



FOREWORD

Mark Morris

Artistic Director/Choreographer, Mark Morris Dance Group

Dance has a longer history than almost any other human activity. Why was there no Dance Museum before this one? Didn't anyone notice that we needed one? Well, here it is, and it is selective, quirky, and marvelous: The National Museum of Dance and Hall of Fame in Saratoga Springs, New York.

The building itself looks a lot like a mausoleum and feels like a sanitarium because of its history and location. Thankfully, the tone and the taste of the collection is warm and friendly and, crucially, serious. Dancers, choreographers, writers, critics, trends, and history are represented and presented. The collections and exhibits are not exhaustive, but specific and varied and engaging.

Dance as an old, strange form of social activity, art form, theater performance, communication, re-creation, personal experience, show business, time killer, workout, the sacred and the profane. Dance deserves our curious attention and reverence. What was there before dance? Language, agriculture, the wheel, fire? Sex, certainly. I imagine that dancing started when our wonderful ancestrals decided to run toward something instead of away from it. Dancing occurred just after noticing the heartbeat, and thereby rhythm. So much dancing in the whole world is a result and response to mystery, physical labor, storytelling, celebration, boredom, entertainment, communication, and glamour. Watch. Listen. Repeat.

We who work behind the scenes and in the public domain to present dance and music to the interested public, love and value everyone who has led up to the now of dance. The history of dancing is a long one. It is fascinating and deep. So many points of view, techniques, opinions, lineages, studies, stories, ballets, spectacles, pageants, competitions, conventions, movements, theories, delights, for all of us. Always interesting. Always more to learn.

My own life has ever been a dancing life and I think I know a little something about it by now. In fact, it's all I know. I've got it. I can read it. I get bored of it. I despair of it. I have faith in it. I admire it. I worship and resent it. I am a choreographer of dances and have lived with my own dance company since 1980. I am so grateful to have been inducted into the museum along with so many notable and important people in the world of dance. And what a wonderful compliment! How nice to be taken as seriously as I take my responsibility to this incredible and untranslatable art form. I have no doubt that the long, vast history of dance will continue as long as the civilization it honors. This book is a good story about a great place to visit. Hail Terpsichore! Hail National Museum of Dance and Hall of Fame!

FACING PAGE:

Mark Morris, Artistic Director/Choreographer, Mark Morris Dance Group.