

**THE MORRISON-SHEARER FOUNDATION AND THE RAGDALE
FOUNDATION CELEBRATE THE OPENING OF THE SYBIL
SHEARER STUDIO IN THE NEW HOUSE OF DANCE AND
MUSIC WITH FREE “SPACE TO MOVE” EVENT ON NATIONAL
DANCE DAY, SEPT. 18**

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NORTHBROOK, Ill.— The Morrison-Shearer Foundation and the Ragdale Foundation mark the opening of the Sybil Shearer Studio in the new House of Dance and Music with “Space to Move,” a celebratory event on National Dance Day, beginning at 6 p.m., Saturday, Sept. 18 (rain date 6 p.m., Sunday Sept. 19). This event takes place on the Ragdale campus located in Lake Forest and is free and open to the public.

The opening event features a promenade-style dance performance directed by Kristina Isabelle, artistic director of Kristina Isabelle Dance, that will lead guests through the late-summer gardens of the Ragdale campus and culminate at the new House of Dance and Music, site of the new Sybil Shearer Studio.

Free parking is available in Lake Forest's Oakwood lot, located behind Lake Forest City Hall at 220 E. Deerpath Rd., on the corner of Oakwood and Deerpath. A shuttle van will run every 15 minutes from 4:30 – 8 p.m. To help keep guests and staff healthy and safe, “Space to Move” attendees are asked to wear a mask and practice social distancing when on the shuttle and when on the Ragdale campus. Supper box and beverages are available for advance purchase. For more information visit ragdale.org/opening-the-sybil-shearer-studio.

The state-of-the-art Sybil Shearer Studio and composer's studio will provide artists with space for contemplative creativity and the opportunity to explore their practice within a group of other artists and writers, with housing and meals provided during their residency. The new House of Dance and Music is designed by Woodhouse Tinucci Architects; the general contractor for the project is Jake Goldberg of Goldberg General Contracting, Inc. and landscape design is by Rosborough Partners, Inc.

The construction of the new House of Dance and Music is made possible by a \$1.5 million one-time grant from the Northbrook-based Morrison-Shearer Foundation to the Ragdale Foundation, along with \$400,000 from the Ragdale Foundation. The Ragdale campus is located on the verdant 5-acre historic grounds of the former country estate of architect Howard Van Doren Shaw not far from Lake Michigan and approximately 30 miles north of Chicago.

The House of Dance and Music brings about the realization of the dream of modern dance pioneer Sybil Shearer (1912 – 2005) and her longtime artistic collaborator, photographer Helen Balfour Morrison (1901 – 1984). Shearer and Balfour Morrison envisioned creating a tranquil location where artists could hone their skills and advance their artistic self-expression free from distractions.

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Sybil Shearer (1912 – 2005) was a leading pioneer of modern dance in the mid-20th century, beginning in New York with the Humphrey-Weidman Company and Agnes de Mille while passionately developing her own solos on the side. After a critically acclaimed solo debut at the Carnegie Chamber Music Hall in 1941, she moved to Chicago and soon met photographer Helen Balfour Morrison (1901 – 1984), who became her lighting director, photographer, filmographer and artistic collaborator for the next 40 years. Shearer first taught at Roosevelt College, started the Sybil Shearer School of Dance, and continued to return to New York for annual solo performances that attracted leading figures from the dance community. She gave all these up in 1951 when she, in collaboration with Morrison, built a studio-residence in Northbrook, Ill. and started the Sybil Shearer Company. As a soloist, critic Walter Terry stated that her "technical skill, creative independence, and unpredictable innovations have made her what is known as 'a dancer's dancer'" and called her "one of the world's foremost modern dancers," a status reaffirmed in 2014 by noted dance historian, David Vaughan. Shearer may not be as widely remembered today as one would expect, perhaps because she worked out of the mainstream and close to nature, with infrequent performances.

The Morrison-Shearer Foundation, established by Shearer in 1991, now "perpetuates the legacy of dancer-choreographer Sybil Shearer and photographer Helen Balfour Morrison as an inspiration for new creativity in the arts." This legacy has been shared through grants and fellowships, occasional public programs and dance re-creations. All of the Morrison and Shearer archives have been placed in the Newberry Library and the Morrison films are in the Chicago Film Archives. An in-depth website was launched in 2020, and Shearer's 3-volume autobiography, "Without Wings the Way Is Steep," was released in July 2021. The new Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale will be a living embodiment of the legacy of the two women, encouraging new creativity for years to come. For more information visit morrisonsshearer.org.

Ragdale is a nonprofit artists' community located on the former country estate of architect Howard Van Doren Shaw. Its mission is to embolden creative exploration and achievement by giving courage to and providing a setting establishing a culture of excellence, generosity, and inclusivity. Ragdale was founded in 1976 by poet Alice Judson Hayes, the granddaughter of Shaw. In 1897, Shaw built the country estate where the Ragdale Foundation is located at 1260 N. Green Bay Road on the edge of a beautiful 50-acre prairie in Lake Forest. Ragdale was the family's summer retreat, and included an outdoor theater, the Ragdale Ring, where Shaw's friends and family frequently performed for the community. Ragdale typically offers 200 residencies and fellowships annually to creative professionals of all types, representing a cross-section of ages, cultures, experience and mediums. While residents do pay a fee to attend Ragdale, the actual costs of a residency are about 95 percent subsidized by Ragdale's annual fundraising. Ragdale Fellows, whose fees are entirely underwritten, are selected based on merit, from the group of accepted residents. Each year about 25 to 30 Fellows are selected. Due to COVID-19 distancing protocols, Ragdale is not accepting new residency applications at this time. For more information visit ragdale.org.

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