



SNOWFLAKES FALLING
THROUGH THE AIR,
FLOATING ON THE WIND,
SWIRLING TO THE EARTH —
CRYSTALS LIKE THE STARS...
CATCHING THE LIGHT...

SYBIL SHEARER
1987



**Wishing You Joy & Peace
as the Winter Solstice moves toward the Light**

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Woodcut by Carol-Lou Burnham, circa 1947

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Your contribution is vital to furthering the Foundation's mission of perpetuating the legacy of dancer-choreographer Sybil Shearer and photographer Helen Balfour Morrison, and promoting new creativity in the arts.

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News from the Morrison-Shearer Foundation

Winter 2022

John Neumeier's 50th Anniversary with the Hamburg Ballet and his Association with Sybil Shearer



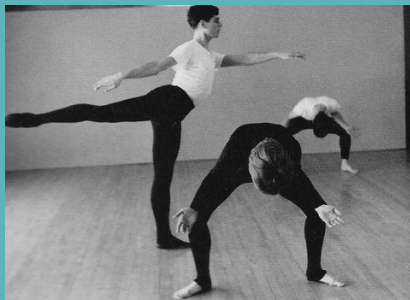
In celebration of John Neumeier's 50 years with the Hamburg Ballet, the company will appear at the [Harris Theatre for Music and Dance in Chicago on February 23, 24, and 25, 2023](#). They will be performing a full-length ballet based on Tennessee Williams play, *The Glass Menagerie*, with music by American composers; Charles Ives, Philip Glass, and Ned Rorem.

Save the Date on the evening of Tuesday, February 21 for a very special free, public event focusing on John Neumeier's roots in the Midwest, also at the Harris Theater. Additional information to follow.

John Neumeier was a college student at Marquette University in his hometown of Milwaukee when his mentor, teacher, and friend Fr. John J. Walsh S.J. introduced him to Sybil Shearer at her home and studio in Northbrook, IL. Sybil immediately recognized him as a talent and he joined her company for the next few years. He performed in a concert entitled *Fables and Proverbs* in 1961, including the piece [Time Longs for Eternity](#).

They remained in touch throughout Sybil Shearer's life during which time she followed his career through Europe. After training in Copenhagen and at the Royal Ballet School in London, he joined the Stuttgart Ballet and danced as a soloist. In 1969 he became Director of the Frankfurt Ballet before becoming the [Chief Choreographer and Director of the Hamburg Ballet in 1973](#).

Reviewing the Hamburg Ballet's performance at Ravinia's Murray Theater in 1984 for Ballet Review, Sybil found herself extremely impressed with the breadth of his talent. After the performance, she looked up into the night sky, spread her arms wide and emotionally declared: "I have progeny." John remarked that he felt he was bringing his company to Ravinia to show her the result of what she had given him and how he had translated it into his own choreographic language. He credits Sybil with inspiration throughout his career, referring to her as "a genius of a wordless art" in the [Foreward](#) which he wrote for Volume II of her three-Volume autobiography, [Without Wings the Way is Steep: The Midwest Inheritance](#).





*Upper Left: John Neumeier, Nan Buck, and Masao Yoshimasu in *Time Longs for Eternity*.*

Upper Right: Ed Ball, John Neumeier, and Nan Buck (foreground), Shelbee Matis and Masao Yoshimasu (background)

Bottom: Sybil Shearer Company Dancers; Toby Nicholson, Nan Buck, Masao Yoshimasu, Shelbee Matis, and John Neumeier

Stephanie Martinez Named 2023 Sybil Shearer Fellow at Ragdale



Award winning choreographer, Stephanie Martinez, has been selected as the second recipient of the Sybil Shearer Fellowship for an artist's residency in the new Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale. Stephanie is the Founder and Artistic Director of [PARA.MAR Dance Theatre](#) in Chicago.

Through this fellowship, Stephanie will explore the work of Chilean poet and scholar Gabriela Mistral as a companion to her most recently completed work, *Dos Lados*, which she began working on 6 years ago through [Ballet Hispanico's Instituto Coreográfico](#). Now realized as a full-length contemporary ballet, *Dos Lados* explores the conflict between the public and private self and the stories we are "allowed" to tell. The piece recently enjoyed its first fully-staged production at Chicago's Auditorium Theatre.



"In this residency...I will interrogate three specific poems from Locas Mujeres: La Fervorosa, La Que Camina, and The Abandoned Woman – all of which reference and examine the generational oppressions, sacrifices, and courage necessary to survive in a world where you are conditioned to mute yourself to fit in. In these poems I am reminded of my mother, my grandmother, and all the women who have had to contort themselves to survive a world that wasn't built to accept them. Mistral uses her voice, her honesty, her creative expression as an act of bravery and protest to survive. In this residency I will use my voice for all the women who couldn't use theirs.

As a dancemaker with a career spanning over thirty years, I have learned that dancemaking is more than a process, it is a practice. It is a practice of rigorous physical and emotional exploration, discovery, deep reflection, humility, and the ability to persevere in the face of adversity.

This practice is also part of what gave me the courage to follow my own voice, one that has been traditionally marginalized as a female, Latin and Native American artist, to create a new company, PARA.MAR Dance Theatre, devoted to a vision of empowering and elevating diversity in contemporary ballet, so that all can have an opportunity to practice the telling and hearing of stories that become a catalyst for connection and understanding."

Congratulations Stephanie! We can't wait to see the results of your practice in this residency.

Follow the link for more information on past recipients of the [Sybil Shearer Fellowship at Ragdale](#).

Art Institute of Chicago Purchases Ray Johnson Moticos and Ephemera from the Foundation



It was an astonishing find in the attic of the Morrison-Shearer Foundation back in 2013. There it was; a pristine collection of Ray Johnson "moticos" tucked inside their original envelope with the postmark December 30, 1955.

With this discovery, the exciting times of Sybil Shearer and Helen Morrison's connection to Ray Johnson suddenly sprang to life. John Cage, Merce Cunningham, and Robert Lippold, were together at Black Mountain College in the late 1940's where Ray Johnson was a student. Helen's photograph of sculptor Robert Lippold is in the Smithsonian, Washington DC; her portrait of musical renegade John Cage can be found at the Newberry Library. In 1949, Sybil and Merce Cunningham choreographed solos for one another when she and Morrison organized a series of performances by him and John Cage in nearby Winnetka, Illinois. The rich, creative connections

between Shearer and Johnson are only now beginning to be revealed on closer examination of this collection.

Now, fast forward to the present: in February 2022, with the Art Institute of Chicago's impressive [Ray Johnson c/o](#) exhibition underway, the Foundation approached the exhibition's lead curator, [Caitlin Haskell](#), for advice. Haskell was immediately intrigued and soon determined the collection held important examples of Johnson's early work and expressed interest in the possibility that the museum might eventually purchase the pieces.



The Foundation's Board Chair, Alida Szabo, and Executive Director, Scott Lundius, then met with representatives of the [Ray Johnson Estate](#), who happened to be in town for the exhibition closing reception and announcement of Haskell's additional new role as Director of Ray Johnson Collections and Research for the museum.

Frances Beatty, Managing Director of the Ray Johnson Estate, and Maria Ilario, Director of Collections and Archives, verified their authenticity and were thrilled to see the pieces as they were unknown evidence of Ray Johnson's connections to artists in the Midwest. The collection of moticos and related ephemera is now the *Sybil Shearer Collection of Ray Johnson*, a significant addition to the growing collection of Ray Johnson materials in the Art Institute of Chicago Archives. Within the first few days after the transfer of ownership, Haskell reported that, "they have already brought to light several important connections between Ray's collage practice and his involvement in the world of mid-century dance."

We wonder if Ray Johnson knew that he and Sybil shared an understanding of the power of forming connections. Shearer's three-volume autobiography is replete with letters she wrote and received. They marvelously concoct the times she lived in, embodying the archetype of the artist exploring and reflecting on her craft. Later in life, Sybil understood the importance of staying connected with dance contemporaries even though earlier she was considered an isolated dance maverick, living more in communication with Nature than with other creatives.

Throughout his life Johnson mailed collages and drawings to friends, colleagues and others who had piqued his interest. Johnson's friends described him as mysterious. He lived alone and simply. To flesh out an artistic idea, he invited friends to witness what he saw on the New York streets, involving them in the onset of creation, an essential collaborator. [Nam June Paik](#) considered him a forerunner and important collaborator in the field of communication art. Johnson's correspondence was often provocative, inciting the recipient to respond, calling out their creativity, and inducing them to mail it forward. As testament to his lasting influence, there are vibrant [mail art](#) networks still functioning internationally and his legacy continues in the movements Pop Art, Fluxus, and Conceptual Art.

Our founders continue to surprise and inspire us to play creativity forward!

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Your contribution to the Morrison-Shearer Foundation is vital and appreciated.

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