

For Immediate Release

July 2, 2021

## **PEAK PERFORMANCES AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES 2021-2022 SEASON OF LIVE, IN-PERSON AND VIDEO-BASED PRODUCTIONS**

### **12 Wide-Ranging Works Break Formal Boundaries, Probe History, and Offer Singular Visions that Reflect and Expand Our World**

On Its PEAK Plus Streaming Platform, the Organization Presents Never-Before-Seen Works by Zvi Gotheiner, David Gordon, and Elevator Repair Service, and a New HD Film of Heidi Latsky's *On Display*—All Free of Charge

Then, the State-of-the-Art Alexander Kasser Theater Reopens to Audiences for Performances Including:

- **World Premiere of Simone Dinnerstein's *The Eye Is the First Circle*, an Innovative Multimedia Work That Deconstructs and Collages Her Father Simon Dinnerstein's *The Fulbright Triptych* and Charles Ives's *Concord Sonata*, October 14-17, 2021**
- ***Look Who's Coming to Dinner*, Stefanie Batten Bland's Dance Inspired by the 1967 Film, November 4-7, 2021**
- **U.S. Premiere of Libertivore's *Fractales*, Written and Choreographed by Fanny Soriano, Entangling and Metamorphosing Dance and Circus, Human and Nature, December 16-19**
- ***Strange Fruit*, a Dance Theater Work from Donald Byrd and Spectrum Dance Theater, Responding to America's History of Racial Terrorism, February 10-13, 2022**
- **World Premiere of Netta Yerushalmy's *Movement*, Transformatively Quilting Together Quotes of Movements and Melodies from Across Dance and Music, March 17-20, 2022**
- **Return of Gandini Juggling to the Kasser with the U.S. Premiere of *Smashed2*, the Follow-up to Their Acclaimed *Smashed*, April 21-24, 2022**

- **The U.S. Debut of Berlin-Based Theater Company Familie Flöz, Performing Their Comic Thriller Fairy Tale *Hotel Paradiso*, May 5-8, 2022 (Postponed from Spring 2020)**
- **The World Premiere of Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Company's *Curriculum II*, Inspired by the Ideas of Cameroonian Philosopher Achille Mbembe, June 9-12, 2022**

### **ZviDance's *The Art of Fugue* Is Available on PEAK Plus Now**

**PEAK Performances at Montclair State University** today announces its 2021-2022 season, presenting a slate of gripping new works on film via the organization's **PEAK Plus** streaming platform, free of charge, and then welcoming audiences back into the **Alexander Kasser Theater** for a robust lineup of exhilarating on-stage premieres. The PEAK Plus programming, debuting on the channel without having been experienced by in-person audiences first, begins with **Zvi Gotheiner** and his company **ZviDance's *The Art of Fugue***, available now.

An amalgamation of exhilarating in-person performance and the dynamic, up-close views and expanded access offered by live-captured work, this season invites local and international, in-person and remote audiences to engage with the imaginations of unparalleled visionaries.

Prior to the pandemic, PEAK installed state-of-the-art performance capture technology in the Kasser, first creating a film of SITI Company and STREB Extreme Action's late-2019 work *Falling & Loving*—opening up PEAK's productions to global audiences and allowing artists to extend their performance practices into filmmaking. The usage of 4K robotic video cameras and steadicams created a unique opportunity after theaters everywhere closed in 2020, and the Kasser continued to be a locus of art-making during the shutdown. Since last fall, PEAK Performances has been inviting artists back into its theater to develop new works and stage full productions without live audiences. They gave artists creative freedom and the rare opportunity to work in physical theater space in a moment that otherwise boxed imaginations into Zoom screens and stripped so many of their livelihoods.

This summer, PEAK Plus makes these captures available to audiences for the first time, including ***The Art of Fugue***, an encapsulation of **Zvi Gotheiner's** artistic generosity that was recorded just months before he suffered the stroke from which he is currently recovering; **Heidi Latsky's *On Display*** (in August 2021), and **Elevator Repair Service's *Baldwin and Buckley at Cambridge*** (in September 2021). On the influential artist **David Gordon's** 85th birthday, July 14, 2021, PEAK Plus premieres ***The New Adventures of Old David (What Happened - 1978/2021)***, a work he wrote, directed, and choreographed expressly for the screen.

On-stage works in 2021-22 hail from a lineup of visionaries including interdisciplinary artist and Jerome Robbins awardee **Stefanie Batten Bland**; “spellbinding” (*The Washington Post*) artist **Simone Dinnerstein**; Tony-nominated and Bessie-winning choreographer **Donald Byrd** and his company **Spectrum Dance Theater**; the form-bending Berlin-based theater company **Familie Flöz** (making their U.S. debut at PEAK); the legendary **Bill T. Jones / Arnie Zane Company**; **Gandini Juggling**, whose acclaimed performances “open windows in the mind” (*The New York Times*, Critic’s Pick review); **Fanny Soriano** and her form-spanning circus company **Libertivore**; and **Netta Yerushalmy**, a dance artist working across genres and disciplines and colliding references from within dance history.

These works reflect our moment—one in which disciplinary distinctions have melted and hybridity has, more than ever, been embraced; and in which art that understands history’s impact on our troubled present is acutely needed. The season’s offerings traverse dance, theater, music, circus, and film, and excavate new visions from formal tradition and the depths of memory and history. Here, artists’ boundless practices turn the stage and screen—not to mention the human body, the piano, juggling pins—into sites of endless possibility.

#### **PEAK PERFORMANCES 2021-2022 SEASON SCHEDULE AND DESCRIPTIONS**

[PEAK PLUS]

**ZVI GOTHEINER | ZVIDANCE**

***THE ART OF FUGUE***

(Dance/Multimedia, USA)

Available Now

World Premiere

*The Art of Fugue* is an evening-length, multimedia dance performance collaboration between Artistic Director Zvi Gotheiner, composer Scott Killian, lighting designer Mark London, media designer Joshua Higgason, and eight dancers. Johann Sebastian Bach’s *The Art of Fugue* is a point of departure for this choreographic exploration that highlights the individual contribution of each of his creative team. In music, a fugue is a contrapuntal composition in which a short melody is introduced by one voice and successively taken up by others; Gotheiner introduces this compositional structure as a metaphor to portray a non-hierarchical society. Killian integrates electronic original music with Bach, anchoring the work in contemporary culture. Higgason’s live and pre-recorded video projection adds an additional “voice” to the complexity of the canonic composition.

[PEAK PLUS]

**DAVID GORDON**

***THE NEW ADVENTURES OF OLD DAVID (WHAT HAPPENED – 1978/2021)***

(Film, USA)  
July 14  
World Premiere

David Gordon's six-decade career has been a journey of constant self-reimagining in which new productions frequently incorporate fragments of his past works and his personal life often becomes explicit source material. In *The New Adventures of Old David (What Happened - 1978/2021)*, Gordon builds upon not only a previous performance, but also his experience making work expressly for the screen—as in the three-time Emmy-nominated *David Gordon's Made in U.S.A. (1987)*, starring his partner, Valda Setterfield, and Mikhail Baryshnikov. *The New Adventures of Old David* is a film written, directed, and choreographed by Gordon, in which he returns to his 1978 dance with words *What Happened* to create something whose content and form are new. A company of recent and longtime collaborators—Wally Cardona, Scott Cunningham, Leslie Cuyjet, Karen Graham, Irène Hultman, Justin Jain, Shayla-Vie Jenkins., Dean Moss, Cynthia Oliver, and Setterfield—perform movement from the original work, in their homes and on the stage of the Alexander Kasser Theater, while Gordon, Setterfield, and Gordon's stage manager of 30+ years, Ed Fitzgerald, tell the story of how *What Happened* happened. The result is a revealing memoir, a loving tribute to Setterfield, and evidence of Gordon's ever-expanding artistry.

*What Happened* archival materials are available at [davidgordon.nyc](http://davidgordon.nyc).

[PEAK PLUS]  
**HEIDI LATSKY**

***ON DISPLAY***

(Dance, USA)  
August 2021  
The Film's World Premiere

*The New York Times* has described Heidi Latsky as a “choreographer and dancer of uncommon intelligence and fluidity,” and has written that, for her, “there are no unbeautiful bodies and no bodies incapable of dancing. In what some might call disability, she finds possibility.” With her ongoing series *On Display*, she turns a cast of diverse bodies into a sculptural installation, appropriating the notion of the body as spectacle and addressing society's tendency to objectify, judge, and stigmatize people who are different from ourselves. On the stage of the Kasser, in collaboration with lighting designer Robert Wierzel, New York Live Arts Associate Artistic Director Janet Wong, and a cast of 14 performers, she has created an arresting new filmed version of the work.

[PEAK PLUS]

## **ELEVATOR REPAIR SERVICE**

### ***BALDWIN AND BUCKLEY AT CAMBRIDGE***

(Theater, USA)

September 2021

Avant-Premiere

In 1965, James Baldwin and William F. Buckley, Jr., were invited to the Cambridge University Union to debate the resolution “The American Dream Is at the Expense of The American Negro.” The result was a provocative and profoundly relevant confrontation between Baldwin, one of the most powerful figures of the civil rights movement, and Buckley, often considered the father of 20th Century patrician conservatism. Building on its history of staging unconventional texts, New York-based ensemble Elevator Repair Service (ERS) will present the debate verbatim in a special video preview of this new work. With both 1965 and 2021 in mind, *Baldwin and Buckley at Cambridge* – through a starkly simple design and acting that favors intimacy over impersonation – presents the debate as real, immediate, and of this moment.

[IN THE KASSER]

## **SIMONE DINNERSTEIN**

### ***THE EYE IS THE FIRST CIRCLE***

(Multimedia, USA)

October 14-17

World Premiere

With *The Eye Is the First Circle*, Simone Dinnerstein ventures into bold interdisciplinary artistic territory in collaboration with projection designer Laurie Olinder and lighting designer Davison Scandrett. Conceived and directed by Dinnerstein, this dynamic production deconstructs and collages elements from two works that are themselves collages: her father Simon Dinnerstein’s painting *The Fulbright Triptych* and Charles Ives’s *Piano Sonata No. 2 (Concord)*. *The Fulbright Triptych* places a family portrait (including an infant Simone) within the tradition of Medieval altar paintings, against a wall teeming with art historical references, and the *Concord Sonata* expresses the imaginative and natural world of the Transcendentalists through an ecstatic and fractured musical lens. Olinder pulls visuals including animated elements of the painting and real-time video to all points of the stage, and Scandrett’s lighting gives them breathtaking theatricality. Dinnerstein’s searching performance sits within this disorientingly immersive visual space. The piece asks: How do our origin stories mold us? How can a sense of self come from the musical and visual fragments we remember from childhood? *The Eye is the First Circle* shows us what it is to draw a new circle around the one we stand in, at the edge of what we can see.

[IN THE KASSER]

**STEFANIE BATTEN BLAND**

***LOOK WHO'S COMING TO DINNER***

(Dance, USA)

November 4-7

Stephanie Batten Bland creates performance at the intersection of dance-theater and installation, questioning contemporary and historical cultural symbolism and the complexities of human relationships. Inspired by the 1967 Stanley Kramer film starring Sydney Poitier, Katherine Hepburn, and Spencer Tracy, *Look Who's Coming to Dinner* pays tribute to those who paved the way toward acceptance in love and life. Set around a transformative dinner setting, seven dance-theater artists excavate interlaced universal traumas through imagery and ritual as they seek a seat at the table.

[IN THE KASSER]

**COMPAGNIE LIBERTIVORE**

***FRACTALES***

(Circus, France)

Written and Choreographed by Fanny Soriano

December 16-19

U.S. Premiere

The language of the circus and dance movement highlight the physical potential of the acrobatic body as performers are confronted by a landscape in transformation. Circus and danced movement induce a slow metamorphosis of humans and organic matter, as performers confront nature, accompany it, dodge it, collide and merge with it. Like fractals, nothing here has a beginning or an end, but is part of a continuum.

[IN THE KASSER]

**DONALD BYRD / SPECTRUM DANCE THEATER**

***STRANGE FRUIT***

(Dance, USA)

February 10-13, 2022

*Strange Fruit* draws its title from the 1937 poem and song of the same name by Abel Meeropol and made famous by the great jazz singer Billie Holiday—which metaphorically addresses lynching as a tool of racial terrorism during the Jim Crow Era. For this dance/theater work, the facts of lynching act as springboards into a highly personal interior space and state of mind. Abstract yet grounded in a brutal reality, *Strange Fruit* tracks choreographer Donald Byrd's feelings as a response to lynching and plays out as a series of dance/theater vignettes.

[IN THE KASSER]

**NETTA YERUSHALMY**

***MOVEMENT***

(Dance, USA)

March 17-20, 2022

World Premiere

*MOVEMENT* follows Yerushalmy's most recent major work, *Paramodernities*, a six-part series generated through reverently and violently dissecting iconic modern choreographies. The project explored tenets of modern discourse – sovereignty, race, sexuality, disability – with contributions by scholars from different fields, and was created explicitly in order to provoke dynamic conversations with the past and its legacies. In *MOVEMENT*, existing dances are again quoted (this time from a vast array of sources) and pieced together into an intricate and elaborate quilt with radical and surprising results. By plucking (stealing) short movements and placing them outside of their original contexts, Yerushalmy repurposes them, re-orientates them, and perhaps re-cultures them.

[IN THE KASSER]

**GANDINI JUGGLING**

***SMASHED2***

(Theater/Circus, UK)

April 21-24, 2022

U.S. Premiere

In Gandini Juggling's hit *Smashed*, which made its U.S. Premiere at PEAK Performances, the manipulation of forbidden fruit shrewdly explored the strained relations between seven men and two women—and kindly flayed traditions of juggling and circus. *Smashed2* is the dark art of juggling revisited. Director Sean Gandini and Kati Ylä-Hokkala borrow elements of Pina Bausch's gestural choreography and combine them with the intricate patterns and cascades of solo and ensemble juggling. Simultaneously evoking great pleasure and small disquiet, *Smashed2* lightly disrupts the rigid conventions of etiquette, dress, gender, and body language. The result is a new hybrid of juggling, performed with meticulous unison and split-second timing.

[IN THE KASSER]

**FAMILIE FLÖZ**

***HOTEL PARADISO***

(Mask Theater, Germany)

May 5-8, 2022

U.S. Premiere

Using clowning, acrobatics, magic, and improvisation, Familie Flöz makes its highly anticipated U.S. debut after delighting European audiences for more than 20 years with captivating theatrical experiences. Strange things happen in *Hotel Paradiso*, a comedic thriller chock full of eccentric characters including a pajama-wearing front-desk clerk, a kleptomaniacal maid, and a cook who chops up more than just pork. Set in a family-run Alpine resort, this fairy tale full of secrets is created by a Berlin-based troupe known worldwide for works that are “wordless and yet somehow so expressive, full of yearning and yet also filled with joy” (*The Guardian*).

[IN THE KASSER]

**BILL T. JONES / ARNIE ZANE COMPANY**

***CURRICULUM II***

(Dance, USA)

June 9-12, 2022

World Premiere

The genesis of the series of works entitled *Curriculum* came from the Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe’s ideas around archive and curriculum. *Curriculum I* began with exploring the rich archive of Bill T. Jones’ movement phrases, all made with the intention of clarity and form. Running parallel to and in juxtaposition with this formal exploration is a ticker tape of topical concerns informed by the 24-hour news cycle: climate change, racial violence, identity politics, reparations, decolonization. Mbembe might categorize these concerns as ‘planetary curriculum.’ *Curriculum I* was set to premiere at the Holland Festival in the summer of 2020 and was canceled due to Covid-19. *Curriculum II* attempts to embrace formal directness and clarity while allowing it to be intruded upon by word fragments, imagery and the stuff of Mbembe’s planetary curriculum. This time the focal point comes from Louis Chude-Sokei’s treatise *The Sound of Culture: Diaspora and Black Technopoetics* which explores the connection between race and technology from minstrelsy, music production, cybernetics, to artificial intelligence and posthumanism. Peak Performances commissioned *Curriculum II* as a film project. It is now being reimaged as a live performance for an in-person audience, and as with any curriculum, it is a dynamic entity made up of intersecting parts whose content will and must change in response to time, place, and purpose.

### **ABOUT PEAK PERFORMANCES**

PEAK Performances is a program of the Office of Arts + Cultural Programming (Jedediah Wheeler, Executive Director) at Montclair State University and has been honored by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts with previous Arts Citation of Excellence and Designation of Major Impact.

Programs in this season are made possible in part by the Alexander Kasser Theater Endowment Fund, PEAK Patrons, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, and the FACE Foundation.

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