

SGT. PEPPER AT 50

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

PEPPERLAND

Notes on the Score by Ethan Iverson

It Was Fifty Years Ago Today

1. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. The original album ended with an unprecedented effect, a very long chord. Fifty years later, perhaps a similar chord is good place to begin...

2. Magna Carta. A formal invocation of personalities from the LP cover.

3. With a Little Help From my Friends. When Ringo sang it, he was on top of the world. Our version is more vulnerable.

4. Adagio. In the age of Tinder, a Lonely Heart advertisement might seem hopelessly quaint. But everyone has always needed to find a match.

5. When I'm Sixty Four. In between 6 and 4 is 5. All three (counts to the bar) are heard beneath the music-hall scuffle.

6. Allegro. A single offhand line of trombone from "Sgt. Pepper" germinates into a full-fledged sonata form.

7. Within You Without You. George Harrison's sincere study of Indian music aligns easily with another Harrison interested in bringing the East to the West: the great composer Lou Harrison, one of Mark Morris's most significant collaborators. The hippie-era sentiment of the lyric remains startlingly fresh and relevant today.

8. Scherzo. Glenn Gould said he preferred Petula Clark to the Beatles. Apparently Gould, Clark, and a chord progression from "Sgt. Pepper" all seem to have inspired this mod number.

9. Wilbur Scoville. The first thing we hear on the LP is a guitar blues lick, here transformed into a real blues for the horns to blow on. Wilbur Scoville invented the scale to measure heat in hot sauce: The original Sergeant Pepper?

10. Cadenza. After seeing Bach's Brandenburg 2 on the telly, Paul McCartney came into the studio and told George Martin to add piccolo trumpet to "Penny Lane." Indeed, detailed references to European classical music are one reason so many Beatles songs still stump the average cover band.

11. Penny Lane. Not on Sgt. Pepper, but nonetheless originally planned to be, and of course especially relevant to the city of Liverpool.

12. A Day In the Life. Theremin nocturne, vocal descant, apotheosis.

13. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. Another unprecedented effect on original LP was a reprise of the first theme, which is part of why it is called the first "concept album." Our later vantage point enables us to project into the next decade, the 70s, and conjure a disco ball. Thank you, Beatles! Thank you, Sgt. Pepper!



Mark Morris and Ethan Iverson. Photo by Beowulf Sheehan.

Investing in Dance: The Support That Makes *Pepperland* Possible

by Ryan Wenzel

It takes a long time to bring a work like Mark Morris' *Pepperland* to the stage. The steps are many: composing and arranging the music, choreographing the movement, rehearsing the dancers and musicians, designing the decor, lighting, and sound. Seldom mentioned is the funding required to set it all in motion.

Dance companies often rely on support from foundations and individual donors to fund new works, and only after the premiere convince presenters to schedule performances. Mark Morris Dance Group, however, has developed a model that is unusual in the dance world, whereby multiple arts institutions join together to commission a piece—often years before it will reach their stages.

This approach began with *Mozart Dances* (2006), a three-way commission, and grew over time with *Romeo and Juliet* (2008), *Acis and Galatea* (2014), and *Layla and Majnun* (2016). It reaches unprecedented scale with *Pepperland*, which received advance funding from no fewer than thirteen institutions. Seven are longtime commissioners of Morris' work, and six are newcomers. They span the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom; are based in towns, cities, and on university campuses; and include both non-profit and for-profit entities.

"The support provided by these institutions sustains us, and shows their unique understanding of the hidden costs involved with creating dance works of this size," says Nancy Umanoff, executive director of Mark Morris Dance Group.

This funding model serves the commissioning partners well, too, and is based largely on Morris' importance and the trust they have in his work. "Like all arts organizations, we need to be careful about how we marshal our resources. But the excellence that Mark represents is at the heart of what we do, so we support it wholeheartedly," says Matias Tarnopolsky, director of Cal Performances at the University of California, Berkeley, which has worked with Morris and his dancers for three decades.

Mike Ross, director of the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, echoes Tarnopolsky and adds that the Dance Group's offstage outreach has also been crucial in furthering their close-knit relationship. "In addition to annual performances, they have brought workshops and other activities to our campus, and to the local population at large," says Ross. "Because they have become part of our community, it is easy for us to support them and their work on this level."

A separate community—one with a reputation for supporting superior new work—has coalesced around the commissioning organizations themselves, enticing others to join. *Pepperland* marks the Banff Centre's first commission of a Morris work, yet there are no plans for the piece to be performed on its stages in Alberta, Canada; it will instead, by arrangement with the Banff Centre, play at the Sony Centre in Toronto, more than 2,000 miles away. "We wanted to support Mark and his company, of course, but also for audiences to know that we support work of this caliber alongside other great organizations," says Janice Price, the Banff Centre's president. "It is incredibly rewarding to be seen as part of the ecosystem that makes this happen."

And if history is any indication, that ecosystem will only continue to strengthen and grow.

Ryan Wenzel is a New York-based writer and editor.