



Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts

# Dance Heginbotham

## Performance guide

Title Sponsor: Betty Hum & Alan Yudell

Presenting Sponsor: Karen & John Voris

Signature Partner: WESTAF

arts  
scottsdale

“The mission of Dance Heginbotham is to move people through dance.”



This guide is designed to explore artists' work and purpose behind the performances on our stage. Please use this as a springboard for deeper understanding and a way to find connection to the work.

# PRE- PERFORMANCE

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Dance Heginbotham (DH) is a New York-based contemporary dance company committed to supporting, producing, and sustaining the work of choreographer John Heginbotham. With an emphasis on collaboration, DH enriches national and international communities with its unique blend of inventive, thoughtful, and rigorous dance theatre works.

Founded in 2011, DH quickly established itself as one of the most adventurous and exciting new companies on the contemporary dance scene and is celebrated for its vibrant athleticism, humor, and theatricality, as well as its commitment to collaboration. DH has shared the stage with music icons including Alarm Will Sound, Brooklyn Rider, Gabriel Kahane and Shara Nova, and members of The Knights orchestra.

Well-known for his 14-year tenure as a dancer with Mark Morris Dance Group, artistic director John Heginbotham creates work known for its “tight formal structure and inventive movement, bolstered by a disarming wit and strangeness” (*The New Yorker*). In recognition of his unique artistic vision, Heginbotham received the 2014 Jacob’s Pillow Dance Award.

Dance Heginbotham has been invited to participate in creative residencies at BAM Fisher, Baryshnikov Arts Center, Brooklyn Academy of Music, CUNY Kingsborough, Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, The Arts Center on Governors Island, The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron, The Watermill Center, and White Oak.

DH celebrated its 10th anniversary in January 2022 with an in-studio performance at the historic Martha Graham Studio Theater. Early July brought the world premiere of a new evening-length work, *The Planets*, performed to Gustav Holst’s music of the same name, with the Greater Bridgeport Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Eric Jacobsen, followed by performances in August with The Knights chamber orchestra, led by Eric Jacobsen, at the acclaimed La Jolla Music Festival in California. Following a one-week creative residency at The National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron (NCCAkron) in July, DH performed at Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival in August, showcasing the ongoing collaboration between John Heginbotham and composer and pianist Ethan Iverson. The program featured their first work together, *Easy Win* (2015), as well as two world premieres, *The Understudies* and *Dance Sonata*, set to brand-new scores composed by Iverson.





**John Heginbotham,**  
Artistic Director and Choreographer

Originally from Anchorage, Alaska, John Heginbotham is a Brooklyn-based choreographer, performer, and teacher. Heginbotham graduated from The Juilliard School in 1993 with a bachelor of fine arts in dance and was awarded the Martha Hill Prize for Sustained Achievement

in Dance. Heginbotham was a member of the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) from 1998–2012, performing lead roles in *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; *The Hard Nut*; *Four Saints in Three Acts*; and *Romeo and Juliet: On Motifs of Shakespeare*. During his time with MMDG, he toured across the United States and abroad alongside many artists, including Mikhail Baryshnikov, Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, The Bad Plus, and Zakir Hussain, and performed with opera companies, including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, and the English National Opera.

Heginbotham received a 2018 Guggenheim Fellowship and the 2014 Jacob's Pillow Dance Award in recognition of his unique choreographic vision and promise. Heginbotham was a research fellow at the National Center for Choreography at The University of Akron, was awarded a 2017/18 New York City Center Choreography Fellowship, was a 2016 Fellow at New York University's Center for Ballet and the Arts, and is a two-time recipient of the Jerome Robbins Foundation New Essential Works (NEW) Fellowship (2010, 2012).

In addition to his work with Dance Heginbotham, Heginbotham is active as a freelance choreographer. Most recently, Heginbotham choreographed Episode 1 “Meet the Family,” Season 3 of Netflix's hit series *Umbrella Academy*. He created a new ballet, *RACECAR*, for The Washington Ballet as part of the company's *NEXTsteps* series in October 2019. In 2015, Heginbotham choreographed Daniel Fish's highly acclaimed Bard SummerScape production of *Oklahoma!*, which received its New York City premiere at St. Ann's Warehouse in October 2018 and opened on Broadway at Circle in the Square on April 7, 2019, for a limited engagement through January 2020. *Oklahoma!* won the 2019 Tony® for Best Revival of a Musical and recently completed a National Tour throughout the United States. *Oklahoma!* enjoyed an acclaimed run in London at the Young Vic Theatre in 2022 and will transfer to London's West End in early 2023.

In 2016, Heginbotham was invited to return to Bard to create the evening-length work *Fantasque* in collaboration with renowned puppeteer Amy Trompette. *Fantasque* had its New York City premiere at the Jack H. Skirball Center for the Performing Arts in November 2018. In 2016, he was commissioned to create *First for Juilliard Dance: New Dances*. In July 2014, Heginbotham created his first ballet, *Angels' Share*, for Atlanta Ballet's Wabi Sabi Project. In December 2013, he choreographed Isaac Mizrahi's *Peter & the Wolf* for Works & Process at the Guggenheim, which has become an annual holiday event. Heginbotham's work has been featured in the music videos of Fischerspooner and NICKCASEY and in the live performances of cabaret artists Lady Rizo and Our Lady J.

Heginbotham's growing list of opera commissions include John Adams's *Girls of the Golden West*, directed by Peter Sellars at San Francisco Opera (2017) and Dutch National Opera (2019); *Candide* with the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra (2016) and The Knights (2018, 2019); *The Magic Flute* at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, directed by Isaac Mizrahi (2014); Handel's *Alceste* with the American Classical Orchestra (2014); *Macbeth* with the Manhattan School of Music Opera Studies Department (2014); and *María de Buenos Aires* at the Cork Opera House (2013). In fall 2022, Heginbotham returned to San Francisco Opera to choreograph an entirely new production of *La Traviata*, conducted by Eun Sun Kim and directed by Shawna Lacey.

As a teacher, Heginbotham offers dance masterclasses in the United States and abroad. He has taught at numerous institutions, including Princeton University, Barnard College, George Mason University, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, School of Visual Arts, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Washington, and University of California, Berkeley. He was invited to give the keynote address to the Utah Dance Educators Conference in November 2016. Heginbotham is the director of the Dartmouth Dance Ensemble and is a founding teacher of Dance for PD®, an ongoing collaboration between the Mark Morris Dance Group and the Brooklyn Parkinson Group.



**Ethan Iverson** (collaborator, composer, pianist) was a founding member of The Bad Plus (TBP), a game-changing collective with Reid Anderson and David King. *The New York Times* called TBP “better than anyone at melding the sensibilities of post-'60s jazz and indie rock.” During his 17-year tenure, TBP performed in venues as diverse as the Village Vanguard, Carnegie Hall, and

Bonnaroo; collaborated with Joshua Redman, Bill Frisell, and the Mark Morris Dance Group; and created a faithful arrangement of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* and a radical reinvention of Ornette Coleman's *Science Fiction*. Iverson also has been in the critically acclaimed Billy Hart Quartet for well over a decade and occasionally performs with an elder statesman like Albert “Tootie” Heath or Ron Carter. In 2017, Iverson co-curated a major centennial celebration of Thelonious Monk at Duke University, and in 2018 he premiered an original piano concerto with the American Composers Orchestra and released a duo album with Mark Turner on ECM.

## COMPANY COLLABORATORS



Paige Barnett (she/her),  
performer



Kara Chan (she/her),  
performer



Justin Dominic (he/him),  
performer



Christine Flores (she/her),  
performer



Ethan Iverson (he/him), collaborator,  
composer, pianist



Amber Star Merkens (she/her),  
rehearsal director



Mykel Marai Nairne (she/her),  
performer



Maile Okamura (she/her), costume designer,  
videographer, and performer



Nicole Pearce (she/her), lighting designer



Macy Sullivan (she/her), performer



Joshua Tuason (he/him), performer

## VOCABULARY

**Accompanists:** An accompanist provides musical accompaniment for vocalists, dancers, and other artists at rehearsals and performances.

**Adagio:** Meaning the music should be played slowly.

**Cadence:** A variation or change in the tone, pitch, or strength of the voice.

**Commission:** When an artist is hired to create a work of art.

**Ebullience:** The quality of lively or enthusiastic expression of thoughts or feelings.

**Fantastical:** Strange and wonderful, like something out of a story.

**Guggenheim Fellowship:** The Guggenheim Foundation offers fellowships to exceptional individuals in pursuit of scholarship in any field of knowledge and creation of any artform, under the freest possible conditions and irrespective of race, color, or creed.

**Musicality:** A set of “inner skills” that let you freely and confidently express yourself in music.

**Sonata form:** A three-section musical form where each of the main sections explores a central theme or motif. While the term “sonata” has meant different things at different points in music history, the term “sonata form” refers to a method of structuring a movement within a piece of instrumental music.



# PERFORMANCE

## ARIZONA PERFORMANCE & ENGAGEMENT

DH + Ethan Iverson

Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts  
Scottsdale, Arizona  
Virginia G. Piper Theater  
Saturday, March 25, 2023, at 8 p.m.

Following Dance Heginbotham's sold-out run at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival in summer 2022, the company is bringing its collaboration with acclaimed jazz pianist and composer Ethan Iverson to audiences in Scottsdale, Arizona. The evening will feature the following repertoire, all performed to live music.



## PROGRAM

### *Easy Win* (2015)

Choreography: John Heginbotham

Music: Ethan Iverson, *If Not, Then Waltz, Lily Pad, Jumps for Harriett, An Unlikely Romeo, Slow Grind, I'd Love a Rag, Movie Cue, Big Three*

Piano: Ethan Iverson

Dancers: Paige Barnett, Kara Chan, Justin Dominic, Christine Flores, Mykel Marai Nairne, Macy Sullivan, Joshua Tuason

### *The Understudies* (2022)

Choreography: John Heginbotham in collaboration with Amber Star Merkens

Music: Ethan Iverson, *Adagio*

Piano: Ethan Iverson

Violin: Hisamii Dillard

Dancers: John Heginbotham and Amber Star Merkens

### *Dance Sonata* (2022)

Choreography: John Heginbotham

Music: Ethan Iverson, *Allegro, Andante, Scherzo, Rondo*

Piano: Ethan Iverson

Violin: Hisami Iijima Dillard

Bass: Chris Finet

Drums: Vincent Sperrazza

Dancers: Paige Barnett, Kara Chan, Justin Dominic, Christine Flores, Mykel Marai Nairne, Macy Sullivan, Joshua Tuason

*More on Dance Heginbotham and Ethan Iverson collaborations in the program.*

## A Note from John

Ethan and I met while we were both members of the Mark Morris Dance Group; Ethan was the company's music director, and I was a dancer in the group. After seeing *Dark Theater* (2013), Dance Heginbotham's evening-length production in which we suspended a baby grand piano above the stage, Ethan proposed a collaboration based on our shared time in the dance studio, and particularly in Mark Morris's ballet company class. I thought it was a great idea—accepted immediately and enthusiastically—and as we parted, Ethan said, "Great, it'll be an easy win!" *Easy Win* takes the conventions of music and movement for ballet class (its progression through various tempos, its series of repetitions, and its symmetry), and capsizes them into a psychedelic alternate dance studio universe.

*The Understudies* was initially intended as a solo—and then a duet—for ballet guest artists. A pandemic, a war, injuries, a birth, and performers' lives evolving in beautiful and heartbreaking ways have all directly influenced the course for casting this dance. At day's end, this piece became a duet for my great friend and collaborator, Amber Star Merkens, and me.

If *Easy Win* is the ballet class—the warm-up—for a performance, *Dance Sonata* is the show. In 2018, Ethan suggested a sequel to our 2013 collaboration. *Dance Sonata* was the final piece Dance Heginbotham rehearsed before the pandemic; we had just started work on it, and the mood in the room was exceptionally joyful as we began creating. We completed the first section, *Allegro*, on a Friday in March 2020, said we would see each other on Monday, and then didn't see each other in-person as an ensemble for two years. It is such a glorious pleasure to have the opportunity to share this new work and this entire program. Sincere thanks to all who are, and who have been, a part of this ride. — John Heginbotham

## A Note from Ethan

I have played for dance ever since moving to New York City in 1991. Pearl Lang trained me at the Martha Graham school, then I gigged for tango milongas every weekend before ending up as the music director for the Mark Morris Dance Group.

John Heginbotham and I met while we were both working for Mark Morris. In those years, John took Mark's ballet class while I manned the piano. Over a decade later, transmuting some of those experiences into a stage piece was a major milestone in my development, for *Easy Win* (2015) was almost my first formal composition without improvisation. Since then, I have become more and more active as a composer, with tonight's premieres being two of the many works I've produced in the last five years. *Adagio* is romance for violin, while the *Dance Sonata* unapologetically applies jazz instrumentation to conventional classical sonata form. It is a thrill to write joyous music for joyous choreography. — Ethan Iverson

## FUN FACTS

The March 25, 2023, performance at Scottsdale Center for the Performing Arts will be Dance Heginbotham's Arizona premiere!

Ethan Iverson, along with percussionist, Vincent Sperrazza, will be performing with local bassist, Chris Finet, and violinist, Hisami Iijima Dillard, who will be featured in the Scottsdale performance on March 25, 2023.

John Heginbotham was a member of the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) from 1998–2012, performing lead roles in *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*; *The Hard Nut*; *Four Saints in Three Acts*; and *Romeo and Juliet: On Motifs of Shakespeare*. John Heginbotham is acclaimed for his choreography in the Tony®-winning Broadway revival of Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!*

John Heginbotham is a founding teacher of Dance for PD®, an ongoing collaboration between the Mark Morris Dance Group and the Brooklyn Parkinson Group.

John Heginbotham choreographed Episode 1 "Meet the Family," Season 3 of Netflix's hit series *Umbrella Academy*.

*Easy Win* is dedicated to John Heginbotham's mother, Jeanie Heginbotham.

In spring 2020, Dance Heginbotham launched an ambitious video project, *24 Caprices*, driven by the desire to continue to collaborate, connect, and advance John Heginbotham's creative vision at a time of physical isolation. Using Niccolò Paganini's 24 Caprices for Solo Violin as a launching point, Heginbotham joined forces with violinist Colin Jacobsen to explore the caprices' delightful, dark, and melancholic turns in short dance films. Each caprice is a captivating jewel, rhythmically intricate and varied in range, capturing a moment in time.



# POST- PERFORMANCE

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How would you describe the dynamic between the music and dancers on stage?

What kind of references to the standard ballet class did you notice in *Easy Win*?

What artistic shifts did you feel throughout the program?

*Easy Win* and *Dance Sonata* are both repertoire in which John Heginbotham collaborated with Ethan Iverson. In what ways do you feel the works connect, contrast, or converse with each other?

What aspects of the program feel distinct to Dance Heginbotham as a company?

Which particular gesture or sequence of movements resonated with you the most?

What kind of story do you feel was being told with the piece *The Understudies*?

## RESOURCES & FURTHER EXPLORATION

### VIDEO: Post-Show Discussion at Jacob's Pillow

This Post-Show Talk features John Heginbotham, artistic director of Dance Heginbotham, and composer/pianist Ethan Iverson, moderated by Scholar-in-Residence Maura Keefe. The talk took place on the Henry J. Leir Stage on August 11, 2022.

Dance Heginbotham website: [DanceHeginbotham.org](http://DanceHeginbotham.org)

Dance Heginbotham HD Hub: [DanceHeginbotham.org/dh-hd](http://DanceHeginbotham.org/dh-hd)

*24 Caprices*, episodes 1–9, now streaming on ALL ARTS: [AllArts.org/programs/24-caprices](http://AllArts.org/programs/24-caprices)

The award-winning Dance for PD® program, founded in 2021, offers specialized classes to those with Parkinson's. For online resources visit: [DanceForParkinsons.org/resources](http://DanceForParkinsons.org/resources)

A Guide to Interpreting Contemporary Dance: [Artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-guide-interpreting-contemporary-dance](http://Artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-guide-interpreting-contemporary-dance)

About Rhythm & Musicality: is it really the same?: [Archives.dance/2012/02/rhythm-musicality-complified-by-ruud-vermeij](http://Archives.dance/2012/02/rhythm-musicality-complified-by-ruud-vermeij)

What does an accompanist do?: [Berklee.edu/careers/roles/accompanistrehersal-pianist](http://Berklee.edu/careers/roles/accompanistrehersal-pianist)

More info on Mark Morris and modern dance: [ArtsIntegration.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Modern.pdf](http://ArtsIntegration.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Modern.pdf)

On Guggenheim Fellowships: [GF.org](http://GF.org)

On musicality: [Musical-U.com/learn/what-is-musicality](http://Musical-U.com/learn/what-is-musicality)

