

# Dear Friends,

Like you, MSF has had to choreograph new ways of working in 2020, sequestering ourselves and meeting on Zoom because of the Covid pandemic. But that hasn't kept us from making progress. It's been a great year!

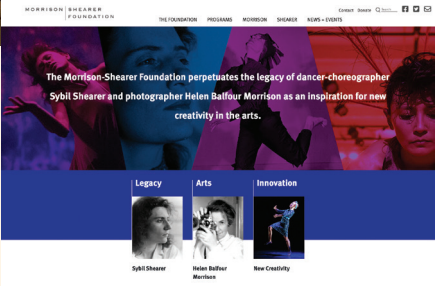


Covered entrances to the Dance Studio on the right and the Composers' Studio on the left.

Our most exciting news is that after several years of working closely with the Ragdale Foundation, the **Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale** is underway in Lake Forest. The MSF gift of 1.4 million dollars is significant at a time when arts funding is foundering, and it makes possible both the dance studio and an adjacent composers' studio to replace Ragdale's former facility. Woodhouse-Tinucci Architects and Goldberg General Contracting are hard at work, and we expect the Studio to open in the fall of 2021. As part of the Ragdale artists' community, it will provide an inspiring space for new creativity in dance and movement – a living legacy of Sybil Shearer and Helen Balfour Morrison.

A documentary film committee, chaired by Alida Szabo, has commissioned Bob Hercules and the Media Process Group, MPG, to create a short film about the work of Sybil, Helen, and the dance studios. It will premier as part of the opening of the new Sybil Shearer Dance Studio at Ragdale next fall.

The publication of **Volume III of Sybil Shearer's autobiography, *Without Wings the Way Is Steep: The Reality Beyond Realism***, is another major project that was finished this year. This volume is about Sybil's later years alone in Northbrook (1985-2004) as critic, writer, and Anthroposophist. In it, her two worlds — dance and Anthroposophy — are melded through reflections, reviews, and three extraordinary correspondences: with *Ballet Review* editor Francis Mason, Waldorf educator and astronomer Norman Davidson, and biodynamic farmer and eurythmist Marjorie Spock. Also important is her connection with John Neumeier, former student and longtime director of the Hamburg Ballet. With this volume, Sybil's autobiography is complete, revealing her genius as thinker, modern dance pioneer, spiritual seeker, writer, friend, and warm human being. One reader's comment was, "What a third act!"



Above: Showing early designs of the MSF website to the MSF Trustees.  
Home page of the new MSF website.

Another longtime project is the new **MSF website**, launching in November, thanks to our graphic designer, Amy Jeppsen Stern, along with Carol Doty, Sue Boléa, and Corinne Pierog. Besides calling attention to current Foundation activities, the site is intentionally deep in content about Sybil, Helen, and their legacies. Until now, research information about them has been hard to find, something that has begun to change now that Sybil's three-volume autobiography is complete and all archives are in the Newberry Library and Chicago Film Archives.

The best thing about the new website is that it is online and immediately accessible, offering both introductory and in-depth information with lots of photographs, links to other sites, and, eventually, film clips. We hope you'll let us know what you think of it. Explore, share, and enjoy! **[www.morrison-shearer.org](http://www.morrison-shearer.org)**

Two **Newberry Library Fellowships** were funded by MSF for a study in 2021. The Newberry has presented the project as "The Edifying and Elusive Gestures of Great Americans," an examination of Helen Balfour Morrison's "Great Americans" portraits. Goals for this research include being featured in two publications, such as the peer-reviewed *Archives of American Art Journal*, to re-introduce Morrison's contributions to a broader public, and to consider the potential to develop a larger exhibition project.

Two recipients have been announced. **Dr. Wendy Castenell** is Assistant Professor of African American Art in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Alabama. Her additional goals include exploring evidence about the reception of Morrison's works, and beginning to place her and her photographs within the larger context of contemporary female photographers engaged in documenting regional populations. She will also consider the way the early photographic series straddled the line between traditional portraiture and the particular concerns of Modernism.

**Dr. Patricia Mooney-Melvin** is Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director in the Department of History at Loyola University Chicago. She intends also to explore ways that exhibitions of the "Great Americans" portraits may have been used to promote a broader understanding of American identity, a central theme in her forthcoming book, *Portraits of Noteworthy Character: Negotiating a Collective American Identity*.



Dr. Wendy Castenell



Dr. Patricia Mooney-Melvin

After serving MSF as a Trustee since 2002 and Chair since 2006, it is poignant to be making my last report to you before **my retirement** at the end of this year.



Sybil with Carol at Carol's retirement from the Morton Arboretum in 1998.

I met Sybil in 1993, not through dance, but through our mutual interest in Jens Jensen and The Clearing, his Wisconsin school where Sybil took her dancers in the 1940s and where I had volunteered since 1972. When we met there, I had no idea that it would lead to a quarter century of such rich opportunities and friendships. It has truly been a joy and a privilege.

Let me leave you with these thoughts, so crucial at this moment in history: *"Arts are infrastructure, as surely as roads, schools and hospitals are. They make life meaningful. They enrich our existence. They deserve our support."*

— John Warner, Chicago Tribune August 2, 2020, on the need for a WPA in this era.

I hope you will continue to help MSF Share the Legacy.

*Carol Doty*, Chair, Morrison-Shearer Foundation

## Fall 2020

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.

Phone 847-291-9161 info@morrison-shearer.org  
www.morrison-shearer.org

### Our People

More than once in its evolution, the Morrison-Shearer Foundation has been fortunate to have just the right person appear with the very talents we need at that moment. In November, 2011, we were nearing the end of our five-year Strategic Plan and needed to find a new Foundation Manager. We engaged Executive Service Corps to help us, and among their interviewees, we deemed one a perfect match. With her own company, *Sustainable Leadership Solutions*, and a superb history of work with non-profits, we knew we wanted her. But would she commute all the way from St. Charles to Northbrook? Not a problem. Distance would *not* deter **Corinne Pierog** from a job she expected to love!

And love it, she has. As Executive Director, she's been central to everything we do. She was all-in from the beginning — professionalizing internal processes, learning deeply about Sybil and Helen, familiarizing herself with the archives, managing our facilities, working with volunteers, providing Trustees with the tools and information we need, and more. And her outgoing and caring personality has created warm relationships for MSF within the dance and art communities.

As you can imagine, it is with mixed feelings that we announce Corinne's recent election as Kane County Board Chair — a big job worthy of her talents. We sincerely congratulate her, but we sure hate to see her go!

Another example of our good fortune is **Amy Jeppsen Stern**. In 2012 we were looking for a graphic designer when Trustee Alida Szabo suggested Amy, whom she had worked with at Chicago Shakespeare. We were surprised to learn



Corinne, Amy and Carol having a little fun while working on the MSF website via Zoom.

that Amy lived just a stone's throw from the Foundation and was available on call. We soon "adopted" her as our resident designer — a person fun to work with and who seems to intuit our wishes for whatever design we need.

In 2013 we began producing "Sharing the Legacy," our annual pictorial newsletter, and Amy gradually amassed a large picture file to work from. Annual Holiday cards seem to come around fast, as do flyers for various events. Amy's most unusual creation may be the pair of large display banners that attract attention at special events. By far the most complex design challenge has been the new MSF webpage, soon to be launched. In it Amy has done a great job of organizing a huge amount of information written by staff into an attractive and welcoming site — a work in progress to be continuously refined and updated.

As the Foundation moves forward into new and exciting directions, you'll continue to see Amy's work, as she's become an essential and esteemed member of the MSF team.



**I would like to purchase  
Sybil Shearer's autobiography:**

### Without Wings the Way Is Steep

☐ *Volume I: Within This Thicket*

- ☐ *Volume II: The Midwest Inheritance*
- ☐ *Volume III: The Reality Beyond Realism*

☐ All Three Volumes:

☐ Please ship my purchases:

(all prices include sales tax)

Help preserve the legacy with your donation

☐ \$25   ☐ \$50   ☐ \$75   ☐ \$100   ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

	Total	\$
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☐ I have enclosed a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ payable to Morrison-Shearer Foundation

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Address

City, Zip

Mail to:  
Morrison-Shearer Foundation, 401 Lee Road, Northbrook IL 60062

## From the Archives

In preparing to send our gift of Helen Balfour Morrison's portraits of **Great Americans** to the Newberry Library, we found negatives from which we'd never seen prints. Among them was this photograph of **Carrie Chapman Catt** (1859-1947), who played an essential role in gaining the right of women to vote. Just now, as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of passing the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, it's serendipitous to discover this photograph!

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucretia Mott started the movement for women's vote in Seneca Falls NY in 1848, an effort that ebbed and flowed over the years until 1890, when several separate organizations finally merged as the **National American Woman Suffrage Association** (NAWSA). With Stanton and Anthony advancing in age, Catt, with her long history in suffrage efforts, was asked to step in as President in 1900. She left in 1904 to care for her dying husband and to start still more suffrage and peace organizations before returning to the presidency of NAWSA in 1915. Her skills as orator, organizer, and dynamic leader were central in the drive to finish the work of Catt was taken at the Palmer House in Chicago ca. 1933.



Jane Addams



Carrie Chapman Catt

Morrison also photographed **Jane Addams** (1860-1935), of Hull House, and a dozen more notable women working at this time in social reform, juvenile justice, higher education, and supporting philanthropies.

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FOUNDATION

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# Sharing the Legacy

## News from the Morrison-Shearer Foundation 2020

