

Dear Friends,

Although no public programs were mounted by MSF this year, don't think for a minute we were idle! Au contraire, it seems we were mired in nitty-gritty for just about every project on our plate! But as you'll see, it's kept us on our toes.

As with most complicated projects, the **Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale** is taking a little longer than was hoped. The City of Lake Forest, which owns the property, is supportive of the project, and MSF's brochure, *The Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale: A Unique Opportunity*, addresses questions from the community. We expect to put a shovel to the ground before too long. Although there are venues that offer extended residential retreats for dance in the eastern and western United States, Ragdale appears to be the only one in the Midwest. This exciting project has dancers already asking us, "When will it be open?"As soon as we know, we'll tell you!

The completion of **Volume III of Sybil Shearer's autobiography**, *Without Wings the Way Is Steep: The Reality Beyond Realism*, has been a major project this year. When it is published in 2019, it will complete the series. While Volume I recounted Sybil's early life and performing in New York and Volume II focused on her move to Chicago and the pinnacle of her dance career, Volume III moves in a different direction as she starts a new life alone after Helen Morrison's death in 1984.



Sybil Shearer, June 1993

Here she matures as a deep thinker, discovering a new career as reviewer/writer for *Ballet Review* and intensifying her spiritual quest as an Anthroposophist/follower of Rudolf Steiner. Sharing her reviews and her extraordinary correspondences with new friends, she attempts to balance spirituality with the physical, which for her is dance.

Of Sybil's writing, noted dancer Trisha Brown wrote: *"You are a master at translating thought to clear words. This is rare in any field. The choreographer-poet has inverted her description. It is especially meaningful to me to see you breach world squeamishness to place in print the subject of spirituality in dance. And, I might add, with discipline and eloquence."*

With a note of pride, we can report that all of **Sybil Shearer's archives** have now been placed in folders, labeled, and boxed, thanks to the patient and careful work of Tracy Goldberg, our excellent Archivist. They will remain at the Foundation until next year when they will be moved permanently to an appropriate institution, to be announced. Meanwhile they are still useful in preparing Volume III. And Tracy can always find what we need!



Tracy Goldberg, right, with volunteer Susan Dunn.

Recent Grants: A Newberry Library Fellowship was funded by MSF for further study of the Kentucky photographs taken by Helen Balfour Morrison in the 1930s. The recipient is Erin Gilliam, PhD, Assistant Professor of History at Kentucky State University.

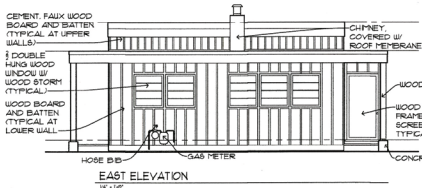
The Sybil Shearer Fellowship at Ragdale was awarded to Brittany Harlan (featured on our cover), dancer/choreographer and founder of Chicago Urban Dance Collective.

The **Chicago Dance History Project** is an ambitious, relatively new organization dedicated to investigating, documenting, and presenting the oral and physical histories of theatrical dance in Chicago and vicinity. Under the directorship of Jenai Cutcher, CDHP is conducting oral interviews toward the future launch of a digital archive showcasing original research and never-before-seen historical images and ephemera, as well as presenting occasional public programs. One of their earliest programs was "Sybil Shearer: Maverick of the Past, Muse of the Present," at the Newberry Library in 2015. This year CDHP brought their video equipment to Northbrook and interviewed a group of five MSF Trustees who shared their memories of Sybil.



Trustees Mary Sue Wheeler, Alida Szabo, Carol Doty, Toby Nicholson, and Tain Balfour.

Anticipating the eventual vacating and probable razing of the original Shearer Studio at Northbrook, MSF has commissioned a **Historic American Buildings Survey** document to be completed by Benjamin Historic Certifications. HABS is the nation's first federal preservation program, started by the National Park Service in 1933 to document America's architectural heritage. The report includes descriptive information about the significance, history, location, owner, uses, date/details of construction, alterations, architect, builder, materials and structure, site & landscape, along with a site plan, photographs, floor plans, elevations, and notes on architectural character. The work has been beautifully done by Susan S. Benjamin and Gwen Sommers Yant, and copies of the final report will be sent to the Library of Congress and to the Lincoln Library in Springfield.



As always, we appreciate your continued interest in the Foundation and invite you to help us "Share the Legacy."

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

Fall 2018

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

Phone 847-291-9161 info@morrisonsshearer.org

Our People

MSF is blessed with a great group of people working together to help share the legacy of Helen Morrison and Sybil Shearer. Besides our regular staff and volunteers, we sometimes need special expertise. These are some who helped us this year:

Recently we called on **Joseph Houseal** to write the Foreword for Volume III of Sybil Shearer's autobiography. Joseph first met Sybil Shearer in 1984 when both began writing for *Ballet Review* and became close friends. And fortunately for us, he's remained a friend of MSF too.



Joseph Houseal with MSF Executive Director Corinne Pierog and Trustee Carol Doty.

Joseph has an unusual career. As an ancient dance specialist and Director of Core of Culture, he has overseen dance preservation and research projects in many parts of the world, especially in Ladakh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, India, and Nepal. The mission of Core of Culture is to safeguard intangible world culture and assure the continuity of ancient dance traditions where they originate. Though based in Chicago, Joseph spends part of each year in remote regions doing this work. He has also designed installations of ancient dance for many noted museums and produced films and events incorporating ancient dance. But he also keeps up with dance as we know it here, and is an internationally recognized writer on dance. As you might guess, Joseph is a man on the move, and we are always pleased when he has time for MSF.

We have brought **Lizzie Leopold** in to develop the appropriate cataloging and metadata for some of our films and sound recordings that are housed at Chicago



Film Archives, where Nancy Watrous has long been our valued collaborator. Besides having been a dancer/choreographer with her own company, Lizzie has an

interesting resumé of productions and publications as well as a strong interest in history. With these and a BFA in dance from the University of Michigan; a Masters in Performance Studies from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts; and an interdisciplinary PhD in Theater and Drama Studies at Northwestern University, she is eminently qualified for this specialized work. And, by the way, she is the mother of two young children, the youngest born in June of this year.

Don't you think everyone wishes they had someone to call who can do just about anything? At MSF that's been **Milt Roman** for a long time. When the wind blew the shingles off the cabin roof, Milt put up a protective tarp the very day we called. When the basement at 401 flooded, Milt came right over to open a passage for the ruined furnace & equipment to be brought up and taken away. Currently he is finishing repairs and spot-painting on the exterior at 401, including windows and storms. And there's a long list of other jobs and emergencies over the years. He even lived at 401 for awhile when the Trustees first became responsible for the house. Best of all, Milt's just a nice guy. He's family. And yes, he's an actor, but we know he's not just "playing the part."



☐ I would like to purchase Sybil Shearer’s autobiography:

Without Wings the Way Is Steep (all prices include sales tax)

Volume I: Within This Thicket _____ at \$20 \$ _____

Volume II: The Midwest Inheritance _____ at \$25 \$ _____

Both Volumes: _____ at \$40 \$ _____

☐ Please ship my purchases: _____ at \$5/book \$ _____



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Morrison-Shearer Foundation, 401 Lee Road, Northbrook IL 60062



Sharing
TheLegacy

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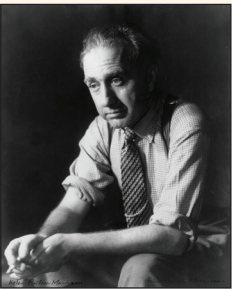
Sharing Our Surrealists

In February some of us viewed the Elmhurst Art Museum’s exhibition, “**Gertrude Abercrombie: Portrait of the Artist as a Landscape,**” which featured over 40 of this surrealist’s enigmatic paintings along with photographs and biographical information. Wishing that Helen Balfour Morrison’s photographic portrait of Abercrombie could have been included, we discovered that the exhibition would be

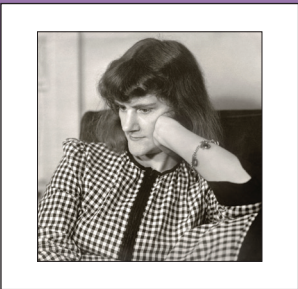


Above: Julia Thecla. Right: Ivan Albright
Cover: Julio de Diego & Gertrude Abercrombie

shown next at the Illinois State Museum in Springfield. Immediately contacting ISM, our staff learned that the museum owns a number of Abercrombie works and would welcome adding a copy of Morrison’s portrait to their collection. The portrait was gifted and appeared in the exhibition in Springfield, which ran through June 15.



In the 1920s and ‘30s, the Arts Club of Chicago was in the forefront of introducing surrealism here, and this summer they mounted an exhibition titled “A Home for Surrealism: Fantastic Painting in Midcentury Chicago.” In the accompanying book with the same title, Helen Balfour Morrison’s famous portrait of Julia Thecla and her chicken appears, provided by MSF. Other surrealists in the exhibition but without their Morrison portraits were **Gertrude Abercrombie, Julio de Diego, and Ivan Albright.**



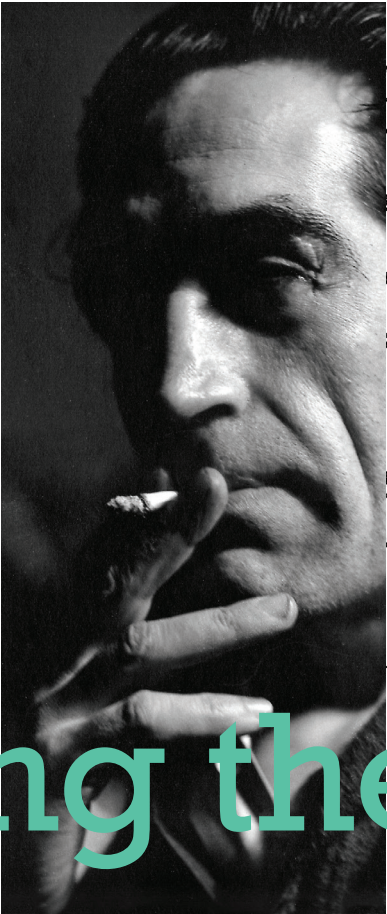
Abercrombie in the Illinois State Museum exhibition.

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FOUNDATION

401 Lee Road
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News from the
Morrison-Shearer
Foundation 2018



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