



African American Heritage

Artists of the African Diaspora and Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival: Inception to Present



Participate in African Diaspora activities at Jacob's Pillow Dance

Attend performances—During the annual Festival Season dance artists from all cultures and heritages are presented on the Pillow's three stages. Call for a complete season brochure of performances, both ticketed and free, or visit www.jacobspillow.org and select performances of African-American artists.

Visit Blake's Barn—Experience a history of diversity at the Pillow through books, photos, and rare dance video footage of African-American performers. Explore memorable moments from the Pillow's inception to the present at the Pillow Interactive kiosk. Attend PillowTalks hosted by notable scholars and artists discussing traditions of the African diaspora for example and more. Open six days a week during the Festival, by appointment year-round.

Tour the Grounds—Walk in the footsteps of those who sought refuge on route to Canada at this historic Underground Railroad Station. Celebrate the beginnings of African-American heritage at Jacob's Pillow, by exploring the 163-acre homestead, including original 18th century structures, every Saturday 5:30pm during the summer Festival from the Welcome Center or pick up the self-guided Tour Brochure at anytime.

Take classes, observe classes, tailor a "Day at the Pillow" for your group and more—all are invited to participate. In addition to public programs, career track programs at the Pillow include the Intern Program and The School at Jacob's Pillow.

This brochure was created with support from the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail which has declared Jacob's Pillow as a site on the trail.



JACOB'S PILLOW DANCE

Festival, School, Archives, Community
358 George Carter Rd. Becket, MA 01223

413-243-9919 www.jacobspillow.org

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“Dance includes every way that men of all races in every period of the world's history have moved rhythmically to express themselves.” —Ted Shawn (1915)

Written over ninety years ago, Jacob's Pillow founder Ted Shawn's vision for a broad and inclusive view of the art form of dance is still a guiding force. In Shawn's quest to promote all forms of dance, the Pillow became an important presenter for artists of the African Diaspora, and continues to present many of these influential artists.

In the Ted Shawn Theater's inaugural season of 1942, Jacob's Pillow audiences enjoyed seeing African dance pioneer **Asadata Dafora** perform with Randolph Sawyer and African percussionists. Dafora, born in Sierra Leone in 1890, was the first to bring African dance to the concert stage. Soon after, Trinidadian native **Pearl Primus** made her theatrical debut in New York City in 1943, and followed Dafora to Jacob's Pillow in 1947. **Talley Beatty**, who worked with musician Duke Ellington, debuted at the Pillow in 1948 with *Southern Landscape*. Just three years before his death in 1995, the work was revived by the Pillow. At that time Beatty returned to record an invaluable oral history and his story has now become part of an extensive archival collection of work about dance artists world-wide.

COVER PHOTO: Talley Beatty in Mourner's Bench, photo Eric M. Sanford TOP: Ronald K. Brown/Evidence in Come Ye, photo Basil Childers

Pearl Primus, photo John Van Lund