

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **New York City Center Live @ Home virtual programming announced**

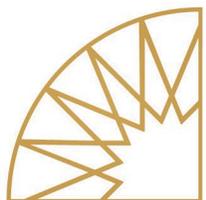
**Ayodele Casel's Diary of a Tap Dancer V.6: Us**  
a seven-part performance series conceived and curated by  
Ayodele Casel and Torya Beard

**Studio 5 | Great American Ballerinas**  
a five-part series featuring Misty Copeland,  
Sara Mearns, and Tiler Peck

**July 8, 2020 (New York, NY)** – New York City Center President & CEO **Arlene Shuler** today announced **New York City Center Live @ Home** virtual programming including a newly commissioned weekly performance series conceived and curated by tap dancer **Ayodele Casel**, alongside frequent collaborator **Torya Beard**, called **Ayodele Casel's Diary of a Tap Dancer V.6: Us**, and the popular **Studio 5** series curated and hosted by **Alastair Macaulay** and featuring **Misty Copeland**, **Sara Mearns**, and **Tiler Peck** in a special five-part event titled **Great American Ballerinas**. The much-loved social media series **Encores! Archives Project**, which revisits selections from City Center's illustrious musical theater vault, also continues through September.

"During these uncertain and turbulent times, it is even more important that City Center provides a platform for artists to develop and share their work," said Shuler. "I'm excited that City Center Live @ Home programming showcases some of the extraordinary dance artists who are part of our extended family. This has been a challenging time for so many and I am personally grateful for the support City Center has received from our loyal audiences. I hope you will all tune in as we launch these new online initiatives."

In keeping with City Center's founding mission to provide access to the best in the arts for all, City Center Live @ Home programs will premiere for free on City Center's YouTube page and website at NYCityCenter.org.



## **Ayodele Casel's Diary of a Tap Dancer V.6: Us**

For this new virtual series, Ayodele Casel, one of the “Biggest Breakout Stars of 2019” (*The New York Times*), has curated a group of artists who will present seven different video performances—solos and duos created and performed by a multigenerational and multicultural group—to be released weekly at 12pm beginning Tuesday, July 14 (through Tuesday, August 25). Co-directed by Casel and **Torya Beard**, the series is a continuation of her Diary of a Tap Dancer project and will feature performances from Casel and other tap artists including **Amanda Castro, Starinah Dixon, Andre Imanishi, Ryan Johnson, Lisa La Touche, Ted Levy, Michela Marino Lerman, Anthony Morigerato, Makenna Watts**, and more. **Kurt Csolak** serves as editor of the series, with **Darren Biggart** and Anthony Morigerato acting as creative producers.

“We all have something to say. We have something to give, something to communicate about who we are and where we've been,” said Casel. “Diary of a Tap Dancer is predicated on the belief that by revealing our stories, we expose our shared humanity and provide a deeper understanding of how our life experience moves the dance.”

Casel began her relationship with City Center in 2016 performing her solo piece, *While I Have the Floor*, as part of the Encores! Off-Center Jamboree and was invited that October to reprise the work as part of the Fall for Dance Festival. She choreographed and performed in the 2017 Encores! Off-Center production of Carole King and Maurice Sendak's *Really Rosie*, with Torya Beard serving as assistant choreographer. Both Casel and Beard served on the Encores! Off Center Artist Board for three years. Casel also appeared with Arturo O'Farrill and the Afro Latin Jazz Orchestra in a one-night-only event as part of the ¡Adelante, Cuba! Festival in 2018. In April 2019, Casel, along with O'Farrill, and Beard as creative director, helped launch City Center On the Move, a community engagement initiative first presented as part of City Center's 75th Anniversary Season. In partnership with NYC Parks Arts, Culture & Fun, On the Move brings world-class artists directly to New Yorkers in their own neighborhoods.

## **Studio 5 | Great American Ballerinas**

City Center's Studio 5 goes virtual with a five-part series—Great American Ballerinas—featuring performance excerpts from three of today's leading ballerinas: **Misty Copeland, Sara Mearns, and Tiler Peck**, curated and



hosted by dance critic and historian **Alastair Macaulay**. In this special series, each dancer works in a live coaching session with another acclaimed dance artist, including **Nina Ananiashvili, Merrill Ashley, Alessandra Ferri, Stephanie Saland, and Pam Tanowitz**.

In July, New York City Ballet (NYCB) principal dancer Tiler Peck, famous for her prodigious technique and musical skill, works with former NYCB star and ballet master Merrill Ashley, who created numerous roles for Balanchine and is credited with establishing unprecedented levels of technique in the 1970s and '80s. Together they will explore a selection of Balanchine solos with Ashley coaching Peck. This program begins live streaming on **Thursday, July 16 at 3pm** and will be available to view through Wednesday, July 22.

NYCB principal dancer Sara Mearns has become known as one of America's foremost interpreters of the dual role of Odette-Odile in *Swan Lake*. She will explore this classic role alongside "one of the twelve greatest ballerinas of all time" (*Daily Telegraph*), Georgian ballerina Nina Ananiashvili. This program begins live streaming **Thursday, July 30 at 12pm** and will be available through Wednesday, August 5.

In September, Peck works with former NYCB ballerina Stephanie Saland (Sep 16) on the "green" solo from Jerome Robbins's *Dances at a Gathering*—the only female solo in the hour-long quintessential piano ballet. Saland was coached in the role by Robbins himself, who also choreographed a number of roles for her in the 1970s and '80s.

Mearns also returns with choreographer Pam Tanowitz (Sep 23) to explore new solo material created for her. Both artists have extended their artistic range in recent years—Tanowitz revealing her distinct choreographic voice through a witty and inventive post-modern treatment of classical dance vocabulary and Mearns expanding her repertory to include works by modern dance pioneers Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, and Merce Cunningham, among others.

In the final program of the Great American Ballerinas series (Sep 30), Misty Copeland, the first African American principal ballerina with the prestigious American Ballet Theatre, revisits Juliet's solo scenes in Act Three of Kenneth MacMillan's *Romeo and Juliet* with international ballet star Alessandra Ferri.

All virtual Studio 5 events will be streamed for one week on City Center's YouTube page and website at [NYCityCenter.org/Studio5](http://NYCityCenter.org/Studio5). Following the week-long streaming period, members will receive exclusive access to an archive of the full series. For information on becoming a member (starting at \$100) visit [NYCityCenter.org/Support](http://NYCityCenter.org/Support) or email [Membership@NYCityCenter.org](mailto:Membership@NYCityCenter.org).

### **Ayodele Casel's Diary of a Tap Dancer V.6: Us**

[NYCityCenter.org/Tap](http://NYCityCenter.org/Tap)

#### **New performances every Tue, Jul 14 – Aug 25, 12pm**

Ayodele Casel and special guests

**Amanda Castro** is a multidisciplinary artist. She is a graduate of California Institute of the Arts, where she studied under Glen Eddy of Nederlands Dans Theatre and Andre Tyson from Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. Recent credits include *Singin' in the Rain* (Olney Theatre Center) and *42nd Street* (Ordway Center). @acastrodance

**Starinah Dixon** is an assistant director, choreographer, and original principal dancer of world-renowned tap company M.A.D.D. Rhythms. She has performed as a guest with companies such as Michelle Dorrance's Dorrance Dance and as a part of Savion Glover's *All Funk'd Up*. Dixon has taught and performed at the most distinguished tap festivals in the country including the LA Tap Fest, DC Tap Fest, RIFF Dallas, and more.

**Andre Imanishi** is a 2020 National YoungArts winner and was most recently seen at The Joyce Theater as part of the Ayodele Casel + Arturo O'Farrill production. His tenacious approach to training, passion for hoofing, and unique point of view, has garnered invitations to perform with Cartier Williams, the Bernstein Tribute at the Kennedy Center, Ziggity Bop, The Giz, Ayodele Casel, New York City Center's On the Move, and more.

**Ryan Johnson** is the co-founder and artistic director for SOLE Defined percussive dance company, and an artist-in-residence at Dance Place in Washington, DC. His work weaves together the techniques, history, and aesthetics of tap dance, body percussion, stepping, and theater to forge works that reclaim Black narratives. @rkj.dance

**Lisa La Touche** is co-founder of Training Dayz alongside Danny Nielsen in Calgary, and founder of Tap Phonics. La Touche has performed, choreographed, and taught worldwide on various independent projects. Recent credits include *Shuffle Along*, choreographed by Savion Glover and directed by George C. Wolfe. [lissalatouche.com](http://lissalatouche.com)

**Ted Levy** made his Broadway debut in the smash hit *Black & Blue*, and collaborated with George C. Wolfe and Gregory Hines on the choreography of *Jelly's Last Jam* (Tony nomination, Drama Desk Award nomination, Outer Critics Circle Award). Other credits include: Spike Lee's *Malcom X*, PBS' *Precious Memories* (Emmy Award), *Ted Levy and Friends*, *Dancing Under the Stars*, *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk!*, and more. @tedlouislevy

**Michela Marino Lerman** is a globally sought-after tap dance artist, performer, choreographer, educator, and all-around creative spirit. Lerman has performed, choreographed, produced, and directed many projects throughout her career and has performed with masters including Jon Batiste and Stay Human, Savion Glover, Benny Golson, Roy Hargrove, Barry Harris, Wynton Marsalis, Cecile McLorin Salvant, Marcus Roberts, and many more. [michelataps.com](http://michelataps.com)



**Anthony Morigerato** is a tap dancer, producer, director, content creator, writer, and Emmy-nominated choreographer. Morigerato is the executive producer and artistic director for AM Dance Productions. He is currently the co-artistic director for American Tap Festival and Operation: Tap, and continues to teach and choreograph for dance organizations, festivals, competitions, theater schools, and dance studios all over the world. [amtapdance.com](http://amtapdance.com)

**Makenna Watts** is a Florida-based tap artist. She is a member of Sole Talk Youth Company and has represented Florida in the Southern Open Rhythm Collective's Youth Program.

### **Studio 5 | Great American Ballerinas**

[NYCityCenter.org/Studio5](http://NYCityCenter.org/Studio5)

**Thu Jul 16, 3pm** (on view through Jul 22)  
Tiler Peck with Merrill Ashley, Balanchine solos

**Thu Jul 30, 12pm** (on view through Aug 5)  
Sara Mearns with Nina Ananiashvili, *Swan Lake*

**Wed Sep 16, 5pm** (on view through Sep 22)  
Tiler Peck with Stephanie Saland, *Dances at a Gathering*

**Wed Sep 23, 5pm** (on view through Sep 29)  
Sara Mearns with Pam Tanowitz, New Work

**Wed Sep 30, 5pm** (on view through Oct 6)  
Misty Copeland, *Romeo and Juliet*

**Misty Copeland** is a principal dancer at ABT. She was promoted in 2015, historically making her the first Black woman to be named a principal dancer in the company's then 75-year history. Copeland joined ABT's Studio Company in 2000 and the main company's corps de ballet in 2001. She was promoted to soloist in 2007. She performed the world premiere of Kyle Abraham's *Ash*, a City Center commission, at the 2019 Fall for Dance Festival. Copeland is a devoted mentor, activist, and philanthropist, as well as the bestselling author of *Ballerina Body*, *Life in Motion*, and the award-winning children's book *Firebird*. She received an honorary doctorate from the University of Hartford, has been named as one of *Time Magazine's* "100 Most Influential People" and *Glamour* magazine's "Women of the Year," and was honored with a Black Girls Rock! Award.

**Sara Mearns** of Columbia, South Carolina, has been a principal dancer with NYCB since 2008. She has been a guest artist with the Paul Taylor Dance Company, Jodi Melnick Dance, and Wang Ramirez. She has also starred in the US premiere of Matthew Bourne's *The Red Shoes* at City Center and performed the *Dances of Isadora Duncan* at both Lincoln Center and City Center's Fall for Dance Festival. Mearns was also featured in the Fall for Dance Festival in 2013, 2017, 2018, and 2019. She has worked with world-renowned choreographers including Alexei Ratmansky and Justin Peck. In 2019, she made her City Center Encores! debut in *I Married an Angel*. Mearns is the winner of the 2018 Bessie Award for Outstanding Performer and a nominee for both the Benois de la Danse and Princess Grace Awards. She has partnerships with Cole Haan, Tiger Balm, and SoDanca.

**Tiler Peck** is a principal dancer with NYCB. She has several Broadway, television, and film credits including choreography for *John Wick 3: Parabellum* (2019) and a guest appearance on *Dancing with the Stars*. She danced at the Kennedy Center Honors twice for the Obamas. She was a "30 Under 30" in *Forbes* magazine and



has been the recipient of several awards including a *Dance Magazine* Award, a Princess Grace Foundation Fellowship, and a Mae L. Wien Award. Peck has also appeared in previous City Center events including Studio 5, the 2015 and 2018 Fall for Dance Festival, and the 2016 Vail Dance Festival: ReMix NYC.

**Nina Ananiashvili** was born in Tbilisi, Georgia. At the age of 10, she began studying ballet at the Georgian State Choreographic School and entered the Moscow Choreographic School when she was 13. Ananiashvili joined the Bolshoi Ballet upon graduating in 1981. While she was a prima ballerina there, she became a principal dancer with American Ballet Theatre and danced with The Royal Ballet, Houston Ballet, La Scala Theatre Ballet, and the Metropolitan Opera, among others. She has performed more than 100 ballet pieces and won first prizes at several international ballet competitions. In 2004, Ananiashvili took on the responsibilities of artistic director of the State Ballet of Georgia. She was awarded the Rustaveli State Prize of Georgia and the State Prize of Russia (Triumph). She is also a People's Artist of Georgia and of the Russian Federation, and a recipient of the Georgian Order of Honor, Georgian Order of Excellence, and the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity by the president of Italy. In 2017, she received the prestigious Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, a Japanese government honor established in 1875 by Emperor Meiji of Japan.

**Merrill Ashley** was born in Saint Paul, Minnesota, and began her ballet training when she was seven years old. At 13, she won one of the first Ford Foundation scholarships to the School of American Ballet. In 1967, she was invited to join NYCB and was promoted to principal dancer in 1977. In addition to dancing classic Balanchine works like *Concerto Barocco*, *Firebird*, and *Square Dance*, Balanchine choreographed *Ballo della Regina* and *Ballade* for her. One of the great Balanchine ballerinas, Ashley retired from the stage in 1997 and currently stages and coaches Balanchine ballets around the world. The film *The Dance Goodbye* documents her transition into retirement. She is the author of *Dancing for Balanchine* and co-author of *The Balanchine Essays*.

Born in Milan, Italy, **Alessandra Ferri** joined the Royal Ballet in 1980 where Sir Kenneth MacMillan selected her for leading roles in his ballets *Romeo and Juliet*, *Manon*, and *Mayerling*, and choreographed others for her. In 1985, Ferri joined ABT as a principal dancer. She is also a permanent guest artist at La Scala. From 2008–2014, she directed dance at the Spoleto Festival. Ferri choreographed *The Piano Upstairs*, written by John Weidman, and was directed by Martha Clarke in *Cheri*. Other roles created for her includes Virginia Woolf in Wayne McGregor's *Woolf Works* and Eleonora Duse in John Neumeier's *Duse*. She premiered McGregor's *Witness* with Herman Cornejo at the 2016 Fall for Dance Festival and *AFTERITE* for ABT in 2018. In 2019, with Cornejo, Ferri inaugurated the new Linbury Theatre at the Royal Opera House with Trio ConcertDance. Ferri received numerous international awards including two Sir Lawrence Olivier Award, the Dance Magazine Award, and the Benois de la Danse.

During her long career with NYCB, **Stephanie Saland** performed in leading roles under Balanchine's direction and received guidance from Jerome Robbins for two decades. Saland was a guest performer in *Nureyev and Friends*, *Giselle* with Alexander Godunov, and numerous Live from Lincoln Center broadcasts. Since 1993, she has been a freelance instructor based in Seattle where she continues to teach, coach, and mentor throughout the US and internationally. Saland is inspired and informed by non-ballet modalities and is working to evolve a teaching style that synthesizes and provides a creative response to the valuable aspects of these approaches.

**Pam Tanowitz** is a New York-based choreographer and founder of Pam Tanowitz Dance. Her work was selected by *The New York Times*' "Best of Dance" from 2013 to 2015 and 2017 to 2019. Tanowitz's 2017 *New Work for Goldberg Variations*, created in collaboration with pianist Simone Dinnerstein, was called a "rare achievement" (*The New York Times*). Her most recent work, *Four Quartets* (2018), inspired by T.S. Eliot's literary masterpiece and set to music by Kaija Saariaho, was called "the greatest creation of dance theater so far this century" (*The New York Times*). Tanowitz's work was featured at The Juilliard School and City Center's Fall for Dance Festival in

2012, 2015, and 2018. Her piece *One Last Good Chance* was co-commissioned by the Fall for Dance Festival and Vail International Dance Festival in 2015. Tanowitz's honors include two Bessie awards in addition to numerous commissions and fellowships.

**Alastair Macaulay** was chief theater critic of the *Financial Times* from 1994 to 2007, and chief dance critic of *The New York Times* from 2007 to 2018. In 1983, he was founding editor of the British quarterly *Dance Theatre Journal*, and in 1988 and 1992, he was guest dance critic to *The New Yorker*. He has written the short biography *Margot Fonteyn* (1998) and the extensive book of interviews *Matthew Bourne and His Adventures in Dance* (2011). He has convened a series of seminars at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts on ballets from *Giselle* to *Afternoon of a Faun* and has given public presentations there on dance from *The Sleeping Beauty* to Merce Cunningham. A Director's Fellow at the NYU Center for Ballet and the Arts in 2020, he is working on a critical biography of Merce Cunningham.

**NEW YORK CITY CENTER** (Arlene Shuler, President & CEO) has played a defining role in the cultural life of the city since 1943. The distinctive neo-Moorish theater welcomes over 300,000 annual visitors to experience internationally acclaimed artists on the same stage where legends like George Balanchine, Leonard Bernstein, and Barbara Cook made their mark. Its landmark 75th Anniversary Season (2018 – 2019) paid tribute to this rich history and celebrated the institution's singular role in the arts today. City Center's Tony-honored Encores! series has celebrated the tradition of American musical theater for over 25 years. In 2013, City Center launched the Encores! Off-Center series, which brings today's innovative artists into contact with groundbreaking musicals from the more recent past. Dance has also been integral to the theater's mission from the start and programs like the annual Fall for Dance Festival, with all tickets \$15, remain central to City Center's identity. Home to a roster of renowned national and international companies including Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater (City Center's Principal Dance Company) and Manhattan Theatre Club, New York City Center is Manhattan's first performing arts center, founded by Mayor Fiorello La Guardia with the mission of making the best in music, theater, and dance accessible to all audiences. That mission continues today through its dynamic programming, art exhibitions, studio events, and master classes, which are complemented by education and community engagement programs that bring the performing arts to over 11,000 New York City students, teachers, and families each year. [NYCityCenter.org](http://NYCityCenter.org)

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