

# The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts Announces 2020 Dance Research Fellows

## New class of fellows will focus on the subject of dance and immigration

June 19, 2020—The Jerome Robbins Dance Division has selected its new class of Dance Research Fellows. Selected from a record number of applicants, these researchers and artists will delve into the Dance Division's archives to explore the theme of dance and immigration.

This year's fellows and the collections they'll focus on are:

- Kiri Avelar – *Descubriendo Latinx: The Hidden Text in American Modern Dance*
- Ninotchka Bennahum – *Border Crossings: Léonide Massine and Encarnación López Júlvez, 'La Argentinita,' 1935 – 1945*
- Pam Tanowitz – *Song of Songs*
- Phil Chan – *Dreams of the Orient*
- Sergey Konaev – *Teaching to Survive: Immigrant Female Dance Schools and Classes in the 1930s–1950s (France and USA)*
- Yusha-Marie Sorzano – *Hierarchy, Rebellion and Hope: An Examination of the Treatment of the Immigrant Experience in Dance*

Created in 2014 to support scholars and practitioners engaged in graduate-level, post-doctoral, and independent research using the Dance Division's unmatched holdings, this program awards a stipend of \$7,500 and a research period from July 1 to December 31, 2020 for fellows to complete their work. Each fellow is required to participate in a public symposium on Friday, January 29, 2021 where they will deliver a presentation or performance on the outcome of their research. The symposium -- which serves as the culmination of the fellowship -- is free and open to the public, and attendees are encouraged to observe as many presentations as possible throughout the day. Online reservations will be accepted beginning in November 2020. Previous classes of fellows have explored a diverse range of research topics, including Jerome Robbins, Merce Cunningham, Cambodian dance, the African dance diaspora in NYC and AIDS dance oral histories.

"The topic of immigration is ever present in the dance community today, but it is also present in dance from its very foundation," said Linda Murray, curator of the Jerome Robbins Dance Division. "We are excited to hear from these scholars and dance artists whose applications demonstrated a desire to engage with the histories contained within our archive to bring forward narratives for the future of dance."

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Previous fellows include Malaika Adero, Reid Bartelme and Harriet Jung, Claire Bishop, Yoshiko Chuma, Emily Coates, Adrian Danchig-Waring, Silas Farley, Jack Ferver & Jeremy Jacob, Robert Greskovic, Triwi Harjito, Joseph Houseal, Julie Lemberger, Alastair Macaulay, Emmanuele Phuon, Hiie Saumaa, Apollinaire Scherr, Gus Solomons, Jr., Victoria Tennant, Justin Tornow, Preeti Vasudevan, Tara Aisha Willis, Netta Yerushalmy & Elizabeth Zimmer.

Founded in 1944, the Jerome Robbins Dance Division is the world's largest dance archive with an international and extensive collection that spans seven centuries. We provide a community space for dance professionals, researchers and the general public, offering programs and exhibitions, a dance studio for special projects, educational activities, residencies, fellowships, documentation of performances and oral histories and, of course, dance reference services, all free of charge.

The 2020 Dance Research Fellowships were made possible by the generosity of the Estate of Louise Guthman, the Doris Duke Charitable Trust, the Nash Family Foundation, the Frederick Loewe Foundation and the Committee for the Jerome Robbins Dance Division.

### About the 2020 Jerome Robbins Dance Division Dance Research Fellows

**Kiri Avelar – Dancer, Educator & Scholar**

*Descubriendo Latinx: The Hidden Text in American Modern Dance*

Avelar will look at how the absented presence of Latinx has shaped the foundation of modern dance in the United States. Latinx is often absent in the stories and histories we tell about the American modern dance pioneers. A descubrimiento (discovery) of the contributions made by Latinx and Spanish people groups and cultures, these presences, challenges us to shift how we talk about the art form and its founding, and asks for a clearer representation and reflection of Latinx cultural contributions in the retelling of the birth and development of modern dance in America. This project fundamentally engages a history of border crossing where artists from different life worlds make contact, share ideas, and imagine new forms of embodied expression.

**Ninotchka Bennahum – Professor of Dance History, UCSB**

*Border Crossings: Léonide Massine and Encarnación López Júlvez, 'La Argentinita,' 1935 – 1945*

Little has been written on the historical relationship between immigration, exilic experience, and contemporary ballet. The Spanish Civil War (1936 – 1939) and the rise of fascism in Western and Eastern Europe threatened the lives of millions, in particular those deemed “valuable individuals,” i.e., artists and intellectuals who escaped, oftentimes under cover of night. Some were forced to adopt temporary, émigré status. For the great majority, permanent exile and loss of homeland forced a reckoning with new national identities and, consequently new frameworks in which to experiment with exilic modernist experience. Bennahum will explore this life on the run where, even if and when one returned “home,” home was now changed and one's prewar artistic ties no longer existed.

**Phil Chan – Founder, Final Bow for Yellowface**

*Dreams of the Orient*

To thrive in a diverse 21st century society, American ballet must grapple with how portrayals of “exotic” Asian people and places in European classical ballets from the 19th and 20th centuries

immigrated to the United States, and continued to perpetuate stereotypes in new works made here by non-Asian artists, constraining the ability of Asian immigrants and subsequent generations of Asian Americans to participate fully in dance and in society. Chan will study *The Nutcracker*, *Le Corsaire*, *Le Bayadere*, *Scheherazade*, *Parade*, and *Le Chant du Rossignol* from the Old World, as well as newer American works such as *Bugaku* and *The Chairman Dances* to create a set of historically-based best practices for performing arts organizations to preserve the integrity of these beloved works while re-thinking any elements of problematic racial portrayals.

**Sergey Konaev – Principal Researcher at the State Institute for Art Studies, Moscow**

*Teaching to Survive: Immigrant Female Dance Schools and Classes in the 1930s–1950s (France and USA)*

Konaev's project documents and analyses the teaching activities of prominent immigrant female dancers in 1930s–1950s as part of the broader womens struggle for self-determination following their retirement from the stage. It aims for the publication of key archival documents with an introduction and commentary.

**Yusha-Marie Sorzano – Choreographer & Dancer**

*Hierarchy, Rebellion and Hope: An Examination of the Treatment of the Immigrant Experience in Dance*

Sorzano will examine archival material from the 1960s to present with specific emphasis on the treatment of immigrant and minority groups. Her interrogation will center on the authenticity of their representation in the work of immigrant/minority and mainstream choreographers with the intent to determine their relevance and usefulness to informing the narrative of a creative dance work that responds to the present reality of these populations.

**Pam Tanowitz – Choreographer**

*Song of Songs*

Tanowitz will research Jewish folk dance– the origins, customs, and steps. This builds on her fascination with the Hora as a community dance and how it brings people together. The word Hora is not Hebrew or Yiddish but Greek– khorós, meaning “circle”, a relative of the Greek chorus. Variations of this dance can be found all throughout the Mediterranean and eastern Europe. Tanowitz will draw a parallel between the “women of Jerusalem” – how they function both as an audience and act as spectators to the lovers – and how they will parallel the audience that is watching the completed dance. The ultimate piece will form the final part of her trilogy of *New Work for Goldberg Variations* and *Four Quartets*.

**Press Contact:** Amy Geduldig, [AmyGeduldig@nypl.org](mailto:AmyGeduldig@nypl.org)

**About The New York Public Library For The Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center**

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts houses one of the world's most extensive combinations of circulating, reference, and rare archival collections in its field. These materials are available free of charge, along with a wide range of special programs, including exhibitions, seminars, and performances. An essential resource for everyone with an interest in the arts — whether professional or amateur — the Library is known particularly for its prodigious collections of non-book

materials such as historic recordings, videotapes, autograph manuscripts, correspondence, sheet music, stage designs, press clippings, programs, posters and photographs. The Library is part of The New York Public Library system, which has 92 locations in the Bronx, Manhattan and Staten Island, and is a lead provider of free education for all.