

# robinbeckerdance

*“I strive to explore the relationship between our common human spirit and its physical expression. I like to think of my work as a journey - a rite of passage which enables the dancer and the audience to mutually rediscover an often forgotten ground.”*



Photo: Steven Speliotis

**ROBIN BECKER**  
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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## About the Company

Celebrating its twenty-third anniversary, Robin Becker Dance is dedicated to creating work that expresses the power of the body's primordial voice. Under the artistic direction of Robin Becker, the company has an extensive repertory of work inspired by Becker's love of world traditions, Native American culture, and the work of the 13th century mystical poet Jelaluddin Rumi. Robin Becker Dance is internationally renowned for its contemplative and stunningly beautiful movement. In the tradition of those who choreograph from the depths of the unconscious, the choreography speaks with power and immediacy.

The company is distinguished in New York City by performances at the Joyce Theater's Altogether Different Series, St. Marks Church-in-the-Bowery, the Fiorello Festival, the Merce Cunningham Studio Theater, and the opening performance series of The Joyce SoHo. The company was invited to perform in the inaugural season of the Harkness Dance Project. Other highlights include a collaborative work with Roberta Flack for Breast Cancer Research with costumes created by Nicole Miller. Recently, the company presented a concert series at the Joyce Soho entitled *The Subject Tonight is Love*: an evening of choreography inspired by Rumi's poetry.

Part of the company's mission is to bring dance to a larger audience. The company has been in residence at the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies, The Abode, a retreat center in upstate New York, and the Zenith Institute in Olivone, Switzerland. Robin Becker Dance has been the Dance Company in Residence in the public school system of Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. The company has also participated in numerous other educational and performance workshops in public schools, congregations, and community centers including a workshop for women and girls at risk at the Westchester County Department of Corrections.

Robin Becker Dance has been supported by the Harkness Foundations for Dance, the Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation, the Philip Morris Companies, Inc., the Manhattan Community Arts Fund, and by the Dance Center of the 92nd Street Y Space Grant Program.



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## About the Artistic Director

“Her quiet intensity made her always compelling.”

—Jack Anderson, THE NEW YORK TIMES



Artistic director, choreographer, and dancer Robin Becker began her dance training with Bentley Stone and Walter Camryn in Chicago, Illinois. She continued her studies on scholarship at the Martha Graham School in New York City. She also studied choreography and was mentored by Bessie Schonberg for ten years. Becker was a principal dancer with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company from 1973 to 1983 and performed with the Martha Graham Ensemble, the Pearl Lang Dance Company, Ballet Etc., Los Angeles Dance Theatre and Zvi Gotheiner. She performed as a guest artist with the Denishawn Repertory Dancers at the Biennale Festival in Lyons, France. In 1987, Becker founded her own company which has enjoyed critical success with engagements at premiere New York dance institutions that include the Joyce Theater's Altogether Different Series, the Harkness Dance Project's Playhouse 91 Series, the Fiorello Festival, and three seasons at St. Marks Church-in-the-Bowery.

Becker's wide-ranging experiences as a choreographer include residencies at Southold Dance Theatre in South Bend, Indiana, and at The Yard, a colony for performing artists on Martha's Vineyard. She was also elected to participate in the Carlisle Project; a competitive residency program designed to foster the creation of new ballet choreography. During the summers of 1995-1997, Becker was a guest artist at the South Carolina Summer Dance Conservatory, and was also in residence at the Omega Institute for Holistic Studies with musician Paul Horn. In 1998, she was commissioned to create a new work that was performed with Roberta Flack in a New York concert to benefit breast cancer research and awareness. Becker performs regularly as a soloist with the Columbia Chamber Players, performing structured improvisations inspired by poetry and literature.

Becker's work is informed by her extensive training in numerous forms of dance, bodywork, meditation practice, and by Continuum, an innovative field of movement education based on the study of the body as a fluid system. Becker is an authorized teacher of Continuum. Becker weaves her foundation of classical dance training together with the ongoing inquiry and discovery of contemporary dance. Her commitment to the exploration of movement, healing and spirituality permeate her art. She has a B.A. in dance and a M.A. in humanities.

Robin Becker has served on the faculties of American Ballet Theatre, Alvin Ailey American Dance Center, The Fiorello Laguardia High School of Performing Arts in New York City, the Princeton Ballet Society, the Actor's Studio, Peridance Center, and the Stone-Camryn School of Ballet in Chicago. She is an accredited teacher of the Martha Graham Technique and is currently on the faculty of Hofstra University. She has presented master classes for several prestigious dance programs, including the New England American College Dance Festival, the University of Utah, Wesleyan University, Skidmore College, the University of South Carolina, and BalletMet in Columbus, Ohio.

Becker has been both a New York and New Jersey State Artist in Residence. She has presented workshops at an international conference on Prayer at Princeton University, and for the past ten years she has taught workshops in Switzerland at The Zenith Institute in Olivone, and Kientalerhof in Kiental.



Photo: Steven Speliotis

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## Repertory

### Dances From Rumi

Dances From Rumi is a series of dances inspired by the poetry of the mystical Persian poet Jelalludin Rumi. The translations of this poetry are selected from the work of renowned Rumi scholars Coleman Barks, Andrew Harvey, Kabir and Camille Helminski and Shahram Shiva. Rumi is currently the most widely read poet in the United States. The poetry of this 13th century poet continues to have an impact on our modern world because of the layered and multi-dimensional images within the poetry.

#### **Night**

A contemplative solo exploring the mystery and wonder of the night sky.

Original score by Bruce Detrick (10 minutes)

#### **After**

An acutely simple solo that portrays the path to acceptance.

Music: Japanese Shakuhachi flute (5 minutes)

#### **Doorways**

Exploring the possibilities and doorways of life, this work investigates the passages and portals of relationships. This work is for five dancers.

Original score by Bruce Detrick (7 minutes)

#### **Arbor**

As trees standing strong and generous even at the midst of their own destruction, nine dancers expose human greed and its impact on environment.

Music: Arvo Part. (15 minutes)

#### **There is a Field**

Longing for union, the duet revolves around the timeless connection of souls, a place beyond boundaries.

Music: Prelude #4 in D Major by Rachmaninoff (5 minutes)

#### **Returning**

A beautiful exploration of meeting and returning. Seven dancers move as part of the same river.

Music: Leonard Cohen performed by Roberta Flack (5 minutes)

#### **Galaxies**

Eleven dancers spiraling as stars drawn together like gravity culminating in the Sufi practice of whirling.

Music: Morten Lauridsen (11 minutes)

#### **Kissing**

A joyous romp, this series of solos and duets plays with the infinite, and sometimes humorous, qualities of beauty.

Music: Bach Suite #3 in C Major (12 minutes)

#### **Courage**

Inspired by the incredible story inspired by the renowned World War II spy Madeline, whose impact was crucial in overthrowing the German regime. She was posthumously awarded the George Cross and the Croix de Guerre with Gold Star. This dance narrative is a tribute to her strength, extraordinary compassion and courage. This work is for a soloist and four dancers.

Original score composed and performed by Beth Craig and Akal Dev Sharonne. Narration performed in English and Farsi by Shahram Shiva. (15 minutes)

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## Repertory Continued

### **Naming**

A response to Native American culture and its near destruction, this work evolves in sections: Before, Naming, Chaos, Forms, Shadows, and Circles. Danced by the entire company, it is a testament to the struggle of spirit against relentless odds. Performed in full (37 minutes) or as the opening self-contained duet (15 minutes), which delves into the mystery, and evolution of the male/female relationship.

Original score composed by Valerie Naranjo as well as live or recorded music (15-40 minutes)

### **Cathedrals of Time**

Surrealistic in quality, this work examines differing perceptions and experiences of time. The work is based on the book Einstein's Dream, by novelist and physicist Alan Lightman.

Recorded music of Armand Amar and of Tibetan Bowls (10 minutes)

### **The Arms of Darkness**

This work developed from the mythological theme of the descent to the underworld as a rite of passage. The choreography explores and embraces the light and dark aspects of the feminine principle. A duet comprised of women.

Live or taped music with original voice score by Tiye Giraud. (15 minutes)

### **Kindred**

Inspired by the communal and ritual behavior of elephants and by Ganesh, the Hindu elephant deity, this work is both powerful and emotional. Danced by three women and two men to a score composed by Tiye Giraud.

Live or recorded music (25 minutes)

### **Landing**

Inspired by a dream of celestial messengers delivering a soul to earth. This trio becomes a dynamic exploration of the struggle to rise and birth new life. The work is structured in three sections and is performed to an original score composed by Scott Steidl.

Recorded music. (15 minutes)

### **Drinking From My Bowl Of Green Tea, I Stopped The War**

A juxtaposition of the power of contemplative life in the face of war and destruction, this work for 15 dancers is to an original score composed by Matthew Ferry.

Recorded and live music. (17 minutes)

### **Weaving**

Explores the intimacy, interconnectedness and mutual support of three women, drawing from the ancient native mythology of spinning and weaving.

Recorded music of John Adams. (11 minutes)

### **Autumn**

A solo inspired by the paintings of autumn leaves by Georgia O'Keefe. The work explores the beauty, loss, and cyclical return of the fall season.

Original score by Eric Edberg. (7minutes)

### **Prayer**

A meditative solo based on a Rodin sculpture, danced by Ms. Becker to the music of Anton Dvorak.

Recorded music. (7.5 minutes)

### **Branching Waters**

A sweeping lyrical work for seven dancers set to the music of Rachmaninoff's Third Piano Concerto. Romantic and full of feeling.

Recorded Music (17 minutes)

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## What the Critics Say

“One dancer not afraid of eloquent simplicity was Ms. Becker. . . This was this evening’s loveliest performance.”

-Jack Anderson, THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Becker possesses an eye, a feel, a love, and knowledge of movement, which she imparts to a splendid ensemble of dancers.”

-Phyllis Goldman, BACKSTAGE

“This sample suggested that [Ms. Becker] can translate [Rumi’s] verbal imagery into motion...*Doorways*...was only for five dancers, but their gatherings and dispersals implied that a whole community was present. And the way Mr. Detrick combined flowing melodies with steady but unassertive percussion rhythms reinforced the choreographic sense of people moving onward without anxiety.”

-Jack Anderson, THE NEW YORK TIMES

“Becker offers up a palpable spirituality that must capture something of the original appeal of modern dance.”

-Diane Webber, DOWNTOWN EXPRESS

“...This solo and duet, because of their relative simplicity, the clear relation of emotion to movement, and the restrained eloquence of the performing - rise above their traditional subject matter. Becker, a modest and very sensitive performer, really does make her outcry seem imperfect, aborted – stifled in her body the way terror can stop a scream already rising in the throat.”

-Deborah Jowitt, THE VILLAGE VOICE

“[In *Kindred*], propelled by the elements of crisis and resolution, the choreography becomes a story that must be told.”

-Anne Tobias, DANCEVIEW

“Again we had power, ideas, attention to detail, and stimulating groupings given smooth movement and free transitions. The extraordinary work of the dancers themselves...is strongly to be celebrated.”

-Bert Wechsler, ATTITUDE MAGAZINE

“Becker’s full-length piece (Naming) gave further proof of her original voice.”

-Phyllis Goldman, BACKSTAGE

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## INTO SUNLIGHT

### About the Project

In the Spring of 2011 Robin Becker Dance, working in collaboration with the Cultural Center at Hofstra University and the University of Wisconsin, Madison, will present *Into Sunlight*, a new evening length work, as the centerpiece of an interdisciplinary symposium, *Into Sunlight: The Impact of War on the Social Body*. Pulitzer Prize winning journalist David Maraniss' book, "They Marched Into Sunlight," a cultural history of war and protest set in 1967, provided the impetus for choreographer Robin Becker's conception of the dance, leading to a broader inquiry into the essential position of the body in self and cultural definition, and the social trauma enacted through war. The symposium has been built on that ground, with explorations of the impact of war and violence on the social body from a variety of social and cultural perspectives.



"They Marched Into Sunlight" examines the tumultuous shifting of cultural perspective centered around events in October, 1967. It weaves together stories of death and heroism in battle in Vietnam with growing social and political unrest on the home front. The violence of war is mirrored through protests that turn violent on the campus of the University of Wisconsin, Madison. These events illustrate how the violence of war is embodied in cultural action, and creates a structure of cultural disassociation. The message inspired from events in 1967 is equally meaningful to the contemporary public, who struggle to understand their connection to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan today. The symposium addresses themes of cultural embodiment, the impact of war and violence, and the integrative power of art from a variety of perspectives. The dance will provide a unifying process of reconciliation for those who experience the trauma of battle and for a culture engaged in its own inner battle.

The goal of the symposium and dance is to bring together diverse perspectives to engage both a public and university audience in active dialogue on the subject of embodiment, and to address current cultural conditions of war through an historical lens. The further goal is to open up consideration of how war and violence shape our experience, transforming us physically, mentally and emotionally.

At both Hofstra University and the University of Wisconsin, Mr. Maraniss will lead discussions with journalists and scholars from a variety of disciplines, using the lens of the Vietnam era to focus an understanding of our current experience, and investigating the role of embodiment in our social condition.

Ms. Becker's dance provides a focal point and palpable connection to the themes and ideas raised. Work on stage and in panel discussions will be connected to exhibits of art and photography exploring the reverberations of war on society. The symposium will include a collection of meetings, performances, discussions and exhibits drawn from as diverse a field of disciplines as possible, with contributions from History, Political Science, Anthropology, Sociology, Science and the Arts.

We are thrilled and inspired by the potential of *Into Sunlight*, and ready to begin what we believe will be an extraordinary and ongoing exploration of these vital concerns in our society.

Visit [www.intosunlight.org](http://www.intosunlight.org) for more information.

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## Funding History

Robin Becker Dance has been generously support by the following institutions:

Philip Morris Companies, Inc.  
Harkness Foundation for Dance  
Joyce Mertz-Gilmore Foundation  
Dance Center of the 92nd Street Y Space Grant Program  
Meet the Composer  
Heilpern Family Fund  
Mary Flagler Cary Charitable Trust/American Music Center  
Manhattan Community Arts Fund  
New York State Decentralization Grant

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*“Like most authors, I’ve occasionally imagined my books as movies, or documentaries, or plays, but until Robin Becker came along I had never thought of one being transformed into dance. Of all my works, *They Marched Into Sunlight*, with its themes of struggle, dissent, bravery, and overwhelming loss, is best suited for this art form, and I am absolutely thrilled by the prospect of seeing what a choreographer with Robin’s insight and emotional power will do with it. Dance is a universal language, which is also the language in which I tried to write this book.”*

DAVID MARANISS  
PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR

