

MELBOURNE  
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FESTIVAL

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2018

21

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP  
& SILKROAD ENSEMBLE

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

WED 10—SAT 13 OCTOBER

Arts Centre Melbourne,  
State Theatre

1 hr 10 mins no interval

PRESENTED  
WITH



PRESENTING  
PARTNERS



ASIAN BUSINESS  
CONSORTIUM

COMMISSIONING  
CIRCLE



# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

## MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

Mark Morris

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Nancy Umanoff

DANCERS

Mica Bernas

Sam Black

Karlie Budge\*

Durell R. Comedy

Brandon Cournay\*

Domingo Estrada, Jr.

Lesley Garrison

Lauren Grant

Sarah Haarmann

Deepa Liegel\*

Aaron Loux

Laurel Lynch

Dallas McMurray

Minga Prather\*

Brandon Randolph

Nicole Sabella

Christina Sahaida\*

Billy Smith

Noah Vinson

\*apprentice

## SILKROAD ENSEMBLE

BASS

Shawn Conley

VIOLIN

Johnny Gandelsman

VIOLA

Mario Gotoh

PERCUSSION

Joseph Gramley

KAMANCHEH

Rauf Islamov

PIPA

Wu Man

VOCALS

Miralam Miralamov

VIOLIN

Jessie Montgomery

VOCALS

Kamila Nabiyeva

CELLO

Karen Ouzounian

SHAKUHACHI

Kojiro Umezaki

TAR

Zaki Valiyev

FEATURING———

MUGHAM VOCALS

Alim Qasimov

Fargana Qasimova

## CREATIVE TEAM

CHOREOGRAPHY

& DIRECTION

Mark Morris

SCENIC &

COSTUME DESIGN

Howard Hodgkin

LIGHTING DESIGN

James F. Ingalls

SET REALIZATION

Johan Henckens

COSTUME REALIZATION

Maile Okamura

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This engagement is supported by Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation through USArtists International in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Howard Gilman Foundation.



## MEDLEY OF AZERBAIJANI MUSIC BAYATI SHIRAZ

MUGHAM VOCALS  
Kamila Nabiyeva  
Miralam Miralamov

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

KAMANCHEH  
Rauf Islamov  
TAR  
Zaki Valiyev

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, folk song and *tasnif*.

## LAYLA AND MAJNUN

MUSIC BY  
Uzeyir Hajibeyli  
(1885–1948)

ARRANGED BY  
Alim Qasimov  
Johnny Gandelsman  
Colin Jacobsen

Sung in Azerbaijani  
with English supertitles

# PROGRAM

## ACT I LOVE AND SEPARATION

LAYLA  
Mica Bernas  
MAJNUN  
Dallas McMurray

Sam Black  
Lauren Grant  
Sarah Haarmann  
Aaron Loux  
Laurel Lynch  
Minga Prather  
Brandon Randolph  
Nicole Sabella  
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  
Minga Prather  
Billy Smith

Mica Bernas  
Sam Black  
Durell R. Comedy  
Sarah Haarmann  
Dallas McMurray  
Brandon Randolph

## ACT III SORROW AND DESPAIR

LAYLA  
Laurel Lynch  
MAJNUN  
Aaron Loux

Mica Bernas  
Domingo Estrada, Jr.  
Lauren Grant  
Sarah Haarmann  
Dallas McMurray  
Minga Prather  
Brandon Randolph  
Nicole Sabella  
Billy Smith  
Noah Vinson

## ACT IV LAYLA'S UNWANTED WEDDING

LAYLA  
Sarah Haarmann  
MAJNUN  
Sam Black  
THE HUSBAND  
Durell R. Comedy  
LAYLA'S PARENTS  
Lauren Grant  
Noah Vinson

Domingo Estrada, Jr.  
Laurel Lynch  
Aaron Loux  
Minga Prather  
Nicole Sabella  
Billy Smith

## ACT V THE LOVERS' DEMISE

LAYLA  
Mica Bernas  
Nicole Sabella  
Laurel Lynch  
Sarah Haarmann  
MAJNUN  
Dallas McMurray  
Domingo Estrada, Jr.  
Aaron Loux  
Sam Black

LAYLA'S PARENTS  
Lauren Grant  
Noah Vinson  
MAJNUN'S PARENTS  
Minga Prather  
Billy Smith

# LAYLA AND MAJNUN

LIBRETTO  
Uzeyir Hajibeyli

BASED ON THE POEM BY  
Muhammad Fuzuli

TRANSLATION  
Aida Huseynova  
& Isabelle Hunter

## ACT I 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 tantalise  
me

Your smile—like a flower—  
makes me weep

Your sweet scent renders me  
motionless

Your tousled hair drives me  
mad

## ACT II 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

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.

### ACT III 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.

### ACT IV LAYLA'S UNWANTED WEDDING

#### MAJNUN

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

#### LAYLA

No, no, my soulmate, 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

#### 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?

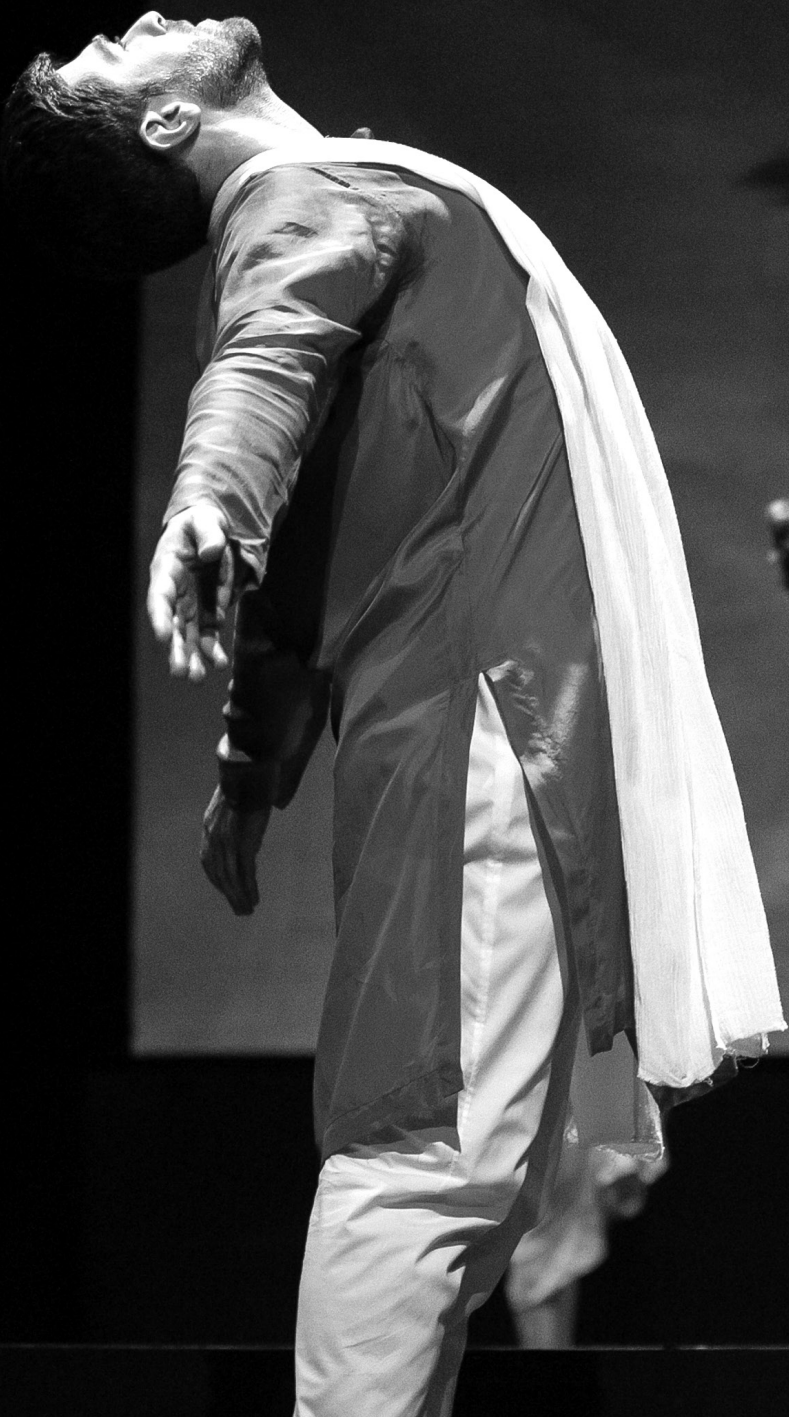
### ACT V THE LOVERS' DEMISE

#### 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.





Morris has orchestrated a feast of visual motion that dances across history with a fleet foot.

The astonishing completeness of the Mark Morris Dance Group and Silkroad Ensemble's *Layla and Majnun*—the way its various elements come together to form an organic whole—doesn't suggest the long and winding path it has taken to get here today.

But this is a work a long time in the making.

For more than 1,000 years the story of these lovers kept apart by fate has been a mainstay in cultures of the Middle East, north Africa and western Asia. Successive writers have adapted the tale to speak to their own audiences, and the story has been most cherished in the region known today as Azerbaijan.

It was in Azerbaijan that the Muslim world's first opera was created: Uzeyir Hajibeyli's 1908 *Layla and Majnun* took its cues from a 16th-century version of the story by Azerbaijani poet Muhammad Fizuli, and featured sections for both traditional mugham vocalists and Western instruments and arias.

Fast forward a century. One of the world's foremost mugham singers and musicians, Alim Qasimov, approaches Silkroad Ensemble proposing they collaborate on a new staging of Hajibeyli's opera. Qasimov along with Colin Jacobsen and Johnny Gandelman, both Silkroad founders, produced a chamber-style arrangement of the classic tale, with Yo-Yo Ma directing.

It was this version that Ma invited Mark Morris to see, and afterwards the acclaimed cellist put to the choreographer a bold idea: an even grander collaboration between Silkroad and the Mark Morris Dance Group, affording the groundbreaking opera the epic scale it deserves.

Morris said no. The music didn't appeal to Morris' choreographic ear. The story might have appeared perfect for a choreographer with a powerful command of tragedy—as Morris' *Dido and Aeneas* and *Romeo and Juliet* both attest—but Morris' wasn't convinced it was the right fit.

Yo-Yo Ma disagreed, insisting that Morris was the only person to do the job. It took years of persuasion, and tweaks to the arrangements, before Morris began to see the possibilities in the proposal, and once the door opened a crack those possibilities began to crowd in.

The result is dance that draws deeply on both the musical diversity of Hajibeyli's *Layla and Majnun* and the many dance genres that have historically spanned the vast Silk Road itself. From the balletic Arabesque to the curved lines of Indian dance, the whirling of dervishes to Eastern European folk dances, Morris has orchestrated a feast of visual motion that dances across history with a fleet foot.

The vision is made complete by the late Howard Hodgkin's sumptuous backdrop, itself inspired by the Persian miniature painting that was developed in Azerbaijan during the medieval era, and by the singular voice of Alim Qasimov, still at the centre of this extraordinary collaboration, along with fellow mugham virtuoso Fargana Qasimova.

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—JOHN BAILEY

John Bailey is a freelance writer based in Melbourne.

Nezami's romance of *Laili and Majnun* is a multilayered, complex text, which makes it open to contrasting, and perhaps contradictory, readings.

# THE IDEALIZATION OF LOVE

THE TIMELESS TALE OF LAYLA AND MAJNUN

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 honour and standing of the tribe, her parents ensure that the lovers are kept apart. When Qays' 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, 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 modelled 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, Hatfehi, 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.

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## —WALI AHMADI

Department of Near Eastern Studies  
University of California, Berkeley

Wali Ahmadi is an associate professor of Persian literature at the University of California, Berkeley. Ahmadi's 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). Ahmadi is currently working on the cultural politics of modern Persian poetics and aesthetics.

# INTO THE DIVINE

## THE MUSIC OF LAYLA AND MAJNUN

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 honour 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 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 International IMC-UNESCO 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

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.

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.

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" (*The New York Times*). 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*).

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.

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## —AIDA HUSEYNOVA

Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

Aida Huseynova has a PhD in musicology and teaches at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music. Huseynova's 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. Huseynova's numerous awards include an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant (2016) and a Fulbright scholarship (2007–08).



# MARK MORRIS

MARK MORRIS was born on August 29, 1956, in Seattle, Washington, studying there with Verla Flowers and Perry Brunson. In the early years Morris performed with the companies of Lar Lubovitch, Hannah Kahn, Laura Dean, Eliot Feld and the Koleda Balkan Dance Ensemble. Morris formed the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) in 1980 and has since created over 150 works for the company. From 1988 to 1991, Morris was Director of Dance at Brussels' Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, the national opera house of Belgium. In 1990, Morris founded the White Oak Dance Project with Mikhail Baryshnikov. Much in demand as a ballet choreographer, Morris has created 22 ballets since 1986 and the works have been performed by companies worldwide including San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, Ballet du Grand Théâtre de Genève and the Royal New Zealand Ballet. Morris has been described as "undeviating in his devotion to music" (*The New Yorker*). Morris began conducting performances for MMDG in 2006 and has since conducted at Tanglewood Music Center, Lincoln Center and BAM (Brooklyn Academy of Music). Morris served as Music Director for the 2013 Ojai Music Festival. Morris 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.

Morris was named a Fellow of the MacArthur Foundation in 1991, has received 11 honorary doctorates and has taught at the University of Washington, Princeton University and Tanglewood Music Center. Morris 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, 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. In 2001 Morris opened the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, New York to provide a home for the 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.



# MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP

The MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP (MMDG) 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 masterclasses. 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' 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 UK's *South Bank Show* and PBS' *Live from Lincoln Center*. In 2015 Morris' signature work *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato* had its national television premiere on PBS' *Great Performances*. While on tour MMDG partners with local cultural institutions and community organizations to present arts and humanities-based activities for people of all ages and abilities.



# SILKROAD ENSEMBLE

Yo-Yo Ma conceived SILKROAD ENSEMBLE in 1998 as a reminder that even as rapid globalization resulted in division, it brought extraordinary possibilities for working together. Seeking to understand this dynamic, Ma began to learn about the historical Silk Road, recognizing in it a model for productive cultural collaboration, for the exchange of ideas and tradition alongside commerce and innovation. In a radical experiment, Ma brought together musicians from the lands of the Silk Road to co-create a new artistic idiom, a musical language founded in difference, a metaphor for the benefits of a more connected world.

Today, these Grammy Award-winning artists seek and practice radical cultural collaboration in many forms, creating and presenting new music, teacher and musician training workshops and residency programs in schools, museums, and communities.

Silkroad has recorded seven albums. *Sing Me Home*, which won the 2016 Grammy Award for Best World Music Album was developed and recorded alongside the documentary feature *The Music of Strangers*, from Oscar-winning director Morgan Neville.





# HOWARD HODGKIN

HOWARD HODGKIN was born in London in 1932 and evacuated during the war to the United States, on Long Island from 1940 to 1943. Hodgkin studied at the Camberwell School of Art and the Bath Academy of Art, Corsham. In 1984 Hodgkin represented Britain at the Venice Biennale and won the Turner Prize the following year. Hodgkin was knighted in 1992 and made a Companion of Honour in 2003. An exhibition of Hodgkin's *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, 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 theatre in 1981, designing 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). Hodgkin is represented by Gagosian Gallery and has shown with them in New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Rome and London. Hodgkin was passionate about India and Indian art. Toronto's Aga Khan Museum exhibited Hodgkin's paintings *Inspired by India* along with Indian miniatures from the artist's collection in 2015. *After All*, an exhibition of prints, opened the Alan Cristea Gallery in Pall Mall, London in October 2016. Hodgkin died 9 March 2017 in London, England.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## KEY ARTISTS

**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); *Platé* (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). Ingalls 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. Okamura was a member of Boston Ballet II and Ballet Arizona before moving to New York to study modern dance. Okamura has also had the pleasure of working with choreographers Neta Pulvermacher, Zvi Gotheiner, Gerald Casel and frequently collaborates as dancer and costume designer with John Heginbotham. Okamura has designed costumes for three Mark Morris works to date—*Words*, *A Forest* and *The Trout* for MMDG and *The Letter V* for Houston Ballet. Maile and Colin Jacobsen are the proud parents of Mimi Hanako, born in 2015. Okamura danced with MMDG from 1998 to 2015.

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

**JOHNNY GANDELSMAN** (musical arrangement) hails from a musical family from Moscow, by way of Israel, whose musical voice reflects the artistic collaborations they have been a part of since moving to the United States in 1995. Through 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 Gandelsman integrates a wide range of creative sensibilities. Combining classical training with a desire to reach beyond the boundaries of the concert hall, and a voracious interest in the music of our times, Gandelsman 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, Gandelsman has premiered dozens of works written for Brooklyn Rider and Silkroad Ensemble. In 2012–13, Gandelsman premiered works by Lev "Ljova" Zhurbin, Dmitri Yanov-Yanovsky, Vijay Iyer, Bela Fleck, Daniel Cords, Rubín 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 Gandelsman 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—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 chamber and orchestral collaborations. Jointly inspired by encounters with leading exponents of non-western traditions and by Jacobsen's own classical heritage, most recent compositions for Brooklyn Rider include *Three Miniatures*—"vivacious, deftly drawn sketches" (*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*, performing as soloist with the YouTube Symphony Orchestra at the Sydney Opera House in a concert that was streamed live by millions of viewers worldwide. Jacobsen's work for dance and theatre 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) is a prominent mugham singer named a "Living National Treasure" of Azerbaijan. Qasimov has been passionate about mugham since early childhood, but did not pursue a career in music until the age of 19 after various jobs as an agricultural worker and driver. Qasimov studied at the Asaf Zeynalli Music College (1978–82) and the Azerbaijan University of Arts (1982–89). Qasimov's teacher was well-known mugham singer Aghakhan Abdullayev. Qasimov perceives 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. Qasimov's 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 International IMC-UNESCO Music Prize in 1999 in recognition of musical contributions to world peace. Qasimov's numerous awards also include the title of the People's Artist of Azerbaijan, the highest artistic rank in the country. On Qasimov's 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. Qasimov has been the major influence in Qasimova's 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 Qasimov at home, and first joined on tour at the age of sixteen. Qasimova 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 Qasimova first appeared as a soloist at the Women's Voices Festival in Belgium.

**COLIN FOWLER** (music director) began musical study at the age of five in Kansas City and went on to study at the prestigious Interlochen Arts Academy. Fowler studied at The Juilliard School, receiving a Bachelor of Music in 2003 and a Master of Music in 2005. While at Juilliard, Fowler 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. Fowler 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 also leads services and concerts at Park Avenue Synagogue, serving as Music Director since 2012. As a classical soloist and collaborative artist, Fowler has performed and recorded with many world-renowned musicians and ensembles, including Deborah Voigt and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Fowler began to collaborate with the MMDG 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. Fowler 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' music", Fowler was appointed music director in 2013.

# BIOGRAPHIES

## ARTISTS

**MICA BERNAS** (dancer), originally from Manila, Philippines, trained at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Dance School. Bernas later joined Ballet Philippines as member of the corps de ballet, performing as a soloist from 2001–06. 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 (2007–13). Bernas 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. Bernas joined MMDG as an apprentice in January 2017 and became a full-time company member in August 2017.

**SAM BLACK** (dancer) is originally from Berkeley, California, and began studying tap at the age of nine with Katie Maltsberger. Black received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance from SUNY Purchase and currently teaches MMDG master classes and Dance for PD®. Black first appeared with MMDG in 2005 and became a company member in 2007.

**KARLIE BUDGE** (dancer) grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee, dancing with the Tennessee Children's Dance Ensemble (TCDE). Budge graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in dance and Bachelor of Statistics in 2016 from Case Western Reserve University and danced with Graham 2 dance company. Budge has performed works by Mark Morris, Pascal Rioult, Larry Keigwin, Martha Graham, Ted Shawn, Bertram Ross, Virginia Mecene, Adam Barruch, Michael Mao and Randy Duncan. Budge has presented choreography throughout New York City in Playscape2016, NEXT@Graham, NYC10, SoloDuo Festival and four Martha Graham School showings. Budge received the Pearl Lang Award for Excellence in Choreography in 2017. Budge joined MMDG as an apprentice September 2018.

**DURELL R. COMEDY** (dancer), a native of Prince Georges County, Maryland, began dancing at the age of six with Spirit Wings Dance Company. Comedy graduated from the Visual & Performing Arts program of Suitland High School in 2004 and magna cum laude from George Mason University, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance performance in 2008. Since then, Comedy has worked and performed with The Metropolitan Opera, Troy Powell and Kyle Abraham, among others. Comedy was a member of the Limón Dance Company from 2009–15, performing principal and soloist roles. Comedy also appeared as a soloist dancer in Baltimore Opera Company's *Aida* and worked with Washington National Opera from 2013–14 as a principal dancer and dance captain. Comedy 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, 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. Conley has performed with Sting, Peter Gabriel, Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax, among many others. Conley teaches at the Hawaii Contrabass Festival and regularly performs with The Hot Club of Detroit, The NOW Ensemble and The Knights.

**BRANDON CURNAY** (dancer) is originally from Walled Lake, Michigan and received a Bachelor of Fine Arts from The Juilliard School. As a freelance artist, Curnay performed in the Radio City Christmas Spectacular and with MMDG, Metropolitan Opera Ballet, New York Theatre Ballet, The Chase Brock Experience, Schoen Movement Company, Dance Heginbotham and Morphoses. TV/Film/industrial credits include PBS' *Great Performances*, *Musical Chairs* (HBO), *Puma*, *Sesame Street* and Target. Curnay has been the Associate Choreographer for *My Fair Lady* (Bay Street), *The Wildness* (Off-Broadway), *Coriolanus* (Off-Broadway) and *I Am Anne Hutchinson/I Am Harvey Milk*. After dancing

with the company for seven years, Cournay became Associate Artistic Director of KEIGWIN + COMPANY. Cournay joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2018.

**DOMINGO ESTRADA, JR. (dancer)**, a native of Victoria, Texas, studied martial arts and earned a black belt in 1994. Estrada danced ballet folklorico through church for 11 years. Estrada earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts in ballet and modern dance from Texas Christian University and had the honor of working with the late Fernando Bujones. During undergraduate studies, Estrada attended the American Dance Festival and had the privilege of performing *Skylight*, a classic work by choreographer Laura Dean. Estrada debuted with MMDG in 2007 and became a company member in 2009. Estrada would like to thank God, their family and all who support their passion.

**LESLEY GARRISON (dancer)** grew up in Swansea, Illinois and received early dance training at the Center of Creative Arts in St. Louis, Missouri and Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan. Garrison studied at the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in The Netherlands and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from Purchase College. Garrison 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 and composer who has distinguished dual roles as an innovative violinist and a violist with a remarkably versatile performance style in all genres of music. Gotoh is a member of The Knights (chamber ensemble), performs and tours with Yo-Yo Ma, Silkroad Ensemble, Garrison Keillor & A Prairie Home Companion and MMDG. Gotoh holds two Doctorates in violin and viola performance from Stony Brook University and is a passionate teacher. Gotoh is the original violinist-violist in the Broadway hit and soundtrack *Hamilton: An American Musical*. Gotoh is inspired by interests in the visual arts, writing, literature, swimming, cooking and exploring cultures worldwide. [mariogotoh.com](http://mariogotoh.com)

**JOESPH GRAMLEY (percussion)** is a multi-percussionist and composer who has performed internationally as a soloist and with major symphony orchestras. Gramley's first solo record, *American Deconstruction*, a rendition of five milestone works in the modern multi-percussion canon, was released in 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 the University of Michigan. Gramley 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 (dancer)**, honored with a New York Dance and Performance "Bessie" award for their career with the MMDG, has danced with MMDG since 1996, appearing in over 60 of Morris' works. In addition to staging Morris' repertory on the MMDG and at universities, Grant teaches ballet and modern technique for numerous professional dance companies and schools around the globe and is an adjunct faculty member at Montclair State University. Grant's writing has been published in the journal *Dance Education in Practice*, *Ballet Review*, *Dance Magazine* and *InfiniteBody*. Grant also serves as a panelist for the New York State Council on the Arts. Grant earned a Master of Fine Arts in Dance from Montclair State University (where Grant was a member of the Alpha Epsilon Lambda Honor Society) and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Dance from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Grant 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 scholarly pursuits. Originally from Highland Park, Illinois, Grant lives in Brooklyn, New York with partner David Leventhal (former MMDG dancer and current Dance for PD® Program Director) and their child, born in 2012.

**SARAH HAARMANN (dancer)** 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. Haarmann graduated magna cum laude with a Bachelor of Fine Art 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. Haarmann joined MMDG as an apprentice in January 2017 and became a full-time company member in August 2017.

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

**DEEPA LIEGEL (dancer)** grew up in Seattle, Washington dancing and performing with Cornish Preparatory Dance, Leela Kathak Dance and Seattle Theatre Group. Liegel graduated in 2017 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance performance and a minor in arts management from Southern Methodist University. Now based in New York City, Liegel is a freelance dancer and model. Liegel has apprenticed with the Limón Dance Company and performed with Barkha Dance Company, Broadway Bares, Catherine Cabeen/Hyphen and others. Liegel joined MMDG as an apprentice September 2018.

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

**LAUREL LYNCH (dancer)** began dance training at Petaluma School of Ballet in California. Lynch moved to New York to attend The Juilliard School, performing 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. Many thanks to Gene and Becky.

**WU MAN (pipa)** is a pipa virtuoso, composer and an ambassador of Chinese music, creating a new role for the lute-like instrument in both traditional and contemporary music. Brought up in the Pudong school of pipa playing, Man became the first person to receive a master's degree in pipa performance from the Central

Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Man has performed in recital and as soloist with major orchestras around the world. Man has recorded more than 40 albums, five of which have been nominated for Grammy Awards. Man was named Musical America's 2013 Instrumentalist of the Year, but the best measure of achievement is that Man's instrument, which dates back two thousand years, is no longer an exotic curiosity.

**DALLAS McMURRAY**, from El Cerrito, California, began dancing at age four, studying jazz, tap and acrobatics with Katie Maltsberger and ballet with Yukiko Sakakura. McMurray received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance from the California Institute of the Arts. McMurray performed with the Limón Dance Company in addition to works by Jiri 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. Miralamov studied in the Asaf Zeynalli Music College in Baku, Azerbaijan and in 2012 joined the Azerbaijan National Conservatory as a member of the graduate program. Miralamov studied with the outstanding masters of Azerbaijani mugham, such as Alim Qasimov and Zabıt Nabızade. In 2011, Miralamov 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.

**JESSIE MONTGOMERY (violin)** is a New York native violinist, composer and music educator, performing regularly among New York's classical and new music scenes. Montgomery is currently a member of the highly acclaimed Catalyst Quartet, raved by the *New York Times* as "invariably energetic and finely burnished... playing with earthy vigor." Montgomery was a co-founding member of PUBLIQuartet, an ensemble made up of composers and arrangers, featuring their own music as well as that of emerging and established composers. Montgomery was also a member of the Providence String Quartet from 2004–09, quartet in residence of Community

MusicWorks. Ensemble experiences have led to collaborations with The Orion String Quartet, The Miro String Quartet and The Knights. Montgomery has also collaborated with several avant-garde artists such as clarinetist Don Byron, Butch Morris and William Parker.

**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. Nabiyeva studied at the Baku Humanitarian College and in 2014, joined the Azerbaijan State University of Art and Culture. Nabiyeva studies with the famous female mugham performer of Azerbaijan, Gulyanag Mammadova. In 2011, Nabiyeva 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. Kamila has successfully introduced Azerbaijani mugham to the audiences in Austria, Italy, Netherland, Norway, Macedonia, 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. Ouzounian 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. Ouzounian's commitment to adventurous repertoire and the collaborative process has led to membership in the Grammy Award-nominated, self-conducted chamber orchestra A Far Cry and the critically-acclaimed new music collective counter)induction. Additionally Ouzounian 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.

**MINGA PRATHER** (dancer), a Dallas, Texas native, received training from Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts and later graduated with honours in dance from the Ailey/Fordham Bachelor of Fine Arts program. Prather has had the pleasure of performing with Hubbard Street Dance Chicago, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater

and Nimbus Dance Works performing works by Alvin Ailey, Alejandro Cerrudo, William Forsythe, Ohad Naharin, Crystal Pite and Twyla Tharp. Prather received an award from the National Young Arts Foundation for Modern Dance in 2014. Prather joined MMDG as an apprentice September 2018.

**BRANDON RANDOLPH** (dancer) began training with the School of Carolina Ballet Theater in Greenville, South Carolina, under the direction of Hernan Justo. At age 14, Randolph was accepted into the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, studying with Stanislav Issaev and Bobby Barnett. Randolph received a Bachelor of Fine Arts. in dance from Purchase College in 2012. There Randolph 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.

**NICOLE SABELLA** (dancer) is originally from Clearwater, Florida, studying at the Academy of Ballet Arts and the Pinellas County Center for the Arts at Gibbs High School under Suzanne B. Pomerantzeff. In 2009, Sabella graduated from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts in modern dance performance and the "Outstanding Performance in Modern Dance" Award. Sabella 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 SAHAIDA** (dancer) grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and began early dance training at the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre School. In 2012, Sahaida graduated with honors from Butler University, receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts in dance performance. Sahaida has worked with Ballet Quad Cities, Texture Contemporary Ballet and most recently the Big Muddy Dance Company in St. Louis, Missouri. Sahaida joined the MMDG as an apprentice in July 2017.

**BILLY SMITH** (dancer) grew up in Fredericksburg, Virginia and attended George Mason University under a full academic and dance talent scholarship. Smith graduated magna cum laude in 2007 and received achievement awards in performance, choreography and academic endeavors. While at George Mason Smith 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 Smith's 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*, Mistofffeles in *CATS* and Dream Curly in *Oklahoma!*. Smith danced with Parsons Dance from 2007–2010. Smith joined MMDG as a company member in 2010.

KOJIRO UMEZAKI (shakuhachi) is a Japanese-Danish performer and composer originally from Tokyo. Renowned as a virtuoso of the shakuhachi, Umezaki's work also encompasses traditional and technology-based music mediated by various forms of electronics. Umezaki's recent commissioned works and producer credits include those for Brooklyn Rider, Joseph Gramley, Huun Huur Tu and Silkroad Ensemble. Umezaki is currently associate professor of music at the University of California, Irvine, and is a core faculty member of the Integrated Composition, Improvisation, and Technology (ICIT) group.

ZAKI VALIYEV (tar) was born in Ganja, Azerbaijan. Valiyev studied at the Ganja Music College and received a Bachelor's degree at the Azerbaijan National Conservatory. Valiyev is a member of and tours extensively with the Alim Qasimov Ensemble.

NOAH VINSON (dancer) is originally from Springfield, Illinois and received a Bachelor of Arts in dance from Columbia College Chicago. Vinson was named a *Dance Magazine* "Dancer on the Rise" in 2009 and assisted Mark Morris in the creation of a work for Houston Ballet, *The Letter V*. Vinson began dancing with MMDG in 2002 and became a company member in 2004.





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For more information on *Layla and Majnun* visit [LaylaandMajnun.org](http://LaylaandMajnun.org)

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