



SUMMER '96

Outside New York, But Still At the Center

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Peggy Baker will perform at Jacob's Pillow in July.

DANCE ALWAYS CROWDS ITS WAY INTO New York City in the summer. And this year, in addition to the usual seasons of ballet at the New York State Theater and the Metropolitan Opera House, there will be an adventurous selection of dance in the new Lincoln Center Festival. Yet, as ever, dance lovers can feel artistically at the heart of things should they head to two long-established festivals away from the urban ferment: the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in the Berkshire Hills of Massachusetts and the American Dance Festival at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

Both are proud of their pasts; both also welcome new ideas. Jacob's Pillow will present its first-ever week of jazz-tap dancing, and the American Dance Festival will offer premieres by choreographers, including Merce Cunningham, from five countries.

Though it has long been a magnet for arts-inclined travelers, Jacob's Pillow still has the feel of being off the beaten track. Lee, the nearest town, has little of the bustle of Berkshire communities like Lenox and Stockbridge. But Lee's placidity is part of its appeal. The town green is dominated by a white, high-steeped church. There are shops, an old railway station, restaurants and guest houses. Nothing proclaims chic.

As audiences have known for decades, getting to Jacob's Pillow can be a soothing experience. Several miles out of Lee, visitors turn off for the festival onto a

At Jacob's Pillow and the American Dance Festival, there's no such thing as standing in place.

long entrance road. At its end is a rustic retreat. The Pillow, as aficionados call it, was originally a farm. The twisting road that led to it in the 19th century was nicknamed Jacob's Ladder, and a huge rock on the grounds was termed Jacob's Pillow.

Dance fans love to revel in the festival's history, because its story is a good one. The pioneering modern dancer Ted Shawn bought the property in 1930 when he felt a need for solitude. He did some building and remodeling. Then, in 1933, his all-male group, the Men Dancers, started rehearsing on the grounds and giving Sunday programs, which continued every summer until World War II — and the military draft — forced the company to disband. Despite wartime gasoline rationing, however, the Pillow's summer activities expanded during the 40's until they became full-scale festivals. Shawn brought in examples of ballet, folk and modern dance, and major troupes like the Royal Danish Ballet, Netherlands Dance Theater and London's Ballet Rambert made their American debuts there.

Since Shawn's death in 1972, his successors, including Sali Ann Kriegsman, the present director, have continued to emphasize diversity. In addition to the Jazz Tap Fest, this summer's festival (June 22-Aug. 25) will feature flamenco and South Indian dance and such varied troupes as the Miami City Ballet and the companies of Eliot Feld, Mark Morris and Paul Taylor. There will be more live music than before (Peggy Baker and Melissa Fenley will share a solo program to live music), and several collaborations between choreographers and composers will receive premieres. There will be tributes to Erick Hawkins and Alwin

Nikolaï.

Amid the illustrious names, the Pillow itself is always one of the chief attractions. It's simply lovely to be there. In some respects, the Pillow still resembles a farm. Its largest theater looks like a barn, although it was specifically built for dance performances in 1942. The Pillow also has the smaller Studio/Theater and an outdoor stage, but parts of the grounds remain forested. A sweeping lawn has a cafe at one end, where theatergoers can buy soups, salads, pasta and wine. As at nearby Tanglewood, it feels wonderfully civilized to dine outdoors and then stroll to a theater for such rich choreography.

Although the Pillow has made itself comfortably at home in an area long famous for its festivals, the American Dance Festival, which specializes in modern dance, has brought the festival spirit to two communities.

It derives from another New England enterprise: the Bennington Festivals, which flourished in the 30's at Bennington College in Vermont. World War II put an end to those events, but in 1948 their organizers established the American Dance Festival at Connecticut College in New London. When the festival outgrew that campus, it was moved to Durham in 1978 by Charles L. Reinhart, who remains co-director with his wife, Stephanie.

The choice astonished some sophisticates. Duke is a major university, but Durham was no dance capital. It was a tobacco town, and an aromatic haze from its cigarette factories still drifts through the streets.

Durham does have its charm. As the city has grown more culturally conscious in recent years, good restaurants have multiplied. And its bookshops are worth exploring. There is even a small Greenwich Village-like area: a few blocks of Ninth Street, on which are bookstores, bakeries and cafes. The people who hang out there range from well-scrubbed, earnest students to languid, bearded folk who give the impression they've been sipping the same cup of espresso since the 60's.

Then there's Duke itself. It consists of two campuses a mile apart. Although most structures were built after the 1920's, visitors may fancy they've journeyed back into time. The East Campus is in a charming Georgian style; one could imagine Thomas Jefferson planning it. The more imposing West Campus, where the festival's two theaters are situated, is grandly Gothic, dominated by the cathedral-like Duke Chapel.

ALTHOUGH DURHAM DOES HAVE ITS sights, anyone wishing to see them should be warned: the temperature often reaches the 100's. But many dancers like hot weather, saying perspiration helps make them limber. And dance is Durham's main summer attraction. Among this year's events (June 6-July 20), in addition to the premiere of Mr. Cunningham's "Rondo," are premieres by Pilobolus, David Parsons and Mark Dendy. On June 24, Meredith Monk will receive the Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award, a prize of \$25,000 for lifetime achievement in modern dance.

Over the years, the festival has encouraged such significant American choreographers as José Limón, Paul Taylor, Twyla Tharp and Laura Dean, and it has acquainted Americans with the London Contemporary Dance Theater, major foreign choreographers like Dore Hoyer, Birgit Akesson and Maguy Marin and exponents of African, Indonesian and Japanese Butoh dance. This year works from Spain, Portugal, Argentina and the Czech Republic will be shown. There may be little urban commotion in Durham, but you can see much of the choreographic world there. And much of the rest will be at the Pillow. □