

# Dear Friends,

As the end of 2019 approaches, we celebrate our growing partnerships with the Newberry Library, Chicago Film Archives, and the Ragdale Foundation, and we reflect on the significant public programs we’ve been able to offer this year. We’re also looking to the future. Here’s a glimpse of our recent activities.



Boulé with MSF Executive Director Corinne Pierog and Trustee Toby Nicholson

A two-part program, **“From Sybil Shearer to Michelle Boulé: Breaking Away and Creating Legacy,”** was held on April 6 at Link’s Hall, Chicago’s venue for dance. The afternoon panel was moderated by MSF Trustee and dancer Toby Nicholson, with lecture-demonstrations by Boulé, Kristina Isabelle, Ayesha Jaco, and Rika Lin.

Funded in part by a grant from MSF, the evening performance of *The Monomyth* by New York-based choreographer and dancer Michelle Boulé was a rousing success.

**“The Legacy of Chicago Dance”** opened in April in the Newberry Library’s newly renovated first floor exhibition area, displaying the wide range of the Library’s dance holdings. While it focuses on Chicago and Midwest dance history, the collection’s reach is international. Sybil was well represented by photographs and a stunning costume from the Shearer Collection, gifted to the Newberry by MSF.

Accompanying the exhibition, MSF and the Newberry co-sponsored the well-attended **“Preservation, Tradition, and Innovation from Sybil Shearer through the Present”** on June 13. Moderated by *Hedy Weiss*, noted performing arts critic for Chicago and national media, the program featured three panelists with film highlights.

Panelists were *Jan Bartoszek*, founder and artistic director of Hedwig Dances; *Melissa Thodos*, of Thodos Dance Chicago, and *Ella Rosewood*, who lives and works in New York City. All have recreated

Shearer dances —/ Hedwig in 2012 at the Winnetka Community House, and Thodos in 2013 at the University of Chicago and 2014 at the Auditorium Theatre. Rosewood’s “Seminal Solos” project includes re-creations of dances of historic dancers, her latest being “Eighth Dance,” premiered by Sybil at Carnegie Hall in 1949, and performed by Ella at the 92nd Street Y in New York in 2018. Interestingly, some of Sybil’s early New York concerts up to 1946 were held in that same Y.



Sybil Shearer costume for *All Is Not Gold But Almost*, 1961

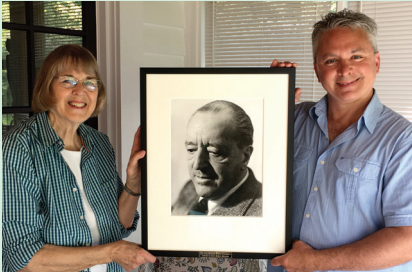


Above: Panelists. Right: Ellen Rosewood performing Sybil Shearer’s “Eighth Dance.”



On July 10, a digitally remastered print of Helen Balfour Morrison’s iconic portrait of **Mies van der Rohe** was gifted to the famed **Farnsworth House** in Plano, Illinois. Presented by MSF Trustee Chair Carol Doty to Scott Mehaffey, Executive Director of the Farnsworth House, it will be displayed in the Farnsworth Visitor Center. The house, built in 1949-1951 in the international style, is one of the world’s most widely recognized and studied structures of the 20th century, visited annually by thousands of architecture students and professionals for whom the house is an international pilgrimage site.

Architect Philip Johnson commissioned this portrait for his monograph of the Museum of Modern Art’s 1947 exhibition of Mies’ work. Oddly, Morrison was not credited for the photo until 2016, when it was discovered on a visit to MoMA by MSF’s Corinne Pierog and Carol Doty.



Carol Doty and Scott Mehaffey. Photo by Lee Johnson.



Alison Hinderliter, Gary Zidek, and Corinne Pierog.

In October, College of DuPage’s **radio station WDCB** invited MSF’s Corinne Pierog and the Newberry Library’s Alison Hinderliter to be on “The Arts Section,” a weekly program that spotlights creative people, events, and ideas — especially stories that are not being told, plus commentary and discussion on all things creative. This interview with Gary Zidek, Assistant Director of News & Public Affairs for the College, gave Corinne and Alison the opportunity to speak in depth about **Helen Balfour Morrison’s life** and accomplishments and about the recent MSF donation of Helen’s archives to the Newberry Library.

MSF Trustees devoted their September meeting to **thinking about our future**. The decision to go forward with making a documentary film about Helen and Sybil yielded enthusiastic support — something we’ve talked about for a long time. Other goals include getting our new website up and running, and finding ways to make the Foundation better known through partnerships and expanded participation with other associations and news venues. The MSF mission statement has also been changed slightly (see top right, this page).



MSF Trustees: Liz Kidera, Brian Schaeffer, Alida Szabo, Toby Nicholson, Chris Rutt, Tain Balfour, Carol Doty, Sue Boléa, Shayne Bullen, Mary Sue Wheeler; absent, Sarah Rigdon.

As always, we encourage and appreciate your interest in helping us “Share the Legacy” and would love to have you visit any time.

*Carol Doty*, Chair, and the Morrison-Shearer Foundation Board of Trustees

## Fall 2019

The Morrison-Shearer Foundation perpetuates the legacy of dancer-choreographer Sybil Shearer and photographer Helen Balfour Morrison as an inspiration for new creativity in the arts.

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### Our People

In 1960, Sybil Shearer went to see a friend perform in a production at Northwestern University, where another performer, an acrobat, caught her eye. She went backstage to ask if he would like to audition for her dance company. Though he didn’t dance or act in the production, she apparently saw potential in him. He had no idea who she was.

A few weeks later, **Toby Nicholson** found himself having a steak dinner with Sybil and Helen Balfour Morrison at Sybil’s studio in Northbrook. After dinner Sybil said she’d like him to join her company, though she hadn’t asked him to dance for her. Toby has said, “It seems that if she saw talent and thought you were the kind of person she’d like to have around, she would mold you into more of a dancer.”

When Toby joined, the heretofore amateur group had just given two performances of “Within this Thicket” as a professional company and were starting a new program, “Fables and Proverbs.” Two other men, John Neumeier and Tom Jarembo, also joined the company at that time, both students of Father John J. Walsh at Marquette University in Milwaukee. But who knew that, in time, John would become the famed director of the Hamburg Ballet in Germany, or that Tom would found the performance art department at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago? Or that Toby would dance in shows with Tony Bennett and Van Johnson before beginning his thirty-year career teaching dance and drama at New Trier High School?

When Sybil started the Morrison-Shearer Foundation in 1991, both Tom and Toby were among the founding Trustees. Although Tom died in 2008, Toby remains a mainstay among the Trustees today. And he is uniquely qualified to work with dancers who are learning to perform Shearer solos, including those featured in the “Preservation, Tradition, and Innovation” program at the Newberry. He also performs as an actor in Chicago theaters whenever he gets a chance.

In October Toby celebrated his **80th birthday** with a joyous costume party at the Winnetka Community House, where he has long volunteered with the Children’s Theater. Since meeting Sybil Shearer almost sixty years ago, he is still “making a difference” in dance and theater in so many ways!

### Sybil Shearer Fellowship at Ragdale

The 2019 fellowship was awarded to **Rena Butler**, a multi-disciplinary artist based in Chicago and New York City. Having trained at the Chicago Academy of the Arts and studied at Taipei National University of the Arts in Taiwan, she received her BFA from SUNY Purchase Conservatory of Dance in New York.

MSF Trustee Shayne Bullen, Chair of the Sybil Shearer Fellowship Committee, reports, “Rena best fit our criteria for representing MSF and the Fellowship at



Ragdale. It was our pleasure to review the candidates, as they all exhibited a high level of talent, skill, and artistic expression.”



