



*A contemporary artist residency, dance and performance center,
for Martha's Vineyard and beyond*

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FOR IMMEDIATE LISTING and RELEASE

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YARD ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, DAVID R. WHITE, RETIRES AFTER 50 YEARS OF SERVICE TO FIELD & NEW YARD LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCED

David R. White, legendary producer and champion of American contemporary dance, is announcing his retirement after a decade of revitalizing The Yard, the renowned performing arts center in Chilmark, MA on Martha's Vineyard. His retirement culminates a five-decade career as a leading and lauded mastermind in the field of contemporary dance and performance in the United States.

White came to prominence as Artistic Director and Executive Producer of Dance Theater Workshop (now New York Live Arts) from 1975-2003 where he discovered, launched and sustained the careers of scores of renowned artists in dance, theater and performance. White had been asked by the founders of DTW, Jeff Duncan, Arthur Bauman and Jack Moore, to take the helm of DTW when it moved from its original location in Duncan's loft to 219 West 19th Street. White created The National Performance Network, a national touring circuit, The Suitcase Fund which supports international touring by small dance companies, and "Making It," a model educational initiative for students from preschool through high school which embeds movement in academic practice. He also established the New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Awards in 1984 and was a principal editor of The Poor Dancer's Almanac, an essential resource guide for dancers. All have endured. His artistic programming merged aesthetics and ethics through a self-avowed "liberal, multi-cultural lens," which has long been distinguished by its diversity and inclusivity. His work, as he saw it, was to "set about to organize our wilderness of independent research and experimentation" so that choreographers would have a life beyond the centers that brought them up. Over the last 50 years he's fulfilled that promise.

ABOUT WHITE'S CAREER:

For 28 years, starting in 1975, White led Dance Theater Workshop which started as a small, scrappy choreographer's collective housed over an Economy Tires store on 19th Street in New York City and transformed it into a major performing arts center with international production and service programs and year round presentations. With his uncannily keen eye for artists, he made

DTW a creative incubator and home for a lustrous array of choreographers such as Bill T Jones, Reggie Wilson, Yanira Castro, AnnieB Parson and Paul Lazar, Bebe Miller, David Parker, Yasuko Yokoshi, Donna Uchizono, Tere O'Connor, David Dorfman, and Keely Garfield to name but a few.

White had gotten involved in dance at Wesleyan University as a natural offshoot of his early work in film and theater. This led him to Kathryn Posin's dance company with which he occasionally performed while finding himself increasingly drawn to devising programs to protect and extend the working lives of choreographers. He became the contemporary dance world's most resourceful problem-solver. As the National Endowment for the Arts turned away from sponsoring touring, he invented The National Performance Network with support from the Ford Foundation. Seeing a need for international dialogue between artists, he created The Suitcase Fund with support from JP Morgan to support international touring by small dance companies. To boost the visibility and celebration of dance and performance, he created the New York Dance and Performance ("Bessie") Awards whose eponymous inspiration, Bessie Schonberg, he invited to lead workshops for choreographers at DTW. To discover and give exposure to emerging artists, White created Fresh Tracks, a highly influential biannual program presenting works by choreographers chosen by a panel of professionals during live auditions. Those chosen were fully produced and frequently continued their relationship with DTW. Notable Fresh Tracks alumni include Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker, David Parsons, Ron Brown, and Doug Elkins.

His expansive programmatic vision extended to clowning, theater, puppetry and stand-up comedy. He introduced Whoopi Goldberg and Bill Irwin to DTW and New York audiences, gave opportunities to experimental tap artists like Gail Conrad and Anita Feldman, hosted The American Ballroom Theater, and provided the Mark Morris Dance Group with many of its early commissions. He knew that contemporary performance was not a genre but an approach to making art that stemmed from interrogation, experimentation and wit, and he opened the doors to a wide range of artists.

"I came out of the sixties and the anti-war movement," says White, "which proved that a collective force could be greater than the sum of its parts." Though fueled by utopian hope, White always stayed close to the ground, surrounded by artists, educators and audiences. "He has an uncanny ability to see directly to the most elemental aspects of an artist's work and to see their value no matter the success or failure of a given piece," says choreographer David Parker who has worked with White since the nineteen eighties, "It's one of the great joys of his life."

White has been commended and recognized as a "Distinguished Alumnus" of Wesleyan University, a Knight (Chevalier) In France's Order of Arts and Letters, a recipient of the Dance/USA Honors, The Capezio Award and the Dance Magazine Award as well as both the Governor's and Mayor's Award of New York State and New York City among other citations. He has consulted widely on issues and policies of community cultural development in both urban and rural settings, and he has served as a grants panelist for numerous federal, state and private agencies, foundations and corporations.

After taking the helm at The Yard in 2011, White devoted himself to fulfilling a vision of The Yard as a national hub for creation, education, local and national programming and national and international presenting. Always sensitive to the links between artists, audiences, students, presenters, funders and the diverse communities they serve, he devised—in partnership with Yard Director of Island Programs & Education Jesse Keller Jason—an innovative education and outreach program called "Making It" which he launched with funds from the Doris Duke Charitable

Foundation. This program reframes dance in education as a way of introducing students from preschool through high school to their own intrinsic movement ingenuity by centering on embodied problem solving. This program was implemented island-wide and continues in its 8th year. In only ten years' time, White partnered with former Executive Director Alison Manning to grow The Yard from an already beloved "artists' colony," founded by the late choreographer Patricia N. Nanon, to a leading national hub of contemporary dance, performance and education.

ABOUT THE FUTURE:

White's vision for The Yard to become a year-round cultural institution lives on, as does his effort to raise a national dance culture in island waters. The Yard continues to evolve programming, even amidst an international pandemic, in order to serve national and international dance artists as well as the Martha's Vineyard community. Last month, The Yard's Board of Directors appointed **Chloe Jones** as the new Executive Director. Jones has been with the organization since 2015, through a critical period of growth. She has worked in both development and programs, serving as Director of Development & Associate Producer from 2017-2020. She was most recently in the role of Interim Executive Director, working alongside White on programming and administration, and successfully led The Yard through the early months of COVID-19. Jones brings a lifelong dedication to dance to her work at The Yard.

Jones is joined by The Yard's Director of Island Programs & Education, **Jesse Keller Jason**, and Director of Artist Services & Associate Producer **Holly Jones**. Having worked closely with White for many years, Keller Jason and Jones are uniquely positioned to carry White's legacy forward, including Keller Jason's intimate work with the community, expanding The Yard's partnership with many island organizations and schools. This leadership team also represents the next generation of leadership in the arts sector, and White has endorsed that they can carry the organization forward.

Following his retirement, White plans to write about the development of contemporary dance in America during the nineteen seventies and eighties. No one is better positioned to do so than he, and no one has done more to ensure its continued life.

SEED. GROW. REAP. REPEAT: THE NATURE OF THE YARD.

