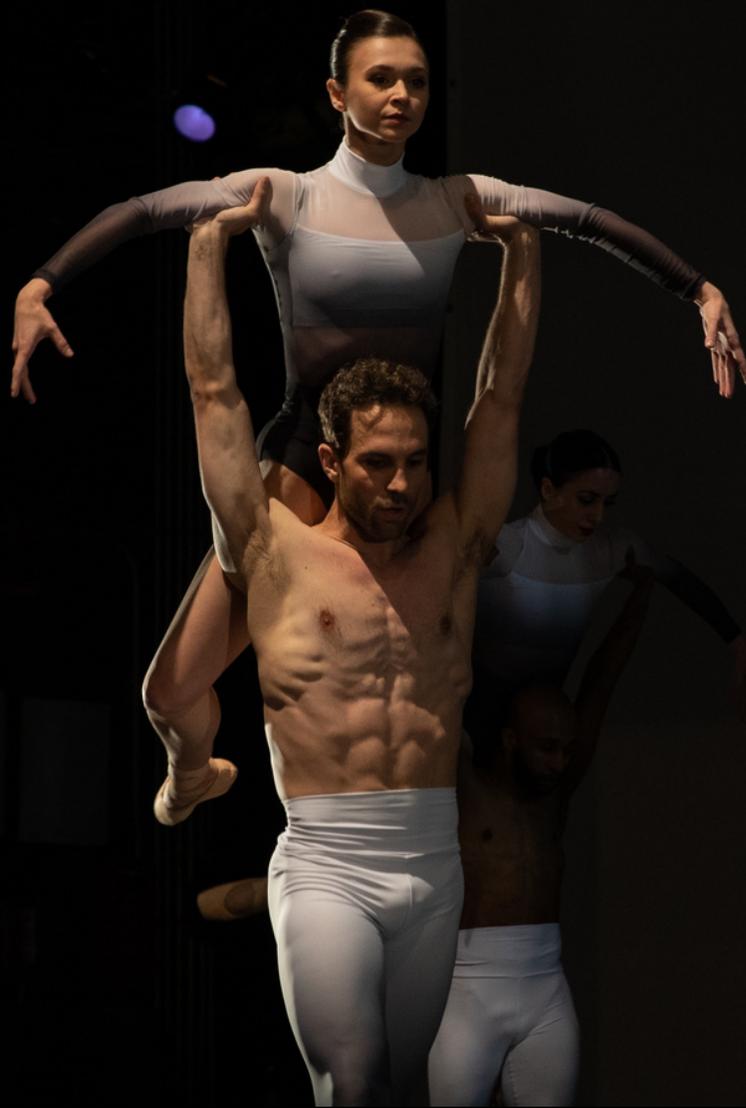
**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

## Original Cast of Dance Artists

Camila Rodrigues, Emily Cardea, Lauren Treat,

Claire Van Bever, Tevin Johnson, David

Hochberg, Dustin James, Joe LaLuzerne



# Albatross

runtime 17min

**About:** Experience the transformative power of this work inspired by Chris Jordan's documentary "Albatross." This poignant performance brings to life the elegance of albatrosses, shedding light on the dire consequences of human mass consumption. With haunting imagery of plastic-filled chicks, the ballet becomes a call to action against global industry's impact on these vulnerable creatures. McEwen's choreography fosters empathy, urging us to protect our ecosystems as 15 albatross species face extinction and 90% of seabirds ingest plastic. Teaming up with composer Josh Knowles, the ballet's music intensifies the emotional resonance. By elevating these endangered birds, McEwen sparks actionable change, urging us to reshape our connection with the environment. This wake-up call emphasizes our duty as Earth's stewards, safeguarding its inhabitants and our planet's future.

## Credits:

**Composer** Joshua Knowles

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

### Original Cast of Dance Artists

Camila Rodrigues, Emily Cardea, Lauren Treat, Claire Van Bever, Tevin Johnson, David Hochberg, Dustin James, Joe LaLuzerne



# Humanism

runtime 17min

**About:** "Humanism" breaks barriers to deliver profound impact. Inspired by Bach's melodies and civil rights speeches, this ballet harmonizes classical beauty with contemporary urgency. "Humanism" celebrates humanity's potential for progress, amplifying marginalized voices. McEwen's dedication to equity shines, weaving a movement language that transcends barriers. It explores race, gender, and the environment. With a desire for an equitable world, McEwen's process draws from every breath and creation's wonder. "Humanism" transforms dance into a force for change, inspiring action. The ballet combines music, dance, and activism, sparking dialogue and introspection. McEwen's choreography invokes empathy and a call to action. Through dance's universality, "Humanism" urges us to embrace shared humanity and strive for equity.

## Credits:

**Composer** Johann Sebastian Bach

**Spoken Word** Gloria Steinem, Harvey Milk, Malala Yousafzai, Josephine Baker, Mother Mary Teresa Bojaxhiu

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

## Original Cast of Dance Artists

Amy Saunder, Emily Cardea, Lauren Treat, Claire Van Bever, Tevin Johnson, Christian Paris Blue, Jace Coronado, David Hochberg, Ethan Huffman



# In C

runtime 20min 45sec

**About:** "In C," an entrancing ballet, draws inspiration from Terry Riley's groundbreaking composition. Riley's minimalist masterpiece, composed in 1964, forms the foundation of this captivating performance. Comprising 53 modular fragments, the composition interlaces in evolving patterns. McEwen brilliantly translates Riley's essence into dance, capturing it through layered backdrops mirroring musical phrases. The ballet incorporates the pulsating force of the constant C note, reflecting life's transient nature. It merges allegro with pedestrian motion, creating a dynamic performance. Hochman of Critical Dance hails it as "ceaselessly interesting," praising execution by the eight-member ensemble. Light and shadow add visual allure, reflecting and illuminating music. "In C" blends Riley's composition with McEwen's choreography, celebrating minimalism's spirit, uniting dance and music. The ballet offers a transcendent journey, epitomizing experimentation and creativity, etching a lasting impression of beauty and innovation.

## Credits:

**Composer** Terry C. Reiley

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

## Original Cast of Dance Artists

Amy Saunder, Emily Cardeai, Lauren Treat, Claire Van Bever, Tevin Johnson, Brian Gephart, Jace Coronado, David Hochberg



# On The Waterfront

runtime 19min

**About:** "On The Waterfront," a profound ballet, pays tribute to Leonard Bernstein on his centenary birth. The evocative score, initially composed for the 1954 film, resonates with haunting beauty. Choreographer Morgan McEwen's vision is ignited by Bernstein's struggle to meld music with scenes. The work deftly transcends these challenges, unifying dance and music in a harmonious expression of human depth. The ballet exemplifies the transformative synergy between dance and music. McEwen's choreography unveils their intrinsic connection, celebrating Bernstein's legacy while forging new creative paths. Through this interpretation, "On The Waterfront" becomes a vibrant narrative, revitalizing Bernstein's score. This ballet is a testament to collaboration, illustrating the profound resonance achieved when two art forms unite in a shared vision of artistic innovation.

## Credits:

**Composer** Leonard Bernstein

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

## Original Cast of Dance Artists

Amy Saunder, Courtney Catalana, Ayaka Kamei, Xiaoxiao Cao, Rachel Thalman, Josh Beaver, Michael Holden, Daniel Powers, Nicholas Rose



# Depths Entangled

runtime 20min

**About:** In 2014, McEwen choreographed "Depths Entangled" for a six-dancer cast, later reimaged in 2018 for nine dancers. The piece artfully explores the intricate tapestry of human relationships. Through graceful movements, it delves into the connections we cultivate, intertwining emotions, thoughts, and personal growth. This ballet transcends conventional bonds, encompassing roles like student, teacher, neighbor, and stranger. With each step, "Depths Entangled" reveals the nuanced interplay of human connections. It serves as a poignant testament to relationships' impact on our lives, etching memories on our hearts and minds. Embark on a captivating journey through the intricacies of human experience, conveyed beautifully through the artistry of "Depths Entangled."

## Credits:

**Composer** Venetian Snares

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

## Original Cast of Dance Artists

Amy Saunder, Courtney Catalana, Ayaka Kamei, Xiaoxiao Cao, Rachel Thalman, Josh Beaver, Michael Holden, Daniel Powers, Nicholas Rose



# Fats Waller's Rhythm

runtime 44min no intermission  
*available in shorter movements*

## **About: POSSIBLE IN FULL EVENING LENGTH WORK OR SHORT MOVEMENTS**

"Fats Waller's Rhythm" is an exuberant ballet that pays homage to the legendary jazz pianist and composer, Fats Waller. Set to Waller's vibrant melodies, this work brilliantly captures the essence of the swing era, infusing it with contemporary flair. The dancers' infectious energy bring Waller's timeless tunes to life, creating a captivating fusion of movement and music. With choreography that effortlessly channels the rhythms of jazz, "Fats Waller's Rhythm" transports the audience to the vibrant world of the Harlem Renaissance. The ballet embodies the spirit of Waller's music, evoking the carefree and dynamic atmosphere of that era. This ballet is a jubilant celebration of jazz, dance, and cultural history, ensuring a toe-tapping, soul-stirring experience for all who witness it.

## **Credits:**

**Composer** Fats Waller

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

## **Original Cast of Dance Artists**

Amy Saunder, Ayaka Kamei, Kately Somers, Rachel Thalman, Daniel Powers, Ahmud Culver, Jose Carlos Losada, Kfir Danelli



# Encounters

runtime 14min 30sec

**About:** "Encounters" delves into intricate connections and life's contrast with death. Collaborating with composer Polina Nazaykinskaya and pianist Konstantin Soukhovetski, McEwen intertwines movement, music, and emotion seamlessly. "Encounters" sprouted from envisioning pianist Soukhovetski as an active choreographic participant. McEwen's personal experiences—loss of her grandmother and motherhood anticipation—fuels exploration of connections spanning life and beyond. The ballet captures this ethereal bridge, enriched by collaboration's fluidity. Nazaykinskaya's score harmonizes with McEwen's choreography, while Soukhovetski's piano elevates the piece's virtuosity. The work fuses dancers and music beyond norms, emphasizing inseparable bonds through shared breaths. "Encounters" intertwines movement, music, and human connection, inviting contemplation of intersections. The ballet showcases collaboration's transformative potential, merging movement and music harmoniously.

## Credits:

**Composer** Polina Nazaykinskaya

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

### Original Cast of Dance Artists

Amy Saunder, Emily Cardea, Lauren Treat, Claire Van Bever, Christian Paris Blue, Jace Coronado, David Hochberg, Ethan Huffman



# Stabat Mater

runtime 25min

**About:** "Stabat Mater," dives into the universal realm of grief, loss, and communal suffering with profound depth and emotion. Drawing inspiration from the 13th-century hymn and accompanied by Arvo Pärt's haunting score, this work is crafted with meticulous choreography, lighting, and stage design. "Stabat Mater" envelopes the audience in a mesmerizing visual tapestry. Evolving lights and elevated structures craft ethereal silhouettes and fleeting movements, guiding viewers through a poignant odyssey. As the world grapples with ongoing challenges, "Stabat Mater" arrives with poignant relevance. In times of crisis, art becomes a compass through complex emotions. Through dance, this piece revitalizes the timeless hymn, offering contemplation on navigating grief and discovering solace amidst bleakness.

## Credits:

**Composer** Arvo Pärt

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

## Original Cast of Dance Artists

Amy Saunder, Courtney Catalana, Ayaka Kamei, Xiaoxiao Cao, Rachel Thalman, Josh Beaver, Michael Holden, Daniel Powers, Nicholas Rose



# R+J Reimagined

runtime 2hrs no intermission

## About: FULL EVENING LENGTH WORK

"R+J Reimagined" takes Shakespeare's timeless tragedy to innovative heights. Through dynamic choreography and contemporary twists, the production revitalizes the classic tale of star-crossed lovers. Dancers breathe fresh life into iconic characters, infusing the narrative with emotional depth and modern relevance. The fusion of traditional and contemporary dance styles, coupled with a captivating soundtrack, offers a unique experience that bridges the gap between centuries. This reimagining captures the essence of love, conflict, and destiny in a way that resonates with today's audiences, making "Romeo and Juliet Reimagined" a compelling journey through the enduring power of love.

## Credits:

**Composer** Ben Galina

**Lighting Design** Becky McCarthy

**Choreographer** Morgan McEwen

## Original Cast of Dance Artists

Amy Saunder, Courtney Catalan, Mary Kate Reynolds, Kennedy Rose, Julia Lipari, Jonatan Lujan, Hector Cerna, Joshua Bever, Josep Maria Monreal, Leo McGrath