**The Hard Nut**

Based on *Nutcracker and the Mouseking,* by E.T.A. Hoffman
Music by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, *The Nutcracker,* Op. 71 (1891-1892)

Edited for chamber orchestra by Ronald Kornfeil
Production based on the work of Charles Burns

Mark Morris, *Choreography*
Adrianne Lobel, *Set Design*

Martin Pakledinaz, *Costume Design*

James F. Ingalls, *Lighting Design*

**MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP**

MICA BERNAS KARLIE BUDGE SARAH HILLMON COURTNEY LOPES

DALLAS McMURRAY ALEX MEETH\* BRANDON RANDOLPH CHRISTINA SAHAIDA

BILLY SMITH JOSLIN VEZEAU NOAH VINSON

JOE BOWIE ELISA CLARK DOMINGO ESTRADA, JR. DEEPA LIEGEL

AARON LOUX † MEGAN WILLIAMS †

McCall Atkinson Kara Chan MJ EDWARDS MIRIAM GITTENS KYLE HALFORD ADRIAN HOFFMAN CLAUDE JOHNSON SAYER MANSFIELD Claudia McDONALD ANNIE MORGAN SLOAN PEARSON ROBERT RUBAMA NICHOLAS RUSCICA CRAIG SALSTEIN FRANCES SAMSON MEGAN SIEPKA

\*apprentice

†understudy

Featuring the

**MMDG Music Ensemble**

**&**

**BROOKLYN MUSIC SCHOOL & BROOKLYN TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL’S**

**HARD NUT SINGERS**

Colin Fowler, *Conductor and Mark Morris Dance Group Music Director*

Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky THE NUTCRACKER

Edited for chamber orchestra by Ronald Kornfeil

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*Artistic Director*

MARK MORRIS

*Executive Director*

NANCY UMANOFF

Official Sponsor

Bloomberg Philanthropies

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**CAST**

Marie Mica Bernas

Fritz Christina Sahaida

Louise/
Princess Pirlipat Karlie Budge

Dr. Stahlbaum/ Joe Bowie

King

Mrs. Stahlbaum/

Queen Elisa Clark

Housekeeper/
Nurse Brandon Randolph

Drosselmeier Billy Smith

Nutcracker/
Young Drosselmeier Domingo Estrada, Jr.

Barbie Doll Mirian Gittens

Robot Kyle Halford

Party Guests Domingo Estrada, Jr.
 Deepa Liegel

Courtney Lopes
 Claudia McDonald
 Dallas McMurray
 Alex Meeth

Craig Salstein
 Joslin Vezeau

Noah Vinson

Changers MJ Edwards
 Kyle Halford

Sarah Hillmon

Adrian Hoffman

Rat King Kara Chan

Rat Soldiers McCall Atkinson
 Sayer Mansfield

Annie Morgan
 Sloan Pearson
 Frances Samson

Megan Siepka

G.I. Joe Soldiers MJ Edwards

Adrian Hoffman
Claude Johnson

Robert Rubama
Nicholas Ruscica

Snow McCall Atkinson
Karlie Budge
Kara Chan

MJ Edwards
Miriam Gittens
Kyle Halford
Adrian Hoffman
ClaudeJohnson
Deepa Liegel

Courtney Lopes
Sayer Mansfield

Claudia McDonald

Dallas McMurray
Alex Meeth

Sloan Pearson
Robert Rubama

Christina Sahaida
Craig Salstein

Frances Samson

Megan Seipka

Joslin Vezeau
Noah Vinson

Rat Queen Deepa Liegel

Spanish Craig Salstein
Joslin Vezeau

Arabian McCall Atkinson
Claude Johnson
Dallas McMurray
Nicholas Ruscica
Megan Siepka

Chinese Miriam Gittens
Alex Meeth
Christina Sahaida

Russian MJ Edwards
Adrian Hoffman
Courtney Lopes

Claudia McDonald
Sloan Pearson

Robert Rubama

French Kara Chan

Kyle Halford
Annie Morgan
Noah Vinson

Suitors Claude Johnson
Nicholas Ruscica

Dentist Sarah Hillmon

Flowers Kara Chan
Miriam Gittens

 Kyle Halford
 Courtney Lopes

Sayer Mansfield
Claudia McDonald
Dallas McMurray
Alex Meeth
Annie Morgan
Robert Rubama
Christina Sahaida

Megan Siepka

Joslin Vezeau

Noah Vinson

**BIOGRAPHIES**

**PYOTR ILYICH TCHAIKOVSKY** (1840-1893) began his career as a civil servant. In 1862, he gave up his job and enrolled at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. He was offered the Professorship of Harmony at the newly opened Moscow Conservatory in 1866. After the success of his first piano concerto, he began a correspondence with Nadezhda von Meck, a wealthy widow, whose financial support enabled him to devote himself to composition. They remained correspondents until a misunderstanding in 1890 ended their relationship, but they never actually met. Tchaikovsky made a disastrous marriage in 1877, possibly to conceal his homosexuality; a separation followed an attempted suicide after only eleven weeks of marriage. Despite his subsequent depressions, he managed to produce his most successful opera, *Eugene Onegin* (1877-1878), his Fourth Symphony (1878), and his Violin Concerto (1878) during this period. In 1881, he gave up teaching at the conservatory and for the next seven years was deeply involved in composition. His death from cholera in St. Petersburg, after imprudently drinking un-boiled water, occurred soon after the first performance of his Symphony No. 6 (*Pathétique)* in 1893.

[INSERT PHOTO] **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 am Rhein, Dusseldorf, 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, 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, subsidized rental space for local artists, community education programs for children and seniors, and a school offering dance classes to students of all ages and levels of experience with and without disabilities. Morris’s memoir, *Out Loud*, co-written with Wesley Stace, was published in paperback by Penguin Press in October 2021.

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’s 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 Adrianne 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 arts and humanities-based activities for people of all ages and abilities.

The **MMDG Music Ensemble,** formed in 1996, is integral to the Dance Group. “With the dancers come the musicians…and what a difference it makes” (*Classical Voice of North Carolina*). The Ensemble’s repertory ranges from 17th and 18th century works by John Wilson and Henry Purcell to more recent scores by Ethan Iverson, Lou Harrison, and Henry Cowell. The musicians also participate in the Dance Group’s educational and community programming at home and on tour. The Music Ensemble is led by Colin Fowler, who began to collaborate with MMDG in 2005 during the creation of *Mozart Dances*.

[INSERT PHOTO] **COLIN FOWLER** (conductor, music director) began his musical study at the age of five in Kansas City, went on to study at the Interlochen Arts Academy, and 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 conductor and keyboardist of many Broadway shows, including *Jersey Boys*, *In the Heights*, *Wicked*, and the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular.* As a classical soloist and collaborative artist, he has performed and recorded with many world-renowned musicians and ensembles, including Deborah Voigt, Renée Fleming, The Knights, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. He has arranged and conducted for numerous TV and film productions, including *Yellowstone* and Greta Gerwig's *Little Women*. He began to collaborate with the Mark Morris Dance Group in 2005 and has performed over 60 pieces with the company on almost every keyboard instrument possible, including the harmonium and toy piano. He has conducted performances of *Mozart Dances*, *Acis and Galatea, The Hard Nut*, and *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, and helped edit and create over 15 videodances with Mark Morris during the pandemic.Hailed by *The New York Times* as “invaluable” and “central to Morris’ music,” he was appointed Music Director in 2013.

**THE HARD NUT SINGERS,** led by MMDG Music Director Colin Fowler, are students, faculty, staff, and community members from Brooklyn Music School and students from Brooklyn Technical High School. The Hard Nut Singers perform in the “Snow” section in Mark Morris’ festive holiday classical *The Hard Nut.* Audience members will also enjoy caroling from Brooklyn Music School students prior to select performances on the front steps of BAM.

[INSERT PHOTO] **ADRIANNE LOBEL** (set design) began working with Mark Morris in 1986 on *Nixon in China*. Since then, she has designed his *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, *The Hard Nut*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Platée*, *King Arthur*, and *Acis and Galatea*. As a stage designer she has worked in opera, dance, on and off Broadway, in regional theater in America, and in Europe for over 30 years. Some highlights (other than working with Morris) include *An American Tragedy* at the Metropolitan Opera, *The Magic Flute* at Glyndebourne, *Passion* and *A Year with Frog and Toad* on Broadway, and *Così fan tutte* and *The Marriage of Figaro*, directed by Peter Sellars, at Pepsico Summerfare. She has been nominated for many awards and has won the Obie, the Lucille Lortel, the Jefferson, and Long Wharf's prestigious Murphy Award.

[INSERT PHOTO] **MARTIN PAKLEDINAZ** (1953-2012) (costume design) designed costumes for theater, opera, and dance. He has collaborated with Mark Morris on works for the Mark Morris Dance Group, San Francisco Ballet, and Boston Ballet, in addition to works by Tomasson, Stowell, Wheeldon, and Balanchine, among others. New York theater credits include *Blithe Spirit* and *Gypsy* with Patti Lupone; *The Pirate Queen*; *The* *Pajama Game*; *The Trip to Bountiful*; *Thoroughly* *Modern Millie*; *Wonderful Town*; *The Wild Party*; *Kiss Me, Kate*; *Waste*; and *A Life*. His work in opera includes *Rodelinda* and *Iphigenie en* *Tauride* for the Metropolitan Opera; *Tristan und* *Isolde*, *Adriana Mater*, and *L’Amour de Loin* for the Paris Opera/Bastille; and works in Salzburg, Seattle, Santa Fe, and Chicago. Projects include *Lend Me a Tenor*, directed by Stanley Tucci on Broadway; *The Glass Menagerie* with Judith Ivey, Gordon Edelstein directing, off-Broadway; and two operas for the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, *Eugene Onegin* and *The Golden Ticket*, a world premiere based on Roald Dahl’s *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory*, directed by Kevin Newbury and James Robinson. He was awarded two Tony Awards, and the Drama Desk, Obie, and Lucille Lortel awards, among others.

[INSERT PHOTO] **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 & 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 (United States and New York State Theatre),*The Sleeping Beauty*, choreographed by Alexei Ratmansky (Teatro alla Scala Ballet and American Ballet Theater), *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.

**CHARLES BURNS** was born in Washington, D.C. He currently lives in Philadelphia with his wife, painter Susan Moore, and their two daughters, Ava and Rachel. His illustrations and comics have been widely published in Europe and the United States in such magazines as *RAW, Time, The New York Times Magazine, The Believer,* and *Rolling Stone*. His books include *Thrilling Detective Stories* (Pantheon, 1988), *Blood Club* (Kitchen Sink, 1991), *Skin Deep* (Penguin Books, 1992), *Facetasm* (Gates of Heck, 1992), *Black Hole* (Fantagraphics, 2004), *X’ed Out* (Pantheon, 2010), *The Hive* (Pantheon, 2012), *Sugar Skull* (Pantheon, 2014), and *Last Look* (Pantheon, 2016).

INSERT PHOTO] **ELISA CLARK** (rehearsal director) is an award-winning artist, educator, and administrator who trained at the Maryland Youth Ballet prior to receiving a B.F.A. from The Juilliard School under the direction of Benjamin Harkarvy, with guidance from Carolyn Adams. She first performed with Mark Morris Dance Group in 2005, remained a full-time company member through 2011, and frequently returned as a guest performer, company teacher, and stager through 2024, when she was appointed Rehearsal Director. In addition to MMDG, she has been a featured company member with Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company, and Monica Bill Barnes & Co, a guest artist for Buglisi Dance Theater, and has performed with Nederlands Dans Theater and the Metropolitan Opera in works by Jiri Kylian and Crystal Pite respectively, amongst others. Elisa was also a founding member and company manager for Robert Battle’s Battleworks Dance Company and has served as Battle’s artistic assistant for over two decades. As an educator and mentor, she has been on faculty at the School at Jacob’s Pillow, Princeton University, University of the Arts, American Dance Festival, Move NYC, Steps on Broadway, Marymount Manhattan College, and at Bard College in partnership with Gibney Company, to name a few, and has taught company class for MMDG, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, Ailey II, Ballet Hispanico, Gibney Company, Hubbard Street Dance Chicago and the Metropolitan Opera Ballet. She is currently on the ballet faculty at the Ailey School, Gibney, and the Mark Morris Dance Center. Elisa is a répétiteur for both Battle and Morris’ works, and is also a Princess Grace Award Winner and a Certified Life Coach.

[INSERT PHOTO] **MCCALL ATKINSON**, originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota, has studied various styles of dance for over 20 years. She began her formal training at the Minnesota Dance Theater and TU Dance Center. Additionally, she has studied at Alvin Ailey, Alonzo King Lines, and Dance Theater of Harlem as a scholarship recipient. She graduated from SUNY Purchase in 2020 with a B.F.A. in dance and a minor in psychology. During her time at Purchase, she had an opportunity to study abroad at the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts as a ballet major and perform work en pointe by Kinsun Chan. She has also performed works including *Decadance* by Ohad Naharin, *Harbor* by Liz Gerring, *Like Photographs* by Sidra Bell, and *Armenian Voices* by Michelle Thompson Ulerich. She is currently rehearsing with Spark Movement Collective and Liz Gerring Dance while she continues to focus on project-based work today.

[INSERT PHOTO] **MICA BERNAS**, originally from Manila, Philippines, received her training at the Cultural Center of the Philippines Dance School. She later joined Ballet Philippines as a member of the corps de ballet and rose up the ranks to Soloist. While at Ballet Philippines, she also studied at De La Salle University and graduated with a bachelor’s degree in organizational communication in 2006. Upon graduating, she moved to New York and joined Carolyn Dorfman Dance. She was a guest artist with the Limón Dance Company and worked with Karole Armitage, Gallim Dance, Marta Renzi, and Connecticut Ballet. As an educator, she has taught all levels of dance, including after school programs, pre-professional, and master classes. She has taught at the Limón Institute and formerly ran the dance program at BIMA at Brandeis University. She joined MMDG as a company member in 2017.

[INSERT PHOTO] **JOE BOWIE** is an interdisciplinary dance artist whose current creative and scholarly research convenes at the intersection of Blackness, queerness, Black joy, and embodied storytelling. Bowie danced professionally for over twenty years in New York City, touring domestically and internationally with two world-renowned dance companies: The Mark Morris Dance Group (1989-2011) and the Paul Taylor Dance Company (1987-1989). He received his MFA in Dance with a Graduate Minor in Queer Studies from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign this past May and holds A.B. with honors in English and American Literature from Brown University. Bowie is a Visiting Assistant Professor in the Theatre Department at Northwestern University. Joe was in the original production of The Hard Nut when it premiered at the Theatre De La Monnaie in 1991 in Brussels, Belgium, and is thrilled to return to this production at the Brooklyn Academy of Music.

[INSERT PHOTO] **KARLIE BUDGE** grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee, training and performing with the Tennessee Children’s Dance Ensemble. She attended Case Western Reserve University on a full scholarship from the department of dance, graduating magna cum laude with a B.A. in dance and a B.S. in statistics in 2016. Budge has performed with Graham 2, Merce Cunningham Trust, and in her own solo and duet choreography. Budge joined MMDG as an apprentice in September 2018 and became a company member in November 2019.

[INSERT PHOTO] **KARA CHAN** is a New York City based freelance dance artist & dance educator, originally from Vancouver, Canada. She recently made her Broadway debut in the original cast of Tony Award winning production, *Illinoise,* choreographed by Justin Peck. She has had the privilege of dancing lead roles with Twyla Tharp Dance in both repertory works and new creations. In 2019, Kara assisted Ms. Tharp as a repetiteur in the staging of *Deuce Coupe* on American Ballet Theatre, which received a 2019 Outstanding Revival Bessie Nomination. Other performance credits include Pam Tanowitz Dance, Lar Lubovitch Dance Company (Artemis in Athens), Mark Morris Dance Group (The Hard Nut), Janis Brenner & Dancers, Dance Heginbotham, Isaac Mizrahi’s *Peter & The Wolf,* Gleich Dances, Barkin/Selissen Project, MorDance, Kathryn Posin Dance Company, Trainor Dance among many others. A BFA graduate from The Juilliard School, she was an inaugural recipient of Juilliard’s Career Advancement Fellowship. Kara was named one of Dance Magazine’s “25 to Watch” for 2020 and is an alumna of Youth America Grand Prix, The School at Jacob's Pillow, and Springboard Danse Montreal. [www.karachandance.com](http://www.karachandance.com/)

[INSERT PHOTO] **MJ EDWARDS,** from Middletown, NY, began professional training at Fiorello H. LaGuardia High School. MJ further honed their craft with MOVE|NYC|. There, they performed works by choreographers Aszure Barton, Shamel Pitts, Yin Yue, and Gregory Dolbashian. In 2017, MJ went to train at the San Francisco Ballet School and received the 2018-2019 Choreographic Fellowship. They are a distinguished 2019 YoungArts Winner in Modern/Contemporary and a proud recipient of the 2019 Meringoff Family Foundation Valedictory Prize. Their journey continued at The Juilliard School, where they worked with celebrated choreographers, including Ohad Naharin, Sonya Tayeh, Amy Hall Garner, and Andrea Miller. MJ also worked as an artistic assistant/performer with FHP Collective, directed by Francesca Harper, and kNoname Artist, directed by Roderick George. In 2021, they joined the Limón Dance Company. Most recently, their artistry has been recognized with the honor of being named a 2024 Princess Grace Award Winner.

[INSERT PHOTO] **DOMINGO ESTRADA, JR.,** a native of Victoria, Texas, studied martial arts and earned his black belt in 1994. He danced ballet folklorico through his church for eleven 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 was a company member from 2009 to 2023. Estrada would like to thank God, his family, and all who support his passion.

[INSERT PHOTO] **MIRIAM GITTENS**  was born and raised in Fresno, California, where she received a diverse dance education at The Dance Studio of Fresno. She earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from The Juilliard School in 2017. Following graduation, Miriam joined chuthis, presenting the work of Peter Chu. In 2018, she joined Ballet British Columbia under the direction of Emily Molnar. There, she had the honor of performing works by Aszure Barton, Sharon Eyal & Gai Behar, William Forsythe, Johan Inger, Felix Landerer, Ohad Naharin, Out Innerspace, Crystal Pite, and Medhi Walerski, spanning over four seasons. In 2022, Miriam returned to New York to join Gibney Company, as an Artistic Associate. In 2023, Gittens was featured in Dance Magazine's "On the Rise" column. Now as a freelance artist, she continues to dance for chuthis and Twyla Tharp Dance. Miriam was awarded the Princess Grace Honoraria for Dance in 2024.

[INSERT PHOTO] **KYLE HALFORD** is a 2021 BFA graduate from the University of Arizona and received the Undergraduate Creative Achievement Award during his time there. Upon Graduation, Kyle began dancing as a company member with Eisenhower Dance Detroit and he got to perform featured roles in new works by Maleek Washington, Hope Boykin, Tamisha Guy, and many others. After two seasons, Kyle decided to move to New York City to begin freelancing and has been working with Twyla Tharp Dance since. Aside from his work with Tharp, Kyle has gotten to be apart of many projects, including an evening length work by Alexander Anderson, film projects by Chelsea Thedinga & Dylan Pearce, and a new solo creation by Igal Perry. He is also a company member of Skyla Schreter Dance. Kyle is excited to be working with the MMDG family as a guest for “The Hard Nut” this season!

[INSERT PHOTO] **SARAH HILLMON** was born and raised in Rochester, New York. There she trained with Garth Fagan and Timothy M. Draper and was a member of the Rochester City Ballet. She graduated with a B.F.A. in dance from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, where she had the privilege of performing works by talented artists including Sidra Bell, Lucinda Childs, Gus Solomons Jr., and Charles Weidman. After college, she became a member of Lucinda Childs Dance Company, where she toured the world performing classic works. While in New York City, she has also had the honor to perform with artists such as Solange Knowles as well as a number of dance companies including Robert Mark Dance, Suzanne Beahrs Dance, BodyStories: Teresa Fellion Dance, DanceBoissiere, and the Daniel Gwirtzman Dance Company. She joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2023 and became a company member in 2024.

[INSERT PHOTO] **ADRIAN HOFFMAN** is a dancer, choreographer and clown from Cambridge, MA currently living in Los Angeles. Previously they have been a company member of Whim W'Him, a guest dancer with Alvin Ailey and BODYTRAFFIC, danced in music videos for Alessia Cara and Justin Bieber among others, freelanced on stage, TV, ad campaigns and film and was featured in Greta Gerwig’s remake of Little Women. As a choreographer their work has been presented across the country including at The Wallis in Los Angeles.

[INSERT PHOTO] **CLAUDE JOHNSON** a native of Chicago, is a Choreographer, Dancer, Movement Director based in Brooklyn. I create to translate the human experience to audiences as I recognize this art form is the best catalyst to motivate self-expression and social change.

[INSERT PHOTO] **DEEPA LIEGEL** is thrilled to be back for her fourth Hard Nut. She was born in Kolkata, India and raised in Seattle, Washington. She trained with Cornish Prep Dance, Leela Kathak Dance and Seattle Theater Group. She earned her BFA in dance and minor in arts management from Southern Methodist University. She’s currently a member of the Limón Dance Company. Professionally, Liegel’s worked with Mark Morris Dance Group, the Metropolitan Opera, Dance Lab NY, Broadway Bares, Catherine Cabeen, Barkha Dance Company and in music videos with J Balvin, Delta Rae and Chloe Flower. She’s taught at Cornish College of the Arts, Western Washington University, Limón Institute and more. A certified classical Pilates instructor since 2020, Liegel teaches across NYC. Find her online @deepaleaps and [deepaliegel.com](http://deepaliegel.com/).

[INSERT PHOTO] **COURTNEY LOPES** is originally from Bermuda and attended the University of North Carolina School of the Arts for her high school education. She graduated magna cum laude with a B.F.A. in dance from SUNY Purchase in 2012 and studied in Taiwan at the Taipei National University of the Arts. As a student, she performed works by Paul Taylor, Jessica Lang, Lar Lubovitch, and Huang Yi of Cloud Gate Dance Theater. In addition to performing with Dance Heginbotham for over nine years, she has worked as a freelance artist with Megan Williams, Sameena Mitta, Kathryn Alter, Sue Bernhard, and Robert Mark Burke. As an educator and répétiteur, she has worked with the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, Ballet Tech, 92Y Harkness Dance Center, Dance for PD®, and the José Limón Institute. She first performed with MMDG in 2017 and became a company member in 2023.

[INSERT PHOTO] **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, where he was a company member from 2010 to 2022. He has also performed with the Merce Cunningham Trust, Cornfield Dance, Christopher Williams, Billy Smith Dance, and Charlotte Bydwell. *Field Day*, a dance film he choreographed, directed, and produced in collaboration with Juilliard classmate Brandon Cournay, was presented as a part of the Guggenheim’s Works & Process Virtual Commission series in December 2020. In 2023, he was the inaugural CBA-Juilliard Fellow at the Center for Ballet and the Arts at New York University, creating a new dance work performed by Juilliard students and the esteemed early music ensemble, Juilliard415. He is currently pursuing a B.A. at Columbia University’s School of General Studies, and his dance writing appears in the Fall 2023 issue and forthcoming Winter 2024 issue of *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*. He is an adjunct instructor at Adelphi University and on the faculty of the Dance for PD® program.

[INSERT PHOTO] **SAYER MANSFIELD** is a movement artist, choreographer, and teacher who spent the past decade touring the world performing with Compagnie Marie Chouinard (Montreal) and Pilobolus Dance Theater (NYC). She attended Phillips Academy Andover for high school, holds a BFA in Dance from Tisch School of the Arts NYU, a BA from Trinity Laban (UK) and studied at Salzburg Experimental Academy of Dance (Austria). Sayer has deep love for teaching and has been an adjunct faculty member and guest artist at Jacob’s Pillow, Phillips Academy Andover, Roger Williams University, Harvard and Yale. She works extensively across mediums including film - most notably as a principal dancer in “Little Women” directed by Greta Gerwig. Sayer is committed to the exploration of independent creation and has presented her work at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, ART CAKE (Brooklyn, NY) and The Foundry West Stockbridge. Sayer is currently dancing as a guest artist with the Mark Morris Dance Group and working as a freelance artist and teacher based between the Hudson Valley and New York City.

[INSERT PHOTO] **CLAUDIA McDONALD** holds a B.F.A. in dance from Fordham University/The Ailey School. She was a member of Jessica Lang Dance, both as dancer and rehearsal director. She has restaged Lang's work, including her choreography in Seattle Opera's production of *Aida,* and continues to assist her with projects. She has performed with the Mark Morris Dance Group in *The Hard Nut*, *Romeo & Juliet: On Motifs of Shakespeare*, and *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*,as well as in Morris's production of *Orfeo ed Euridice* at the Metropolitan Opera.

[INSERT PHOTO] **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 Jiří Kylián, Alonzo King, Robert Moses, and Colin Connor. McMurray performed with MMDG as an apprentice in 2006 and became a company member in 2007.

[INSERT PHOTO] **ALEX MEETH** grew up in Dousman, Wisconsin, and began his dance training with Eddy Bray at the age of thirteen. After graduating from the Kettle Moraine School for Arts and Performance, he was accepted on scholarship to the Boston Conservatory at Berklee, where he graduated with a B.F.A. in contemporary dance performance (emphasis in choreography) in 2022. While at the Boston Conservatory, he performed works by Mark Morris, Catherine Coury, José Limón, Daniel Pelzig, and Bradley Shelver. Since 2019, he has additionally danced with the Boston Early Music Festival under the direction of Kathleen Fay and Melinda Sullivan. Meeth joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2024.

[INSERT PHOTO] **ANNIE MORGAN** hails from Birmingham, Alabama where she studied at the Alabama School of Fine Arts. She continued her studies at Point Park University’s Conservatory of Dance where she received the Loti Falk scholarship and graduated with a BFA in ballet. In 2018, Annie joined GroundWorks DanceTheater as a Dance and Teaching Artist. While dancing for GroundWorks, she performed works by Banning Bouldin, Robyn Mineko Williams, James Gregg, Dianne McIntyre, Brian Brooks, Adam Barruch, Hannah Garner, Amy Miller, Antonio Brown, and David Shimotakahara. In 2020, Annie was named one of *Dance Magazine*’s “25 to Watch.” Annie has choreographed an evening length work for Cleveland Public Theatre, performed with the Berkshire Choreography Project at Jacob’s Pillow, been an adjunct professor for Cleveland State University, and has performed as a backup dancer for comedian Hannibal Burress. Other recent credits include acting in Matt Stone and Trey Parker’s Casa Bonita immersive show, WHITE WAVE Dance Company, and Terre Dance Collective. Currently, Annie performs as a freelance dance and teaching artist in NYC. She is a Community Actionist for Gibney Dance’s *Hands Are for Holding* community programming, and performs regularly as a performer and collaborator for NVA & Guests.

[INSERT PHOTO] **SLOAN PEARSON** is a multifaceted artist based in New York City. Originally from Charlotte, she began studying at Charlotte Ballet under the direction of ballet luminaries Jean- Pierre Bonnefoux and Patricia McBride. She received her BFA with a modern dance emphasis from the Point Park University Conservatory of Performing Arts. While at Point Park, Sloan was offered an apprenticeship with the August Wilson Dance Ensemble. Sloan has danced with Dayton Contemporary Dance Company, Kybele Dance Theater, and Debbie Allen as a dancer in her dance ensemble - later to be featured in her Netflix Documentary. She was honored to dance with the Paul Taylor 2 Dance Company, where she was Paul Taylor’s last chosen dancer. During her four seasons she worked with Ron K. Brown, Larry Keigwen, and Peter Chu, before joining his company chuthis. Sloan has since worked with Tommie Waheed-Evans — Princess Grace Recipient both dancing and remounting his works, Holly Blakey for Puma New York Fashion Week, Yin Yue Dance Company, and the Metropolitan Opera in, “Carmen,” choreographed by Ann Ye and directed by Carrie Cracknell, and most recently with Mark Morris Dance Group in Gluck’s, “Orfeo ed Euridice.”

[INSERT PHOTO] **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.

[INSERT PHOTO] **ROBERT RUBAMA** is a graduate of George Mason University with a BFA in Dance. They have worked with The Metropolitan Opera, Haus of Bambi, Groundworks Dance Theater, Carolyn Dorfman Dance, LaneCo Arts, Peridance Contemporary Dance Company, and Alejandro Cerrudo. Robert was an artist in residence at The National Building Museum, The Floor on Atlantic, and The Homeport Art House. Robert currently works with Orange Grove Dance, Flockworks Dance, and Yin Yue Dance Company. Robert is an independent choreographer, and their work has been performed by Company E Dance, Spark Movement Collective, Bucknell University, Cleveland Dance Project, Jane Franklin Dance, Luna Dance Company, and Terre Dance Collective. Robert is an animal lover, a daydreamer, and loves the color black.

[INSERT PHOTO] **NICHOLAS RUSCICA** is a New York based dance artist originally from Toronto, Canada. He is a President’s Merit Scholar (Calarts, BFA) as well as a trained unarmed actor combatant. He has collaborated with artists such as Aszure Barton, Kayla Farrish, Olivier Tarpaga and Raul Tamez. Nicholas has had the pleasure of performing throughout North America and Europe in theaters such as Stadttheater Fürth (Germany), Bellas Artes (Mexico City) and New York City Center, in festivals including Jacob's Pillow, Vail International Dance Festival and Fall for Dance. Additionally, Nicholas enjoys teaching Limón Technique and Floorwork. He has taught workshops and assisted in lecture demonstrations at Princeton University, University of Minnesota, The Limón Dance Company, and The National Ballet School of Canada.

[INSERT PHOTO] **CHRISTINA SAHAIDA** 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. Sahaida joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2017 and became a company member in 2019.

[INSERT PHOTO] **CRAIG SALSTEIN,** a former soloist with American Ballet Theatre, Salstein has performed in Mark Morris’s *Drink To Me Only With Thine Eyes*, *Gong*, *and After You*, as well as works by Macmillan, Ashton, de Mille, and Robbins. Broadway credits include Carousel and Illinoise Directed and choreographed by Justin Peck. In film, he worked as associate choreographer for Steven Spielberg’s West Side Story and Bradley Cooper’s Maestro. Salstein trained at The Miami City Ballet School and won the grand champion title on Star Search in 1995.

[INSERT PHOTO] **FRANCES SAMSON** Hailed by the Boston Globe as "absorbing, steadfast and compelling", Frances Lorraine Samson is a New York based artist originally from Toronto, Canada. She has been featured by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), TEDx and Harper's Bazaar, and has had the honor of working for institutions such as The Juilliard School, SUNY Purchase College and the Danish National Academy of Music. Frances was a principal dancer with the Limón Dance Company from 2017-2023 and is currently on faculty for the Limón Institute. She has had the pleasure of collaborating with artists such as Twyla Tharp, Baye & Asa, Raúl Tamez, Madeline Hollander, Jamar Roberts, Aszure Barton, Francesca Harper, Hélène Simoneau and Kate Weare. Frances is the 2023 recipient of the Clive Barnes Award for Dance and is an unarmed actor combatant certified by The Society of American Fight Directors.

[INSERT PHOTO] **MEGAN SIEPKA** is a Brooklyn based dancer, choreographer, and educator from Richmond, Virginia who completed her BFA at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2020. Siepka sought further training from Sidra Bell, Laja Martin, Andrea Miller, and Ohad Naharin. In 2022, Siepka attended Springboard Danse Montreal before joining the inaugural GibneyPRO cohort. They currently work as a collaborator and performer with Baye & Asa, TAQ Dance, and as a guest performer for the Mark Morris Dance Group. Siepka also directs movement for fashion houses and commercial music artists such as Helmut Lang, LAPOINTE, and PARADISE productions.

[INSERT PHOTO] **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.

[INSERT PHOTO] **JOSLIN VEZEAU** is from St. Louis, Missouri, where she trained at the Center of Creative Arts (COCA). She graduated magna cum laude from the Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. program in dance performance in 2018 and while there was awarded the Denise Jefferson Memorial Scholarship. During her senior year in college, she joined Peridance Contemporary Dance Company in New York and danced with that company for six seasons. When not dancing, she is a personal trainer and loves rock climbing, volunteering at Brooklyn farmers markets, and taking care of dogs. She joined MMDG as an apprentice in 2023 and became a company member in 2024.

[INSERT PHOTO] **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 *The Letter V* for Houston Ballet. He began dancing with MMDG in 2002 and became a company member in 2004.

[INSERT PHOTO] **MEGAN WILLIAMS** is an independent dance artist, choreographer and educator.

She is currently on the faculties of Sarah Lawrence College and the Conservatory of Dance at Purchase College SUNY and is on the Dance for PD flagship teaching team. She was a member of the Mark Morris Dance Group from 1988-1997, returning over the decades as a guest artist and guest rehearsal director, and as an assistant to Morris on numerous projects spanning television, Broadway and the ballet realm. She has staged his work on dance companies and students internationally. Megan was in the original cast of The Hard Nut. For more info: mwdanceprojects.com @meganwilliamsdance

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