

# HARRIS THEATER PRESENTS TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## Mark Morris Dance Group Silkroad Ensemble *Layla and Majnun*

MARCH 16 & 17, 2018

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The presentation of Mark Morris Dance Group was made possible by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

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## MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

Mica Bernas, Sam Black, Durell R. Comedy, Rita Donahue,  
Domingo Estrada, Jr., Lesley Garrison, Lauren Grant, Sarah Haarmann,  
Brian Lawson, Aaron Loux, Laurel Lynch, Dallas McMurray,  
Brandon Randolph, Nicole Sabella, Christina Sahaida\*,  
Billy Smith, Noah Vinson  
\*apprentice

*Artistic Director*  
Mark Morris

*Executive Director*  
Nancy Umanoff  
with

## SILKROAD ENSEMBLE

*Featuring*  
Alim Qasimov  
Fargana Qasimova

*Layla and Majnun* is made possible, in part, through the MMDG New Works Fund with support from the Friends of MMDG, The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, the Howard Gilman Foundation, Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, Elizabeth Liebman, a special grant from The Henry Luce Foundation, PARC Foundation, Poss Family Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and The Trust for Mutual Understanding.

Funding has also been provided by the New England Foundation for the Arts' National Dance Project, with lead funding from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts.

*Layla and Majnun* is a Mark Morris Dance Group/Cal Performances, UC Berkeley, California production in association with; Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, College of Fine + Applied Arts, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; Harris Theater for Music and Dance, Chicago, Illinois; Hopkins Center for the Arts, Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire; The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Washington, D.C.; Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, New York, New York; Meany Center for the Performing Arts, Seattle, Washington; Melbourne Festival, Victoria, Australia; Sadler's Wells, London, England; and University Musical Society of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN PROGRAM

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## Medley of Azerbaijani Music: Bayati Shiraz\*

Kamila Nabiyeva, mugham vocals  
Miralam Miralamov, mugham vocals  
Rauf Islamov, kamancheh  
Zaki Valiyev, tar

## *Layla and Majnun*

Music by Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885-1948),  
arranged by Alim Qasimov, Johnny Gandelman, Colin Jacobsen

*Sung in Azerbaijani with English supertitles*

Choreography and Direction: Mark Morris  
Scenic and Costume Design: Howard Hodgkin  
Lighting Design: James F. Ingalls  
Set realized by: Johan Henckens  
Costumes realized by: Maile Okamura

## Cast

Layla: Fargana Qasimova, mugham vocals  
Majnun: Alim Qasimov, mugham vocals  
Rauf Islamov, *kamancheh*; Zaki Valiyev, *tar*; Evan Ziporyn, *clarinet*;  
Jin Yang, *pipa*; Joseph Gramley, *percussion*; Georgy Valtchev, *violin*;  
Xiaofan Liu, *violin*; Mario Gotoh, *viola*; Karen Ouzounian, *cello*;  
Shawn Conley, *bass*

## \*Medley of Azerbaijani Music: Bayati Shiraz

All pieces in this medley are based on the melodic patterns of Bayati Shiraz, which is one of the major mughams of Azerbaijani music. The composition proceeds from the melancholic and sad music expressions toward upbeat and playful closing piece; such development is highly typical for Azerbaijani traditional music. The medley opens with the famous Azerbaijani folk song, "I have watered the street" which is about the girl who is waiting for her beloved and wishing that they never be separated.

The second part of this composition features the actual mugham Bayati Shiraz where both singers and instrumentalists demonstrate their ability to improvise. The song "You have been apart from me" is a closing part of the medley. Alibaba Mammadov (b. 1929), Azerbaijani mugham singer composed this song following all the rules and stylistic features of the traditional songs known as *tasnifs*.

*Tasnif* is a romance-like lyrical song that is usually performed within mugham composition. This medley, therefore, features three vocal genres of traditional music of Azerbaijan, such as mugham, and folk song and *tasnif*.

*This program is approximately one hour with no intermission.*

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

## PROGRAM cont.

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### Act I. Love and Separation

Layla: Mica Bernas                      Majnun: Dallas McMurray

Sam Black, Lesley Garrison, Lauren Grant, Sarah Haarmann,  
Brian Lawson, Aaron Loux, Laurel Lynch, Christina Sahaida,  
Billy Smith, Noah Vinson

### Act II. The Parents' Disapproval

Layla: Nicole Sabella                      Majnun: Domingo Estrada, Jr.

Layla's Parents: Lauren Grant, Noah Vinson  
Majnun's Parents: Christina Sahaida, Billy Smith

Mica Bernas, Sam Black, Lesley Garrison, Brian Lawson,  
Dallas McMurray, Brandon Randolph

### Act III. Sorrow and Despair

Layla: Laurel Lynch                      Majnun: Aaron Loux

Mica Bernas, Domingo Estrada, Jr., Lauren Grant, Sarah Haarmann,  
Brian Lawson, Dallas McMurray, Nicole Sabella, Christina Sahaida,  
Billy Smith, Noah Vinson

### Act IV. Layla's Unwanted Wedding

Layla: Lesley Garrison                      Majnun: Sam Black  
The Husband: Durell R. Comedy  
Layla's Parents: Lauren Grant, Noah Vinson

Domingo Estrada, Jr., Sarah Haarmann, Aaron Loux, Nicole Sabella,  
Christina Sahaida, Billy Smith

### Act V. The Lovers' Demise

Layla: Mica Bernas, Nicole Sabella, Laurel Lynch, Lesley Garrison  
Majnun: Dallas McMurray, Domingo Estrada, Jr., Aaron Loux, Sam Black  
Layla's Parents: Lauren Grant, Noah Vinson  
Majnun's Parents: Christina Sahaida, Billy Smith

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

## PROGRAM NOTES

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### *The Idealization of Love*

by Wali Ahmadi

Department of Near Eastern Studies, University of California, Berkeley.

From my early youth I have been intrigued by the love story of Majnun and Layla (or Laili, in most Persian renderings), two young lovers from Bedouin Arabia. I remember very well that, during long, cold winter nights in Kabul, in the 1970s, my mother would tell us the remarkable story of these two lovers, their intense, splendid romance, and their endless plights leading to their heartrending deaths. It was then that I learned of an epic Indian movie based on the story that purportedly brought the audience to tears.

Years later, as a student of literature, I read the Persian romance of *Laili and Majnun* by Nezami Ganjawi (1140-1209 CE) and then came across several reworkings of this amazing romance. The story clearly draws from brief, disjointed oral anecdotes reported in earlier Arabic sources. It was Nezami who superbly worked through the scant materials in his possession, developed a more complex plot, intensified the characterization, and composed a much more multilayered story, in the *masnawi* (rhyming couplet) form, to be incorporated, along with four other long narratives, into his monumental quintet (*Khamsa*).

In brief, Qays Ibn al-Mulawwah of the Banu 'Amir tribe falls in love with his classmate Layla bint Sa'd. As the two grow older, the intensity of their love increases. Although Layla, too, is truly smitten by love, it is Qays who publicly and unreservedly pronounces his obsessive passion in elegiac lyrics, thus earning the epithet Majnun (literally, "possessed" or "mad"). Majnun's incessant poetic expression of Layla's beauty and his astonishingly outrageous public conduct alarm Layla's parents. Concerned about their daughter's reputation as well as the honor and standing of the tribe, her parents ensure that the lovers are kept apart. When Qays's father asks for Layla's hand in marriage to his beloved (but universally seen as deranged) son, Layla's family flatly refuses the proposal, a response that seems harsh but, in the light of Majnun's scandalous conduct, not necessarily unreasonable. As Majnun continues wandering aimlessly through the desert, bonding with wild beasts, living an ascetic life, and composing verses about his obsession with Layla, his father lures him into visiting the holiest of Muslim sites, the Ka'ba, in the hope of curing him of his obsessive love. There, Majnun pleads to Allah to make him "a hundred-fold" more "possessed" in his love for Layla.

In the meantime, Layla's father gives her in marriage, against her will, to an affluent, but shallow, man named Ibn Salam. The marriage never consummates as Layla insists on preserving her chastity. She remains faithful to her true love, Majnun, until Ibn Salam dies of rejection, disillusionment, and grief.

A number of times, Majnun is offered the chance to visit his beloved, to speak with her in person. Towards the end of the story, when Layla, through the intermediation of a young, faithful devotee of Majnun, appears to him, he still refuses to have physical (or sexual) contact with her. Majnun strives to realize "perfect love" in Layla, a love that transcends sensual contact with the beloved, a love that is free from selfish intentions, lust, and earthly desires. Precisely for this reason,

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN PROGRAM NOTES cont.

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many commentators have interpreted Nezami's *Laili and Majnun* as a Sufi (Islamic mystical) allegorical narrative, where the lover seeks ultimate union with, as well as annihilation in, the Beloved (i.e. the Divine or the Truth). Majnun's harsh life in the desert, then, has been compared to the ascetic life of Muslim mystics who rejected earthly pleasures and renounced worldly affinities. Accordingly, his excessive devotion to Layla represents his unique and steadfast devotion to Ideal Love, the Divine—which explains why, in spite of his incessant yearning for his beloved Layla, he is incapable of physical intimacy with her. It is with the idealized image of the beloved—in the person of Layla—that Majnun is infatuated. When Layla falls mortally ill and passes away, Majnun, too, loses his one and only purpose in life, his sole means towards the realization of True Love. When he learns about the death of his beloved, he at once seeks her gravesite. Weeping and moaning, he presses himself against her gravestone and breaths his final gasps, and dies. The lovers ultimately unite, but only in death.

Nezami's romance of *Laili and Majnun* is a multilayered, complex text, which makes it open to contrasting, and perhaps contradictory, readings. While a Sufi (mystical) reading of it is plausible, one can justifiably read it as a conventional, yet immensely rich and enthralling, love-story. Despite the abundance of mystical motifs and metaphors, the profane dimensions of the poem cannot be overlooked.

Nezami's unparalleled narrative proved considerably influential during the subsequent centuries. While allusions and references to Layla and Majnun can be readily found in *divans* (collections) of poets before Nezami's time, his version led several noted poets, in a host of languages, to compose original texts modeled after Nezami's work. In Persian alone, one should mention Amir Khusraw Dehlawi's masterpiece *Majnun and Laili* (completed c. 1299) and 'Abd al-Rahman Jami's *Laili and Majnun* (composed c. 1485). Other notable renderings of the story are by Maktabi Shirazi, Hatefi, and, more notably, Fuzuli. The latter became considerably influential in Ottoman Turkey. The romance of Layla and Majnun has been made into several popular films and movies in Hindi, Turkish, Arabic, and Persian.

*Wali Ahmadi is an associate professor of Persian literature at the University of California, Berkeley. His publications include Modern Persian Literature in Afghanistan: Anomalous Visions of History and Form (2008) and Converging Zones: Persian Literary Tradition and the Writing of History (2012). He is currently working on the cultural politics of modern Persian poetics and aesthetics.*

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

## MUSIC NOTES

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### *Into the Divine*

The Music of *Layla and Majnun*

by Aida Huseynova

Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

At the age of 23, the composer Uzeyir Hajibeyli (1885–1948) put Azerbaijan—and himself—on the map of music history with his *Leyli and Majnun*. This opera was the first piece of composed music created in Azerbaijan, premiering in 1908 in Baku (then part of the Russian Empire, now the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan). Azerbaijanis have revered their first national composer and his work ever since. For decades, every season at the Azerbaijan State Opera and Ballet Theater has opened with *Leyli and Majnun*. Each Azerbaijani singer appreciates the honor and responsibility of participating in these productions, and audiences throughout the country enjoy broadcasts of the performances.

Nearly a century after the Baku premiere, Hajibeyli's opera found a new life half a world away thanks to the Silkroad Ensemble under the artistic direction of Yo-Yo Ma. In 2007, the group created a chamber arrangement of Hajibeyli's work that was entitled *Layla and Majnun*, following the pronunciation of the heroine's name in Arabic culture, in which this ancient legend had originated. From 2007 to 2009, the arrangement was a highlight of the ensemble's repertoire, delighting large audiences around the world.

The rich multicultural potential of Hajibeyli's opera perfectly resonates with Silkroad, the cultural organization Yo-Yo Ma founded to house the Silkroad Ensemble. Silkroad envisions music as a global phenomenon, with musical forms, genres, and styles serving as bridges across time and between cultures. Azerbaijani opera offers many possibilities for such musical and cultural synthesis. In *Leyli and Majnun*, Hajibeyli combined Western opera with two artistic treasures of Central Asia and the Middle East: the story of Layla and Majnun and the genre of *mugham*.

The ill-fated lovers Layla and Majnun are often compared to Romeo and Juliet, although their story in oral tradition predates Shakespeare's play by more than a thousand years. Layla and Majnun have been celebrated in tales by Turks, Arabs, Persians, Indians, Pakistanis, and Afghans. Known in many poetic renditions, their story also has inspired works of visual art, literature, cinema, and music. It is not accidental that Hajibeyli chose the poetic setting of the Azerbaijani poet and philosopher Muhammad Fuzuli (1483–1556). Written in the Azerbaijani language, Fuzuli's work is one of the most famous versions of this ancient legend.

Musical interpretations of the legend of Layla and Majnun appear in diverse genres and national traditions, attesting to the tale's enduring popularity. Hajibeyli's opera—the first piece of composed music to set this ancient story—was based on *mugham*, the quintessential genre of traditional Azerbaijani music. *Mugham* is a branch of the large *maqam* tradition cultivated in the Middle East and Central Asia. An improvised modal music, *mugham* historically has been performed by a *mugham* trio that consists of a singer playing *gaval* (frame drum) and two instrumentalists playing *tar* (lute) and *kamancheh* (spike fiddle). *Mugham* remains a precious part of the traditional music heritage of Azerbaijan. Since the early 20th century, *mugham* also has become the main source

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN MUSIC NOTES cont.

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of creative inspiration and experimentation for Azerbaijani composers. In 1977, Azerbaijani *mugham* was one of the 27 musical selections put in Voyagers I and II. Sent beyond our solar system, these American spacecraft carried this music as a testament to the emotional life of human beings. In 2003, UNESCO recognized Azerbaijani *mugham* as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Throughout its long history, the *mugham* genre has attracted many outstanding performers in Azerbaijan. Among them is Alim Qasimov, who occupies a unique and honorable place in Azerbaijan's national music history. Qasimov is revered as a National Treasure of Azerbaijan, and he also has enjoyed substantial acclaim abroad. In 1999, Qasimov won the IMC-UNESCO International Music Prize—a highly respected award that previously had been bestowed on Dmitri Shostakovich, Leonard Bernstein, Olivier Messiaen, Daniel Barenboim, Munir Bashir, and Ravi Shankar, among others. Qasimov possesses an in-depth knowledge of *mugham*. At the same time, he is renowned for his innovative approach to tradition and his openness to experimentation. This is why it is no surprise that Qasimov initiated the idea of a new embodiment of Hajibeyli's old "*mugham* opera."

Qasimov shared his vision with members of the Silkroad Ensemble and received a positive response. He was intimately familiar with Hajibeyli's *Leyli and Majnun*, as he had been involved in its productions in the Azerbaijan State Opera and Ballet Theater in the 1980s. For his Silkroad work, Qasimov selected the portions of Hajibeyli's score that focus on Majnun's solo and duet scenes with Layla, the heroine, whose role was performed by Fargana Qasimova, Qasimov's daughter and student, now a highly reputed *mugham* singer on her own. Qasimov also included choral and ensemble episodes, along with instrumental interludes. Based on these selections, Silkroad Ensemble members Johnny Gandelsman and Colin Jacobsen, both violinists, created a score.

In the interpretation of the Silkroad Ensemble, the story of Layla and Majnun is presented in a condensed version: the three-and-a-half-hour-long opera is compressed into an hour-long chamber piece. Hajibeyli's five acts are rearranged into six parts. These changes have resulted in a reordering and even an omission of many operatic episodes. Ultimately, the Silkroad Ensemble's alterations highlight the story's time-honored messages. The legend of Layla and Majnun has a strong Sufi component, with the love between a man and a woman being seen as a reflection of love for God. The death resulting from separation from one's beloved is a supreme fulfillment, as it takes the individual into the divine. In Hajibeyli's opera, this idea was conveyed through the chorus "Night of Separation," which opens and concludes the work. These episodes can be compared to the Chorus in Greek tragedies, which comments on events before they occur in the narrative. Reconstituting the Chorus as a cello solo, both at the beginning and at the end of the piece, is one of the new arrangement's most insightful interpretations: the lonely melody of the cello sounds as the voice of eternity.



## LAYLA AND MAJNUN MUSIC NOTES cont.

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The new arrangement of Hajibeyli's opera has created a different balance between Western and Eastern traits. In Hajibeyli's opera, these two components mostly are kept separate: the symphony orchestra plays all episodes of composed music and remains silent during the *mughams*. Only the *tar* and *kamancheh* accompany singers during *mugham* episodes. In the new version, however, the role of the ensemble—with *tar* and *kamancheh* included—is crucial throughout the entire piece, and both the improvised and written parts of the composition are firmly integrated.

*Layla and Majnun* is a constantly changing and developing project. Every performance is unique, and it is impossible to take a snapshot of this work. Yo-Yo Ma called this a “part of the thrill” and described the project as “perhaps the finest example of group intelligence at work” (*New York Times*, March 1, 2009). A reviewer of a performance by the Silkroad Ensemble noted, “*Layla and Majnun* was the apex of the program. Classical music making rarely achieves this combination of spontaneity and superb craftsmanship” (*Washington Post*, March 14, 2009).

Indeed, this composition is a result of collective effort and is imbued with the spirit of improvisation. Hajibeyli was aware of the large cultural span of his project, in terms of its musical and literary contents. However, Hajibeyli limited the cultural, aesthetic, and stylistic scope of the opera to the context of his native culture. In so doing, he reflected the social and cultural expectations of early 20th-century Azerbaijan as well as his own professional experience (or rather, its absence, as *Leyli and Majnun* was Hajibeyli's first work). The Silkroad Ensemble has expanded the cultural reach of Azerbaijani opera deep into the Middle East and Central Asia. No less importantly, they have increased the Western elements in Hajibeyli's score, creating a work of global East-West significance. The new musical arrangement of *Layla and Majnun* is a respectful and highly artistic transformation of Hajibeyli's *mugham* opera, now shaped by creative energies coming from diverse cultural, stylistic, and temporal sources.

*Aida Huseynova has a PhD in musicology and teaches at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Her publications include Music of Azerbaijan: From Mugham to Opera (Indiana University Press, 2016). Huseynova also serves as a research advisor for Silkroad under the artistic direction of Jeffrey Beecher, Nicholas Cords, and Shane Shanahan. Her numerous awards include an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant (2016) and a Fulbright scholarship (2007-08).*

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

## LIBRETTO

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Libretto by Uzeyir Hajibeyli (based on the poem by Muhammad Fuzuli)

Translation by Aida Huseynova and Isabelle Hunter

### 1. LOVE AND SEPARATION

**Majnun:**

My soul is on fire because we are apart  
I want to join my beloved  
My heart is heavy because I am alone  
I want to see my beloved  
I feel like a nightingale that cries in pain,  
trapped in a cage  
I want a flower garden.

**Layla:**

My heart has been breaking since I was overcome by love  
What kind of sorrow is this?  
I do not have the strength to describe the sorrow in my heart  
I cannot bear being apart from you

**Majnun:**

Seeing your face — as lovely as the sun — has made me weak  
I cannot be still  
My only wish is to perish in the world of love  
I thank God that my wish is granted  
I have no more desire

**Layla:**

My true love knows my heart is breaking  
He knows what sadness lives in my heart  
There is no need for me to explain my grief  
He knows every sliver of sorrow in my heart

**Majnun:** Yes, I know

**Layla:** Yes, he knows

**Majnun:** Yes, I know

**Layla and Majnun:**

Your movements tantalize me  
Your smile — like a flower — makes me weep  
Your sweet scent renders me motionless  
Your tousled hair drives me mad

### 2. THE PARENTS' DISAPPROVAL

**Both:**

You fell in love, desperately in love  
And your love is mixed with sadness and grief

**Majnun:**

Father and Mother — my soul, my spirit  
Father and Mother — my heart  
How could I know that falling in love with Layla  
would turn out this way?  
What could I say, what could I do?  
I cannot control this love

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

## LIBRETTO cont.

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I'm powerless – I have no strength  
I can only worship this one idol  
until the very end of my life

**Layla:**

Mother, Father – it's not my fault that I went to school  
I've never done anything to disobey you  
I swear this was not my intention  
I just wanted to be a carefree schoolgirl  
Don't say any more  
Have mercy and stop tormenting me

**Majnun:**

Father, Mother, my love will drive me mad.

### 3. SORROW AND DESPAIR

**Majnun:**

Dear God, let me be at peace with my troubles  
Let me feel the despair of my love  
Have mercy on me in my grief  
Let me feel even more despair for my love

**Layla:**

Your eyes are closed, your heart is broken  
Your mind tortured, and your legs are bound  
You are burning from head to toe  
And your heart smolders

**Majnun:**

I yearn to feel this sorrow as long as I live  
I need this sorrow because this sorrow needs me  
I will not surrender  
I will not be called unfaithful

**Layla:**

I am as faithful as you are  
Maybe even more so  
You are on fire only at night  
While I am on fire night and day

**Both:**

Like Fuzuli, I am inspired. Please, God, let me be.

### 4. LAYLA'S UNWANTED WEDDING

**Majnun:**

Why are you in the garden with a stranger  
Enjoying yourself, bestowing favors on him?  
How could you break your word?  
Did you forget about our vows? How cruel!

**Layla:**

No, no, my soul mate, please listen to me  
If this were up to me I would never want anyone but you  
Fate has dealt me a cruel blow  
I don't know how this happened

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

## LIBRETTO cont.

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**Majnun:**

What did I do to make you turn away from me?  
How could you choose a stranger to share your grief and happiness?  
Is this what you call love?  
You are cruel! You broke our vows!

**Layla:**

God, what torture! What agony!  
I was burning with love for you. Now I know the torture of being apart.

**Majnun:**

So this is your loyalty, Layla?  
Can someone who is unfaithful be loved?

### 5. THE LOVERS' DEMISE

**Layla:**

The wheel of fate has not turned the way I wanted  
It has not cured the pain of separation  
My beloved gave me so much pain  
My heart is filled with suffering that has no remedy  
My beloved promised to love me forever,  
But he forgot about his vows and about our love.

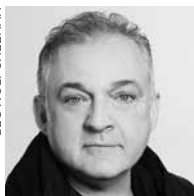
**Majnun:**

True love means sacrificing one's life for his beloved  
A soul that has not been given to a beloved is a wasted soul  
Lovers want to be together  
But separation brings them joy forever.

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES

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BEOWULF SHEEHAN



**MARK MORRIS** was born on August 29, 1956, in Seattle, Washington, where he studied with Verla Flowers and Perry Brunson. In the early years of his career, he performed with the companies of Lar Lubovitch, Hannah Kahn, Laura Dean, Eliot Feld, and the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. He formed the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) in 1980, and has since created over 150 works for the company. From 1988 to 1991, he was Director of Dance at Brussels' Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, the national opera house of Belgium. In 1990, he founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Much in demand as a ballet choreographer, Morris has created 22 ballets since 1986 and his work has been performed by companies worldwide, including San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève, and the Royal New Zealand Ballet. Noted for his musicality, Morris has been described as "undeviating in his devotion to music" (*The New Yorker*). He began conducting performances for MMDG in 2006 and has since conducted at Tanglewood Music Center, Lincoln Center, and BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music). He served as Music Director for the 2013 Ojai Music Festival. He also works extensively in opera, directing and choreographing productions for the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, English National Opera, and The Royal Opera, Covent Garden, among others. He was named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation in 1991 and has received eleven honorary doctorates to date. He has taught at the University of Washington, Princeton University, and Tanglewood Music Center. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the American Philosophical Society, and has served as an Advisory Board Member for the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. Morris has received the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement, the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society, the Benjamin Franklin Laureate Prize for Creativity, the International Society for the Performing Arts' Distinguished Artist Award, Cal Performances Award of Distinction in the Performing Arts, the Orchestra of St. Luke's Gift of Music Award, and the 2016 Doris Duke Artist Award. In 2015, Mark Morris was inducted into the Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Dance in Saratoga Springs, New York. Morris opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, New York, in 2001 to provide a home for his company, rehearsal space for the dance community, outreach programs for children and seniors, and a school offering dance classes to students of all ages and abilities.

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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The **MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP** was formed in 1980 and gave its first performance that year in New York City. The company's touring schedule steadily expanded to include cities in the United States and around the world, and in 1986 it made its first national television program for the PBS series *Dance in America*. In 1988, MMDG was invited to become the national dance company of Belgium, and spent three years in residence at the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie in Brussels. The Dance Group returned to the United States in 1991 as one of the world's leading dance companies. Based in Brooklyn, New York, MMDG maintains strong ties to presenters in several cities around the world, most notably to its West Coast home, Cal Performances in Berkeley, California, and its Midwest home, the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. MMDG also appears regularly in New York, Boston, Seattle, and Fairfax. In New York, the company has performed at New York City Center's Fall for Dance Festival, regularly performs at Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts' Mostly Mozart and White Light Festivals, and collaborates yearly with BAM on performances and master classes. From the company's many London seasons, it has received two Laurence Olivier Awards and a Critics' Circle Dance Award for Best Foreign Dance Company. Reflecting Morris's commitment to live music, the Dance Group has featured live musicians in every performance since the formation of the MMDG Music Ensemble in 1996. MMDG regularly collaborates with renowned musicians, including cellist Yo-Yo Ma, pianist Emanuel Ax, mezzo-soprano Stephanie Blythe, and jazz trio The Bad Plus, as well as leading orchestras and opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera, English National Opera, and the London Symphony Orchestra. MMDG frequently works with distinguished artists and designers, including painters Robert Bordo and the late Howard Hodgkin, set designers Adrienne Lobel and Allen Moyer, costume designers Martin Pakledinaz and Isaac Mizrahi, and many others. MMDG's film and television projects include *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, *Falling Down Stairs*, two documentaries for the U.K.'s *South Bank Show*, and PBS's *Live from Lincoln Center*. In 2015 Morris's signature work *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* had its national television premiere on PBS's *Great Performances*. While on tour the Dance Group partners with local cultural institutions and community organizations to present Access/MMDG, a program of arts and humanities-based activities for people of all ages and abilities.

The **SILKROAD ENSEMBLE** was founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 1998 to create music that engages difference. Silkroad artists represent dozens of artistic traditions and countries, from Spain and Japan to Syria and the United States.

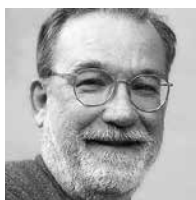
The Grammy Award-winning Ensemble is a musical collective that appears in many configurations and settings, from intimate groups of two and three in museum galleries to rousing complements of 18 in concert halls, public squares, and amphitheatres. Silkroad musicians are also teachers, producers, and advocates. Off the stage, they lead professional development and musician training workshops, create residency programs in schools, museums, and communities of all sizes, and experiment with new media and genres to share Silkroad's model of radical cultural collaboration and spark passion-driven learning. Learn more at [silkroad.org](http://silkroad.org).

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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**HOWARD HODGKIN** (set and costume design) was born in London in 1932 and evacuated during the war to the United States, where he lived on Long Island from 1940 to 1943. He studied at the Camberwell School of Art and the Bath Academy of Art, Corsham. In 1984, he represented Britain at the Venice Biennale and won the Turner Prize the following year. He was knighted in 1992 and made a Companion of Honour in 2003. An exhibition of his *Paintings 1975-1995*, organized by the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, opened in 1995 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and toured to museums in Fort Worth and Düsseldorf, and to London's Hayward Gallery. A retrospective opened at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, in Spring 2006. It traveled to London's Tate Britain and then to the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid. Hodgkin first worked in the theater in 1981, when he designed the set and costumes for Richard Alston's *Night Music* with the Ballet Rambert. They later collaborated on *Pulcinella*, which was filmed by the BBC and released on DVD. For the Mark Morris Dance Group, Hodgkin designed the sets for *Rhymes with Silver* (1997), *Kolam* (2002), and *Mozart Dances* (2006). He is represented by Gagosian Gallery and has shown with them in New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Rome and London. He was passionate about India and Indian art for most of his life. Toronto's Aga Khan Museum exhibited Hodgkin's own paintings "Inspired by India" along with Indian miniatures from his collection in 2015. "After All", an exhibition of prints, opened the Alan Cristea Gallery in Pall Mall, London in October 2016. Hodgkin died March 9, 2017 in London, England.



**JAMES F. INGALLS** (lighting design) has designed several pieces for Mark Morris including *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Metropolitan Opera); *King Arthur* (English National Opera); *Sylvia*, *Sandpaper Ballet*, *Maelstrom*, and *Pacific* (San Francisco Ballet); *Platée* (Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and New York City Opera); *Mozart Dances*, *Romeo and Juliet: On Motifs of Shakespeare*, *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, and *Dido and Aeneas* (MMDG). Recent designs for dance include *The Nutcracker* (Pacific Northwest Ballet/Seattle), Twyla Tharp's 50th Anniversary Tour (US and NY State Theatre), *The Sleeping Beauty*, choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky (Teatro alla Scala Ballet and ABT), *Celts*, choreographed by Lila York (Boston Ballet), *Sea Lark* and *Death and the Maiden* (Paul Taylor Dance Company). Recent theatre work includes *Desdemona*, directed by Peter Sellars (UCLA/CAP, Melbourne and Sydney Festivals), *Druid Shakespeare*, directed by Garry Hynes (Galway, Irish tour and Lincoln Center Festival). He often collaborates with Melanie Rios Glaser and The Wooden Floor dancers in Santa Ana, California.



**MAILE OKAMURA** (costume realization) studied primarily with Lynda Yourth at the American Ballet School in San Diego, California. She was a member of Boston Ballet II and Ballet Arizona before moving to New York to study modern dance. Okamura performed with MMDG from 1998-2015. She has also had the pleasure of working with choreographers Neta Pulvermacher, Zvi Gotheiner, Gerald Casel, and John Heginbotham, with whom she frequently collaborates as dancer and costume designer. Okamura has also designed costumes for three Mark Morris works to date— *Words* and *A Forest* for MMDG and *The Letter V* for Houston Ballet. Okamura and her husband, Colin Jacobsen, are the proud parents of Mimi Hanako, born in 2015.

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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**JOHAN HENCKENS** (set realization) became the Director of Technical Production of the Mark Morris Dance Group in 1989, during the company's three-year residency at the Koninklijke Muntscouwburg in Brussels, Belgium.



**JOHNNY GANDELSMAN** (musical arrangement) is the son of a musical family from Moscow, by way of Israel, whose musical voice reflects the artistic collaborations he has been a part of since moving to the United States in 1995. Through his work with such artists as Yo-Yo Ma, Bono, Osvaldo Golijov, David Byrne, Bela Fleck, Kayhan Kalhor, Suzanne Vega, James Levine, Mark

Morris, Alim Qasimov and Fargana Qasimova, Nigel Kennedy and Martin Hayes, Gandelman has been able to integrate a wide range of creative sensibilities into his own point of view. Combining his classical training with a desire to reach beyond the boundaries of the concert hall, and a voracious interest in the music of our times, Gandelman developed a unique style amongst today's violinists, one that according to the *Boston Globe*, possesses "a balletic lightness of touch and a sense of whimsy and imagination." A passionate advocate for new music, Gandelman has premiered dozens of works written for Brooklyn Rider and Silkroad Ensemble. In 2012-2013, he premiered works by Lev "Ljova" Zhurbin, Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky, Vijay Iyer, Bela Fleck, Daniel Cords, Rubin Kodheli, Dana Lyn, Gabriel Kahane, Colin Jacobsen, Shara Worden, John Zorn, Christina Courtin, Ethan Iverson, Padma Newsome, Gregory Saunier, Evan Ziporyn, Bill Frisell and Nik Bartsch, as well as a violin concerto by Gonzalo Grau, commissioned for Gandelman by Community Music Works.



**COLIN JACOBSEN** (musical arrangement) is "one of the most interesting figures on the classical music scene" (*Washington Post*). A founding member of two game-changing, audience-expanding ensembles — the string quartet Brooklyn Rider and orchestra The Knights — he is also a touring member of Yo-Yo Ma's venerated Silkroad Ensemble and an Avery Fisher Career Grant-

winning violinist. Jacobsen's work as a composer developed as a natural outgrowth of his chamber and orchestral collaborations. Jointly inspired by encounters with leading exponents of non-western traditions and by his own classical heritage, his most recent compositions for Brooklyn Rider include *Three Miniatures*, called, "vivacious, deftly drawn sketches" by *The New York Times*, which were written for the reopening of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Islamic art galleries. Jacobsen collaborated with Iran's Siamak Aghaei to write a Persian folk-inflected composition, *Ascending Bird*, which he performed as soloist with the YouTube Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House, in a concert that was streamed live by millions of viewers worldwide. His work for dance and theater includes *Chalk and Soot*, a collaboration with Dance Heginbotham, and music for Compagnia de' Colombari's theatrical production of Walt Whitman's *Song of Myself*.



**ALIM QASIMOV** (mugham vocals, musical arrangement) is a prominent mugham singer named a "Living National Treasure" of Azerbaijan. He has been passionate about mugham since his early childhood, but did not pursue a career in music until the age of nineteen, after various jobs as an agricultural worker and driver. Qasimov studied at the Asaf Zeynalli Music College (1978-

1982) and the Azerbaijan University of Arts (1982-1989). His teacher was well-known mugham singer Aghakhan Abdullayev. Qasimov perceives



## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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and presents mugham not only as an ancient art and a part of Azerbaijan's musical and cultural heritage but also as a constantly developing tradition. His performing style is unique, combining deep knowledge of centuries-old rules of mugham with challenging innovations, willingly juxtaposing mugham with other music styles, such as jazz and contemporary composition. Qasimov was awarded the IMC-UNESCO International Music Prize in 1999 in recognition of his musical contributions to world peace. Past winners of this prize include Yehudi Menuhin, Ravi Shankar, Olivier Messiaen and Daniel Barenboim. Qasimov's numerous awards also include the title of the People's Artist of Azerbaijan, the highest artistic rank in the country. On his 50th birthday in 2007, the President of Azerbaijan awarded Qasimov the Medal of Glory.



**FARGANA QASIMOVA** (mugham vocals), Alim Qasimov's daughter and protégée, is an accomplished mugham singer. Her father has been the major influence in her life and career. Qasimova grew up with sounds of mugham and verses from the classical poetry of Azerbaijan and from the age of four, often performed along with her father at home and first joined him on

tour at the age of sixteen. She studied mugham at the Azerbaijan National Conservatory (1996-2000) and performs frequently with Qasimov both in Azerbaijan and internationally and has earned recognition as a master of mugham. In 1999, *Love's Deep Ocean*, a CD featuring Qasimov and Qasimova, was released by Network Medien in Frankfurt, Germany. In 2002 at the Women's Voices Festival in Belgium, Qasimova made her first appearance as a soloist.



**COLIN FOWLER** (MMDG music director) began his musical study at the age of five in Kansas City and went on to study at the prestigious Interlochen Arts Academy. He continued his education at The Juilliard School, where he received his Bachelor of Music in 2003 and his Master of Music in 2005. While at Juilliard, he studied piano with Abbey Simon, organ with Gerre Hancock

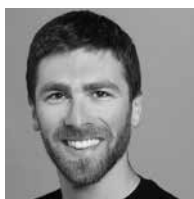
and Paul Jacobs, harpsichord with Lionel Party, and conducting with James dePriest and Judith Clurman. A versatile musician and conductor, Fowler works in many areas of the music scene in New York City. He is a veteran of numerous Broadway shows, most recently performing in the Tony Award winning musical *Jersey Boys*. A seasoned church musician, Fowler is currently the organist at Marble Collegiate Church on Fifth Avenue and leads services and concerts at Park Avenue Synagogue, where he has served as Music Director since 2012. As a classical soloist and collaborative artist, he has performed and recorded with many world renowned musicians and ensembles, including Deborah Voigt and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He began to collaborate with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2005 and has since then performed over 40 pieces with the company on almost every keyboard instrument possible, including the harmonium and toy piano, and has conducted performances of *Mozart Dances*, *Acis and Galatea*, and *The Hard Nut*. Hailed by the *New York Times* as "invaluable" and "central to Morris's music," he was appointed music director in 2013.

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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**MICA BERNAS**, originally from Manila, Philippines, received her training at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Dance School. She later joined Ballet Philippines as member of the corps de ballet, performing as a soloist from 2001-2006. Since moving to New York in 2006, Bernas has worked with Marta Renzi Dance, Armitage Gone Dance, Gallim Dance, Barkin/Selissen Project, and Carolyn Dorfman Dance (2007-2013). She was a guest artist with the Limón Dance Company, performing at the 2013 Bienal Internacional de Danza de Cali in Bogotá, Colombia; Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater; and at The Joyce Theater for the company's 70th Anniversary in 2015. Bernas also teaches at the Limón Institute and has been on the faculty for BIMA at Brandeis University since 2011. She joined MMDG as an apprentice in January 2017 and became a full time company member in August 2017.



**SAM BLACK** is originally from Berkeley, California, where he began studying tap at the age of nine with Katie Maltsberger. He received his B.F.A. in dance from SUNY Purchase, and currently teaches MMDG master classes and Dance for PD®. He first appeared with MMDG in 2005 and became a company member in 2007.



**DURELL R. COMEDY**, a native of Prince Georges County, Maryland, began dancing at the age of six with Spirit Wings Dance Company. He graduated from the Visual and Performing Arts program of Suitland High School in 2004 and magna cum laude from George Mason University, receiving his B.F.A. in dance performance in 2008. Since then, he's worked and performed with The Metropolitan Opera, Troy Powell, and Kyle Abraham, among others. Comedy was a member of the Limón Dance Company from 2009-2015, performing principal and soloist roles. He's also appeared as a soloist dancer in Baltimore Opera Company's *Aida* and worked with Washington National Opera from 2013-2014 as a principal dancer and dance captain. He was a former fellowship student at the Ailey School and a 2014 adjunct faculty member at George Mason University's School of Dance. Comedy joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2015 and became a company member in 2016.



**SHAWN CONLEY** (bass) was born in Honolulu and won a position with the Honolulu Symphony while in high school and went on to earn degrees in Music Performance from Rice University. Conley won the 2009 International Society of Bassists Jazz Competition, was a semi-finalist in the Thelonious Monk Jazz Competition, and received a Wagoner Fellowship. He has performed with Sting, Peter Gabriel, Yo-Yo Ma, and Emanuel Ax, among many others. He teaches at the Hawaii Contrabass Festival and regularly performs with The Hot Club of Detroit, The NOW Ensemble and The Knights.



**RITA DONAHUE** was born and raised in Fairfax, Virginia, and attended George Mason University. She graduated magna cum laude in 2002, receiving a B.A. in English and a B.F.A. in dance. Donahue danced with bopi's black sheep/dances by kraigpatterson and joined MMDG in 2003.

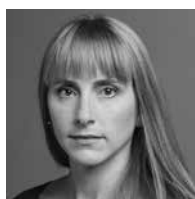
## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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**DOMINGO ESTRADA, JR.**, a native of Victoria, Texas, studied martial arts and earned his black belt in 1994. He danced ballet folklórico through his church for 11 years. Estrada earned his B.F.A. in ballet and modern dance from Texas Christian University and had the honor of working with the late Fernando Bujones.

During his undergraduate studies, he attended the American Dance Festival where he had the privilege of performing *Skylight*, a classic work by choreographer Laura Dean. He debuted with MMDG in 2007 and became a company member in 2009.



**LESLEY GARRISON** grew up in Swansea, Illinois, and received her early dance training at the Center of Creative Arts in St. Louis, Missouri, and Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan. She studied at the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in The Netherlands and holds a B.F.A. from Purchase College. She first performed with MMDG in 2007 and became a company member in 2011.

Garrison teaches at The School at the Mark Morris Dance Center and for MMDG's Dance for PD® program.



**MARIO GOTOH** (viola), is a Grammy Award-winning musician who has distinguished herself as an innovative violinist with a remarkably versatile performance style in all genres of music. Gotoh has been invited to perform worldwide at the White House, The Elbphilharmonie, Dresden Musikfestspiele, Kölner Philharmonie, Madison Square Garden, Het Loo Palace,

National Centre for the Performing Arts, National Theater and Concert Hall, Taipei, Aix-en-Provence Festival, Ravinia Festival, Tanglewood Music Center, Banff Centre for the Arts, Aspen Festival and School, Boston Early Music Festival, Seoul International Computer Music Festival, Carnegie Hall, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Beacon Theatre, The Town Hall, United Palace, Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts. She is a member of The Knights, performs with Yo-Yo Ma and the Silkroad Ensemble, and will perform in William Kentridge's upcoming *The Head & The Load* at the Tate Modern, Ruhr Festival Germany, and Park Avenue Armory. Gotoh is the original and current violinist-violist in the Broadway hit and soundtrack *Hamilton: An American Musical*. She has also performed on The Grammys, Saturday Night Live, Late Show with Stephen Colbert, David Letterman, The Today Show, CBS This Morning, and performs and records regularly with stars including Stevie Wonder, Roger Waters, Katy Perry, Adele, Sting, Sufjan Stevens, Jim James, Brian Wilson, Twenty-One Pilots, Perfume Genius, Nico Muhly, Bryce Dessner, and Joshua Redman. Gotoh holds two doctorates in violin and viola performance from Stony Brook University and is a passionate teacher. She is inspired by visual and culinary arts and is currently writing original music for several projects. [www.mariogotoh.com](http://www.mariogotoh.com)



**JOSEPH GRAMLEY**(percussion) is a multi-instrumentalist and composer. The Oregon native also served as Silkroad's Associate Artistic Director. During more than 16 years with Silkroad, he has collaborated with renowned musicians from India, Iran, China, Japan, Korea, and central Asia. He has performed internationally as a soloist and with major symphony orchestras.

His first solo record, *American Deconstruction*, a rendition of five milestone works in the modern multi-percussion canon, was released in

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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2000 and reissued in 2006. A second solo recording, *Global Percussion*, was released in 2005. Gramley is Associate Professor of Music and Director of Percussion Studies at his undergraduate alma mater, the University of Michigan. Prior to his teaching career, he performed extensively in New York with chamber groups and symphony orchestras and has directed the Summer Seminar at Juilliard for 16 years. Now, he frequently tours with The Knights as well as with organist Clive Driskill-Smith in the duo Organized Rhythm. Their CD *Beaming Music* appeared in 2008.



**LAUREN GRANT**, honored with a New York Dance and Performance “Bessie” award for her career with the Mark Morris Dance Group, has danced with MMDG since 1996, appearing in over 60 of Morris’s works. She stages Morris’s repertory on his company, at universities and conservatories, and teaches ballet and modern technique for the Dance Group, The School at the Mark Morris

Dance Center, Jessica Lang Dance Company, Liz Gerring Dance Company, Ballet Preljocaj, and at schools and universities around the globe. Her writing has been published in the journals *Dance Education in Practice* and *Ballet Review*, and in *Dance Magazine* and *InfiniteBody*. She also serves as a panelist for the New York State Council on the Arts. Grant holds a B.F.A. in dance from NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts and is currently pursuing her M.F.A. in dance at Montclair State University where she is also an adjunct professor and a member of the National Honor Society for graduate and professional students. She is a recipient of the prestigious American Association of University Women Career Development Grant, the Sono Osato Scholarship for Graduate Studies, and the Caroline Newhouse Grant—all in support of her academic pursuits. Originally from Highland Park, Illinois, she lives in Brooklyn, New York with her husband David Leventhal (former MMDG dancer and current Dance for PD® Program Director) and their son, born in 2012.



**RAUF ISLAMOV** (kamancheh) was born in Baku, Azerbaijan and studied kemancheh at the Asaf Zeynalli Music College, the Azerbaijan National Conservatory, and received his master’s from the Azerbaijan State Art University. He has toured widely with the Alim Qasimov Ensemble.



**SARAH HAARMANN** grew up in Macungie, Pennsylvania and received training at the Lehigh Valley Charter High School for the Performing Arts under the direction of Kimberly Maniscalco. She graduated magna cum laude with a B.F.A. in dance from Marymount Manhattan College in 2012. Haarmann has had the pleasure of performing with Pam Tanowitz Dance,

Jessica Lang Dance, Dylan Crossman Dans(ce), Pat Catterson, Denisa Musilova, and Bill Young. She joined MMDG as an apprentice in January 2017 and became a full time company member in August 2017.



**BRIAN LAWSON** began his dance training in Toronto at Canadian Children’s Dance Theatre. There he worked with choreographers such as David Earle, Carol Anderson, and Michael Trent. Lawson spent a year studying at the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in The Netherlands and graduated summa cum laude in 2010 from Purchase College, where he was also granted

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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the President's Award for his contributions to the dance program. Lawson has had the pleasure of performing with Pam Tanowitz Dance, Dance Heginbotham, and Nelly van Bommel's NØA Dance, among others. He joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2011 and became a company member in 2013.



**XIAOFAN LIU** (violin) has established himself as one most sought-after and exciting young musicians. Praised by the Berlin Philharmonic String Quartet as a "tasteful young musician," Liu is the recipient of the Jules C. Reiner Violin prize from Boston Symphony Orchestra, and has performed under the baton of world renowned conductors, including Maestro Christoph von Dohnányi, Charles Dutoit, Andris Nelsons, and many more. As an avid chamber musician and soloist, Liu has appeared on numerous venues, such as Seiji Ozawa Hall and Koussevitzky Music Shed in Lenox, Carnegie Hall Stern auditorium in New York, National Concert Hall and Opera House in Taiwan, Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles, Jordan Hall in Boston, and Kennedy Center in Washington DC where he was invited in 2015 to perform alongside Yo-Yo Ma, in celebration of Maestro Seiji Ozawa's lifetime achievements. He began his violin studies at the Central Conservatory in Beijing before moving to California to attend Idyllwild Arts Academy when he was 14. Liu received his Bachelor degree from New England Conservatory, where he was the last student of late Japanese pedagogue, Masuko Ushioda. Currently, Liu is pursuing his Masters of Music degree at the New England Conservatory under the tutelage of Boston Symphony Orchestra concertmaster, Malcolm Lowe.



**AARON LOUX** grew up in Seattle, Washington, and began dancing at the Creative Dance Center as a member of Kaleidoscope, a youth modern dance company. He began his classical training at the Cornish College Preparatory Dance Program and received his B.F.A. from The Juilliard School in 2009. He danced at The Metropolitan Opera and with Arc Dance Company before joining MMDG in 2010.



**LAUREL LYNCH** began her dance training at Petaluma School of Ballet in California. She moved to New York to attend The Juilliard School where she performed works by Robert Battle, Margie Gillis, José Limón, and Ohad Naharin. After graduation Lynch danced for Dušan Týnek Dance Theatre, Sue Bernhard Danceworks, and Pat Catterson. Lynch joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007.



**KAMILA NABIYEVA** (mugham vocals, understudy) was born in 1997 in the Khanagah village in the Ismayilli district of Azerbaijan. In 2004, Nabiyeva became a winner at the Children's Mugham Competition held by the Kainat Group. She studied at the Baku Humanitarian College and in 2014, joined the Azerbaijan State University of Art and Culture. She studies with the famous female mugham performer of Azerbaijan, Gulyanag Mammadova. In 2011, she was awarded at the Mugham Competition held by the Azerbaijan State Television company and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation and frequently appears as a soloist on Azerbaijani National Television. Nabiyeva has successfully introduced Azerbaijani mugham to the audiences in Austria, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Macedonia, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United States, and many other countries.

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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**DALLAS McMURRAY**, from El Cerrito, California, began dancing at age four, studying jazz, tap, and acrobatics with Katie Maltsberger and ballet with Yukiko Sakakura. He received a B.F.A. in dance from the California Institute of the Arts. McMurray performed with the Limón Dance Company in addition to works by Jifí Kylián, Alonzo King, Robert Moses, and Colin Connor.

McMurray performed with MMDG as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007.



**MIRALAM MIRALAMOV** (mugham vocals, understudy) was born in 1988 in the Shamakhi district of Azerbaijan. He studied in the Asaf Zeynalli Music College in Baku, Azerbaijan and in 2012 joined the Azerbaijan National Conservatory where he is a member of the graduate program. Miralamov studied with the outstanding masters of Azerbaijani mugham, such as Alim Qasimov

and Zabıt Nabızade. In 2011, he was awarded first place at the Mugham Competition held by the Azerbaijan State Television company and the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. In 2013, Miralamov became winner at the National Mugham Competition and International Mugham Competition and frequently appears as a soloist on Azerbaijan National Television. Miralamov has successfully introduced Azerbaijani mugham to the audiences in Canada, Georgia, Germany, Italy, Norway, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United States and many other countries.



**KAREN OUZOUNIAN** (cello) has been described as “radiant” and “expressive” (*The New York Times*) and “nothing less than gorgeous” (*Memphis Commercial Appeal*). Ouzounian approaches music-making with a deeply communicative and passionate spirit. She is a founding member of the Aizuri Quartet, currently the string quartet-in-residence at the Curtis Institute of

Music, Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, and the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia. Her commitment to adventurous repertoire and the collaborative process has led to her membership in the Grammy-nominated, self-conducted chamber orchestra A Far Cry, and the critically-acclaimed new music collective counter) induction. Additionally she has performed with such ensembles as The Knights, Trio Cavatina, IRIS Orchestra, and as guest principal of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia.



**BRANDON RANDOLPH** began his training with the School of Carolina Ballet Theater in Greenville, South Carolina, under the direction of Hernan Justo. At age 14, he was accepted into the South Carolina Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities, where he studied with Stanislav Issaev and Bobby Barnett. Randolph received his B.F.A. in dance from Purchase College in

2012. There he had the opportunity to perform with Dance Heginbotham as well as repertory by Stephen Petronio, Lar Lubovitch, Paul Taylor, and George Balanchine. Randolph began working with MMDG in 2013 and became a company member in 2014.

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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**NICOLE SABELLA** is originally from Clearwater, Florida, where she studied at the Academy of Ballet Arts and the Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School under Suzanne B. Pomerantzeff. In 2009, She graduated from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, PA, earning her B.F.A. in modern dance performance and the “Outstanding Performance in Modern Dance”

Award. She was a performer with Zane Booker’s Smoke, Lilies and Jade Arts Initiative. Sabella first performed with MMDG in 2013 and became a company member in 2015.



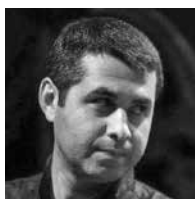
**CHRISTINA SAHAÏDA** grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and began her early dance training at the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School. In 2012, she graduated with honors from Butler University, receiving a B.F.A. in dance performance. She has worked with Ballet Quad Cities, Texture Contemporary Ballet, and most recently the Big Muddy Dance Company in St. Louis, Missouri.

Sahaïda joined the Mark Morris Dance Group as an apprentice in July 2017.



**BILLY SMITH** grew up in Fredericksburg, Virginia, and attended George Mason University under a full academic and dance talent scholarship. He graduated magna cum laude in 2007 and received achievement awards in performance, choreography, and academic endeavors. While at George Mason he performed the works of Mark Morris, Paul Taylor, Lar Lubovitch, Doug

Varone, Daniel Ezralow, Larry Keigwin, Susan Marshall, and Susan Shields. Smith’s own piece, *3-Way Stop*, was selected to open the 2006 American College Dance Festival Gala at Ohio State University and his original choreography for a production of *Bye Bye Birdie* garnered much critical praise. An actor as well, Smith’s regional theater credits include *Tulsa in Gypsy*, *Mistoffelees in CATS*, and *Dream Curly in Oklahoma!*. Smith danced with Parsons Dance from 2007-2010. He joined MMDG as a company member in 2010.



**ZAKI VALIYEV** (tar) was born in Ganja, Azerbaijan. He studied at the Ganja Music College and received a bachelor’s degree at the Azerbaijan National Conservatory. He is a member of the Alim Qasimov Ensemble, with whom he has toured extensively.



**GEORGY VALTCHEV** (violin) has appeared as soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician throughout the United States, Europe, and Asia. Originally from Plovdiv, Bulgaria, he came to the United States in 1992 as a scholarship student of Dorothy Delay and Masao Kawasaki at The Juilliard School, where he ultimately earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees. He has been

heard as soloist with orchestras in Bangor, Baton Rouge, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Miami, New York, New Jersey, in his native Bulgaria, and throughout Japan. Since 2011, Valtchev has been a Guest Concertmaster of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. As a chamber musician he has appeared in New York’s Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, 92nd Street Y, Kennedy Center in Washington DC, Chicago’s Cultural Center, the Royal Carre Theatre in Amsterdam, the Barbican Centre in London, and the Guangzhou Opera

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN BIOGRAPHIES cont.

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House in China. He has been featured in international music festivals such as Mostly Mozart at Lincoln Center, Beethoven Festival at Bard College, Sofia Music Weeks, Varna Summer and Appolonia in Bulgaria, and Bastad Chamber Music Festival in Sweden. Valtchev is a founding member of Bulgarian Concert Evenings in New York.



**NOAH VINSON** is originally from Springfield, Illinois, and received his B.A. in dance from Columbia College Chicago. He was named a *Dance Magazine* “Dancer on the Rise” in 2009 and assisted Mark Morris in the creation of his most recent work for Houston Ballet, *The Letter V*, which premiered in May 2015. He began dancing with MMDG in 2002 and became a company

member in 2004.



**JIN YANG** (pipa) was born in Datong, in northern China’s Shanxi province. She began studying pipa at nine. In 1995 she was admitted to the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and received her B.A. and M.A. degrees. Before relocating to the U.S., she served as a pipa instructor at the Wuhan Conservatory of Music in Wuhan, Hubei province, China. Yang has received

many awards, including first prize in the TianHua Cup National Youth Traditional Music Competition in 1997, and the Silver Award of Chinese Golden Bell Award for music. She has performed in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, France, the United States, Britain, Japan, and the Philippines. In 2010 she was the only mainland Chinese pipa performer selected (by Wu Man) to participate in a workshop led by the Kronos Quartet and Wu Man at Carnegie Hall. Yang served as Visiting Scholar at Kent State University in 2013-14 and currently lives with her family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where she maintains a busy performing and teaching schedule.



**EVAN ZIPORYN** (clarinet) has composed for the Silkroad Ensemble, the American Composers Orchestra, Brooklyn Rider, So Percussion, Maya Beiser, Wu Man, Sentieri Selvaggi, and Bang on a Can. He studied at Eastman, Yale, and UC Berkeley with Joseph Schwantner, Martin Bresnick, and Gerard Grisey. He is Inaugural Director of MIT’s new Center for Art, Science

and Technology, where he has taught since 1990. His work is informed by his 30 plus year involvement with traditional gamelan. He received a Fulbright in 1987, founded Gamelan Galak Tika in 1993, and has composed a series of groundbreaking compositions for gamelan and western instruments. Awards include a USA Artist Fellowship, the Goddard Lieberson Prize from the American Academy, Massachusetts Cultural Council Fellowship, the MIT Gyorgy Kepes Prize, and commissions from Carnegie Hall, Kronos Quartet, Rockefeller Multi-Arts Program, and Meet the Composer. He co-founded the Bang on a Can All-Stars in 1992, performing with the group for 20 years. He has also recorded with Paul Simon, Steve Reich Ensemble (sharing in their 1998 Grammy), and Matthew Shipp, and he currently performs with Iva Bittova and Gyan Riley as the Eviyan Trio.



# MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP SILKROAD ENSEMBLE STAFF

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# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks to Maxine Morris.

Sincerest thanks to all the dancers for their dedication, commitment, and incalculable contribution to the work.

Major support for the Mark Morris Dance Group is provided by American Express, Anonymous, Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners, LLP, Morley and Frederick Bland, Booth Ferris Foundation, Allan and Rhea Bufferd, Suzy Kellems Dominik, Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Judith R. and Alan H. Fishman, Shelby and Frederick Gans Fund, Isaac Mizrahi & Arnold Germer, Howard Gilman Foundation, Sandy Hill, Ellsworth Kelly Foundation, Elizabeth Liebman, The Pierre and Tana Matisse Foundation, Suzanne Berman and Timothy J. McClimon, McDermott, Will & Emery, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Meyer Sound/Helen and John Meyer, Stavros Niarchos Foundation, Ellen and Arnold Offner, Sarabeth Berman and Evan Osnos, PARC Foundation, Poss-Kapor Foundation, Diane Solway and David Resnicow, Resnicow + Associates, Jennifer P. Goodale and Mark Russell, Margaret Conklin and David Sabel, The Fan Fox and Leslie R. Samuels Foundation, Iris Cohen and Mark Selinger, The SHS Foundation, The Shubert Foundation, Jane Stine and R.L. Stine, The White Cedar Fund, and Friends of MMDG.

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The Mark Morris Dance Group is a member of Dance/USA and the Downtown Brooklyn Arts Alliance.

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We are pleased to acknowledge donors who have contributed one-time campaign gifts or multi-year pledges of \$5,000 or more between the inception of the campaign on **July 1, 2013**, and **January 31, 2018**. The continued growth and success of the Harris Theater would not be possible without this generosity and support.

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# HARRIS THEATER

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On February 21, 2018, the Harris Theater for Music and Dance hosted its 2018 Gala: *Celebrate the Harris*. We extend our deepest gratitude to our Co-Chairs, Marilyn F. and David J. Vitale, and the generous corporate and individual sponsors who made this celebration possible.

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# HARRIS THEATER TRIBUTE GIFTS

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The Harris Theater for Music and Dance would like to thank the following individuals who chose to honor a special person in their lives, celebrate a milestone event, or memorialize an inspirational friend or family member with a tribute gift to the Theater between **February 1, 2017, and January 31, 2018.**

## **In Memory of:**

Gayle Bezdek  
*Lesley Bezdek*

Little Miss Pauline  
*Arnold and Irene Newman*

Joseph and Mary Rudney  
*Mary Jo Rudney*

Virginia Lee Tallman  
*William Ziemann*

Mary Tiknis  
*The Alford Group*

## **In Honor of:**

The Apollo Chorus of Chicago  
*John N. Schwartz*

Patricia Barretto  
*Gail Belytschko*  
*Stella and Yigal Greener*  
*Michelle Yeung*  
*Elizabeth Yntema and Mark Ferguson*

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*Francie Comer,*  
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*David Robin*

## **In Honor of (cont.):**

Harris Theater Staff  
*Jake and Elizabeth Anderson*

Christine Kelly  
*Louise Lane*

Debbie Korompilas  
*Craig and Mary Pieters*

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*Patricia D. Smith*

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*Robert and Marletta Darnall*

*For information about making a contribution to the Harris Theater for Music and Dance, please contact us at 312.334.2482 or visit [www.HarrisTheaterChicago.org/support](http://www.HarrisTheaterChicago.org/support)*

## HARRIS THEATER LEGACY SOCIETY

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The Harris Theater for Music and Dance is pleased to recognize members of the *Legacy Society*, who have committed to make a future gift to the Theater. To learn more about planned giving at the Harris, please contact Elizabeth Halajian, Director of Development, at 312.334.2460.

Anonymous (2)

Estate of Nelson D. Cornelius\*

Christine Evans Kelly and Glenn Kelly

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Estate of Joan Nopola\*

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Thomas Sinkovic

*\* Gift Realized*

## HARRIS THEATER IN-KIND GIFTS

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The Harris Theater would like to thank the following organizations for their valuable donations of goods and/or services for our 2017-18 season.

Chicago magazine  
Jewell Events Catering  
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