

Sharing the Legacy

News from the Morrison-Shearer Foundation 2022



Khecarisana in the Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale

The Path Forward: “Plans are Worthless but Planning is Everything!”



For many reasons, the time was right for the Morrison-Shearer Foundation to begin strategic planning in 2021.

After more than nine years, the prior plan was successfully completed calling for; expanded board membership, preparing and gifting all of the Foundation's archival materials into the appropriate hands, stabilizing and contending with the limitations of its physical facilities, and tending to ongoing financial management and operations. As a result, the Foundation had established strong and meaningful partnerships with the Newberry Library, Chicago Film Archives, and Ragdale and had recently hired a new executive director. With the results of this work confidently in place, the board of trustees was now charged with creating a new roadmap to the Foundation's future.

Amy Wishnick, principal of Wishnick & Associates, was engaged to facilitate the planning process that officially kicked off in October 2021. The work was guided by Board Chair, Alida Szabo, Vice Chair, Shayne Bullen, and Executive Director, Scott Lundius as the strategic planning workgroup.

A key element of the planning process was engaging stakeholders, both internal and external. The assessment activities were based around a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats), an often-used tool, and a SOAR assessment (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results) from Appreciative Inquiry. Amy Wishnick conducted six individual interviews with key external stakeholders and Scott Lundius conducted an additional nine with others who had perspective on MSF and the dance world. Interviews were conducted in December 2021 and January 2022. In January,

the board of trustees engaged in a SWOT-SOAR activity to assess MSF from an insider perspective.

An important activity in the process was the in-person planning retreat on March 19, 2022. Notably, the retreat was the first time the MSF board had been together in years due to Covid. Highlights of the retreat were reviewing the stakeholder input, engaging in dialogue about the mission and “why” of MSF, creating a strategic vision to guide the plan, and developing the goals and strategies to achieve the vision.

MSF leadership built the plan around two strategic pillars:

Governance – Management
(including Governance, Board of Directors, Finance, Funding, Property)

Program – Partnerships – Communication
(including Relevance, Visibility, Public Relations)

Following the retreat, Amy Wishnick drafted the strategic plan and refined the first draft with Scott Lundius to ensure that the goals, strategies, and actions aligned and would lead to making the strategic vision a reality. A second review took place with Alida Szabo and Shayne Bullen. The final step was to further build out the plan by identifying the resources needed to accomplish the goals, assigning lead responsibility for each item, and determining the time frames. This latter ensured appropriate sequencing and timing for successful implementation. The result of these activities is this strategic plan and a separate implementation plan.

We’re excited to share the results of this work in the months and years to come!

Strategic Plan Summary

July 2022 – June 2025

MISSION

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.

STRATEGIC VISION

The Morrison-Shearer Foundation is valued and widely recognized as a generous resource and collaborator in service to artists and their creative processes and has the structure to ensure successfully achieving the mission.

STRATEGIC PILLAR 1

Governance – Management

Leadership, Board of Directors,
Finance, Funding, Property

Goal 1: MSF has motivated, excited board members leading the Foundation to its next level of growth and excellence

Goal 2: Governing documents reflect MSF’s commitment to board oversight, good governance, and diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility

Goal 3: MSF has a strong infrastructure

Goal 4: MSF has a plan for the Northbrook properties

STRATEGIC PILLAR 2

Program • Partnership • Communication

Relevance, Visibility, Public Relations, Marketing

Goal 5: MSF has a clearly defined mission and purpose that guides its board composition, decision making, and partnerships affiliations

Goal 6: MSF consistently cultivates collaborations with partners

Goal 7: MSF successfully partners with institutional funders and individuals to support its maturing programs

Goal 8: There is broad awareness of MSF's mission and programs



MSF Board of Trustees and Executive Director, Scott Lundius.



The First Year of the Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale



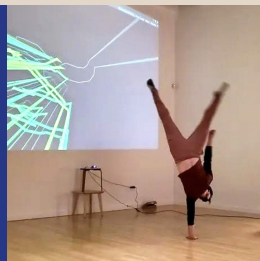
Since it opened last year, the Sybil Shearer Studio has welcomed dozens of movement artists for residency programs, realizing the dream of modern dance pioneer Sybil Shearer and her longtime artistic collaborator, photographer and filmmaker Helen Balfour Morrison. Shearer and Morrison envisioned creating a tranquil location where artists could hone their skills and advance their artistic self-expression free from distractions.

The Roster of 2022 Resident Artists Includes:

* recipient of a Sybil Shearer Fellowship at Ragdale



Deeply
Rooted
Dance
Theater

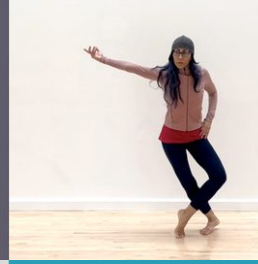


Christopher
Knowlton

Silvita
Diaz
Brown



Nejla
Yatkin*



Non
Edwards

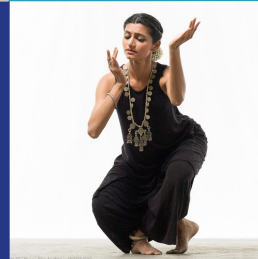


Irene
Hsiao

Khecari



Kinnari
Vora



High School
Arts Week
Dance Program
with Brittany
Harlan*



Meida
McNeal



Maya
Odim



Tara
Aisha
Willis

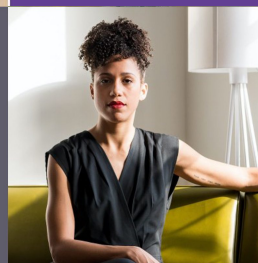


Photo of Kinnari Vora by William Frederking Photography. All other photos courtesy of Ragdale and the Artists.

After several years of working in close collaboration with the Ragdale Foundation, the Morrison-Shearer Foundation helped to plan and build the Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale in Lake Forest, Illinois. As part of the House of Dance and Music, the studio provides an inspiring space for creativity in dance and movement – a living legacy of Sybil Shearer and Helen Balfour Morrison. The Studio was officially opened in a joint celebration on September 18, 2021.

This collaborative relationship between Ragdale and the Morrison-Shearer Foundation in promoting dance and inspiring new work was an elegant marriage of each organization's mission and commitment to artistic exploration and creation. The result is a celebration of each one's past heritage and a promise of the dance heritage it will build in making the space available for creative exploration in dance and movement.

The construction of the House of Dance and Music was made possible by a \$1.5 million, one-time grant to Ragdale from the Morrison-Shearer Foundation, along with an additional \$400,000 raised by Ragdale. The 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, approximately 30 miles north of Chicago.

The 2,500 square foot building houses both the state-of-the-art Sybil Shearer Studio and adjacent composer's studio provides artists with space for contemplative creativity and the opportunity to explore their practice within a group of other artists with housing and meals provided during their residency.



MSF and Ragdale Share Hedwig's Dance Heritage Award



Michael Cleavenger, Beth Boyd, Shayne Bullen, and Scott Lundius. Photos courtesy of Hedwig Dances.

“In celebration and gratitude for the creative alchemy of mission and service as manifested by the Morrison-Shearer Foundation and the Ragdale Foundation.”

On Friday, June 3, Hedwig Dances presented its Dance Heritage Award in honor of the collaboration between the Morrison-Shearer Foundation and Ragdale at their annual gala, performance, and awards ceremony, *Hedwignites*, held at The Arts Club of Chicago. The award was presented by Julia Mayer, Executive Director of See Chicago Dance and former Program Manager of Morrison-Shearer Foundation. Accepting the award was the Morrison-Shearer Foundation's Vice Chair, Shayne Bullen, and Beth Boyd, president of the board for the Ragdale Foundation.

Hedwignites is a special evening to support the artistry and community created by the Hedwig Dances company. Every year, friends, family, and supporters gather to celebrate an evening of food, art and conversation to help further the mission of Hedwig Dances.

In 2018, the Board of Directors established the annual conferral of Hedwig Dance Awards to recognize and celebrate transformational leaders, artists, critics, mentors, and funders who create, illuminate, and nourish contemporary dance. Founder and Artistic Director Jan Bartoszek explained: “Having produced dance for more than three decades, we felt it was time we showed our gratitude to the individuals and organizations that have paved the way for contemporary dance in Chicago.”

The Award reads as follows:

“In celebration and gratitude for the creative alchemy of mission and service as manifested by the Morrison-Shearer Foundation and the Ragdale Foundation. This unique partnership, envisioned and realized in the creation of the Sybil Shearer Studio at Ragdale, is an elegant confluence of organizational missions, dedication to artists' dreams, and the commitment to nurture artistic exploration and creation.

The resulting studio is a fitting tribute to the dreams shared by Sybil Shearer and Helen Morrison, a vivid fulfillment of each foundation's mission, and an abiding promise to continue nurturing dance artists. In this way you have ensured a richly diverse and flourishing heritage of dance.”

The Foundation is deeply grateful to Hedwig Dances for this honor we share with our close collaborators at Ragdale.



Beth Boyd and Shayne Bullen receive the Hedwig Dance Heritage Award on behalf of MSF and Ragdale, presented by Julia Mayer.
The Hedwig's Dance Heritage Award.
Representatives from MSF, Ragdale and Hedwig Dances gather to celebrate. Photos courtesy of Hedwig Dances.

The Chicago Film Archives is Awarded Preservation Grant



Sybil Shearer performs *O Lost* (above), *In a Vacuum*, *Salute to Old Friends: Agnes de Mille*, *Untitled (Moussorgsky)*, *Salute to Old Friends: Doris Humphrey*

The National Film Preservation Foundation has announced its support for the Chicago Film Archives to photochemically preserve eight solo dances from the Morrison-Shearer Collection.

These dances were created and performed by choreographer/dancer Sybil Shearer and filmed by photographer and artistic partner, Helen Balfour Morrison.

CFA's Executive Director, Nancy Watrous, writes "The films transcend a mere recording of choreography and performance. They present an elevation and synthesis of each woman's artistic gift, born out of a strong and confident mutual devotion. CFA believes that their collaborative efforts have produced works that are unique among the genre of dance films."

You can find more about these films [here](#).



The eight solos that will be photochemically preserved are:

- *In a Vacuum*
- *O Lost*
- *No Peace on Earth*
- *Untitled (Moussorgsky)*
- *Salute to Old Friends: Doris Humphrey*
- *Salute to Old Friends: Agnes DeMille*
- *Salute to Old Friends: Walter Terry*
- *Salute to Old Friends: John Martin*

For each title, CFA will produce:

- New 16mm polyester b&w internegative (picture)
- New 16mm negative optical sound track
- New 16mm polyester B&W composite Answer Print
- New 16mm polyester B&W composite Release Print
- 4K Pro Res digital file

All of this work will be done at Colorlab.

Ragdale's Annual Benefit was a *Novel Affair*



MSF Executive Director, Scott Lundius, with Bruce Boyd, Phoebe Turner, Beth Boyd, and Michael Cleavenger.
Photo by Bob Laemle courtesy of Ragdale.

Morrison-Shearer Foundation's executive director, Scott Lundius, read selected passages from Shearer's autobiography *Without Wings the Way is Steep* at Ragdale's *Novel Affair*.

After a two-year hiatus, Ragdale Foundation's beloved *Novel Affair* event returned on April 30 to Shoreacres in Lake Bluff. Acclaimed authors and guests gathered for an evening of creativity and conversation in support of one of the Foundation's valued collaborators, Ragdale, the renowned nonprofit artists' community located on the former Lake Forest estate of architect Howard Van Doren Shaw. The evening began with a cocktail reception followed by short presentations given by featured writers/artists. The evening concluded with opportunities for guests to have books signed by featured guests.

Hosted by the celebrated Chicago-based author, Rebecca Makkai, the program included Morrison-Shearer Foundation's executive director, Scott Lundius, reading selected passages from Shearer's autobiography *Without Wings the Way is Steep*. You can view his presentation [here](#) on Ragdale's YouTube channel along those by authors, Jonathan Eig, Jasmine Chan, Alex Kotlowitz, and Sahar Mustafah, photographer Melissa Ann Pinney, and poets Erika L. Sánchez, and Natasha Trethewey. (Pictured Below)



The presenters gather before the program at this year's *Novel Affair*. Photo by Bob Laemle courtesy of Ragdale. Scott Lundius and fellow presenter, Melissa Ann Pinney, at Shoreacres. Shoreacres, Lake Bluff, IL.

Agnes de Mille Remembers Sybil Shearer



"She was long-waisted and slender, with angelic long arms, hands that played the air like an instrument and the strong printless foot of God's messengers."

During a recent cleaning spree at the Foundation's headquarters, Board Chair Alida Szabo discovered an issue of *Dance Magazine* from May 1952 buried in a bankers box. The issue held an excerpt from Agnes de Mille's acclaimed autobiography published the previous year. The two-page spread featured de Mille's tributes to and commentary on four fellow luminaries from the dance world including Martha Graham, Antony Tudor, Camalita Maracci, and our own Sybil Shearer. The portion of the article dedicated to Shearer is excerpted in full below.

Portraits of Her Contemporaries, By Agnes de Mille

Descriptions of dance personalities are usually by writers, rarely by dancers. But Agnes de Mille is choreographer, dancer and writer. The vivid word-portraits she creates of her colleagues add a new dimension to the many pages previously written on the subject. The following excerpts from Mill de Mille's best-selling Dance To The Piper are of four friends who are also significant contemporary artists.

Sybil Shearer

Physically she presented the asexual aspect of a Renaissance angel, sensitive but not girlish, her face too strong for prettiness, her manner unbroken with the noble ease of an animal or spirit. She might have stepped from any Botticelli fresco. She had the enigmatic smile, the airy magnificence, the unsexed purity and vigor of his heavenly youths. She was long-waisted and slender, with angelic long arms, hands that played the air like an instrument and the strong printless foot of God's messengers.

She was a visitor in my studio, a visitor in this world, and serene in dedication gave herself daily to the beloved work with the absorption and success of a fanatic.

She wore her hair - it hung straight from the temples. It was never for any occasion arranged. She combed it, and that was enough. She scorned powder and makeup of course, later even on the stage...she talked a lot, arguing eight or nine conflicting philosophies simultaneously and was very hopeful of the fourth dimension, urging repeatedly to study this. But remembering my trouble with spherical trigonometry, I declined. Ray Bolger excepted, she was the greatest comedian I have ever seen dancing.

— De Mille, Agnes. *Dance Magazine*, May 1952, pg 17.



Images above by Helen Balfour Morrison.

Thank you for supporting the Morrison-Shearer Foundation.

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.

Donate Today!


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