



Martha Hill (1900-1995)  
Educator, administrator, artistic director,  
and visionary for dance as a performing art.

MARTHA HILL DANCE FUND LIMITED WAS  
ESTABLISHED TO HONOR, PERPETUATE,  
AND REWARD MARTHA HILL'S  
COMMITMENT TO DANCE,  
EDUCATION AND  
PERFORMANCE INTERNATIONALLY.

## 2010 Screening Event



Photo: Ernesta Corvino

December 6 at Symphony Space

During this past year, the MHDF dedicated all its efforts and resources to producing the documentary *The Life of Martha Hill* (working title). In this spirit, it was decided to forgo the traditional Gala with awards ceremony, and to instead host a 2010 Martha Hill Screening Event. With much pride and anticipation, the first ever screening of the work-in-progress, by director Greg Vander Veer, took place on December 6th at Symphony Space.

The excerpt shown, *Juilliard Moves to Lincoln Center*, was enthusiastically applauded, and it stimulated a lot of interesting and heartfelt opinions and remembrances. These were expressed during the panel discussions that followed each screening and at the reception. At the end of the evening, the general feeling was that everyone enjoyed the event and wished for more: more of the documentary and more time to continue the conversation. The Board is pleased that the event left all with a desire to see each other soon again, and the 2011 event is already in the planning stages!

Both panel discussions were moderated by Elizabeth McPherson, who led and gently guided the animated interchange amongst the panelists Janet Mansfield Soares, Risa Steinberg, Douglas Turnbaugh, director Vander Veer, and the audience. Many thanks to all the participants for sharing their memories, research and interpretations of past events, especially with regards to the tumultuous events surrounding the move of Juilliard's Dance Division to Lincoln Center in 1969.

For a review of the screening by Rachel Straus, please go to <http://www.musicalamerica.com/mablogs/?p=780>

The premiere of the excerpt marks the completion of Phase One of the production. We have completed 37 interviews to date and are planning more. We have also filmed several dance companies and shot on location at Juilliard, Lincoln Center, Bennington College, and the American Dance Festival. We are very thankful to everyone involved for their time and commitment. The documentary would not be possible without the myriad voices that bring to life the times of Martha Hill and help illuminate her vision.

Phase Two of the documentary will commence as soon as the necessary funds are secured. All proceeds from the screening event were devoted to this end and we are very close to start filming again. Looking ahead to Phase Three the anticipated budget is \$80,000. A hefty sum, but one we are confident of achieving thanks to the ongoing and generous support of the dance community.

THANK YOU, MHDF BOARD

To view the trailer and make a contribution, please visit our re-designed website at [www.marthahilldance.org](http://www.marthahilldance.org)

## Profile of MHDF Board Member Hudas Liff



Photo: David K. Manion

I met Martha Hill first in the mid 1940s when I was a social science major at Bennington College and she was heading the dance department. I had been taking some art classes, but my advisor suggested trying a dance class. Martha Hill was my teacher. To put it bluntly, I was klutzy. I found moving across the floor difficult. I did my best, and I learned to move a little bit, but I was clearly not a dancer. I took a class from another Bennington faculty member, Bill Bales, next. After a little while, he said "Hudas, I think you get the idea," meaning that I should move on to other studies. I was never part of the dance world, but part of the Bennington College world which was an important part of my life and of Martha's.

In the 1980s, Martha and I did a "horse and pony show" to raise money for Bennington College. I was then the president of the Alumni Association and member of the Board of Trustees. We went to events in Chicago, Washington D.C., New York, and other east coast cities, and we would talk about the college with the alumni. Hill was adored by the women who knew her and had studied with her.

Martha and I were also connected through our mutual friend Irwin Dennis. I knew Irwin because he was part of my husband's gang from Brooklyn where they grew up – they were close childhood friends. After my husband passed away, Martha, Irwin, and I would often go to dinner, usually a Chinese restaurant. Martha always insisted on taking the subway back to Brooklyn afterwards, despite our protests.

After Martha died, Irwin and Hortense Zera had the idea of forming an organization in her honor and they asked me to help. Our first event was a celebration of Martha's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday with a big party in Chinatown. We raised money at that event, and I became treasurer of the organization to make sure the money was safeguarded. The following year, we began giving out monetary awards to outstanding members of the dance community. It was like a mom and pop organization at the beginning. We all worked very hard, particularly in the first few years. When Irwin became ill, I took over as president of the board, a position I held for several years, only just recently moving into a vice president's role as Vernon Scott became president.

In the larger framework of my life, I have 3 children: my son Bradford and daughters Wendy and Janet. Bradford is a professor at Arizona State University. He and his wife adopted two daughters, Jessamyn and Emma, who were born in China. My daughter Wendy is president of the board of the Hewitt School – a full time volunteer job. Her daughter Julia was a ballet dancer, but has since moved on to other pursuits, attending Columbia University and working in the fashion industry. My daughter Janet works in commercial real estate.

I earned a Master's Degree in Library Science from Connecticut State College. Then for many years, I was President of the Suffolk county chapter of Planned Parenthood Association, and for my work there, I was very honored to receive the prestigious Margaret Sanger Award. I learned a great deal about non-profits at Planned Parenthood, including how to hire the best managers, and how to oversee the management of an organization. What I learned there, has contributed to my work on the Martha Hill Dance Fund Board.

To finish up, one funny thing I'll always remember about Martha is that despite my being married twice or maybe because of that, I was always Miss Schwartz to her as that was my maiden name. Martha would never call me by my married name as she said that might change again. She was a very special lady, sometimes with a sharp tongue, but not with me. I admired her – "up to he sky"!

Interview and editing  
by Elizabeth McPherson

## Meet the Director



Photo: Peter Buntaine

**Greg Vander Veer** has worked with legendary documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles on several projects. He was a cameraman for the recent film *Sally Gross: The Pleasure of Stillness*, about the ground breaking dancer and choreographer. For Allee Willis, composer of the Broadway musical, *The Color Purple*, Greg filmed a detailed account of backstage activities for the two-year duration of the show. He is also a video contributor and coeditor of IndexMagazine.com. Recently, he directed and shot the documentary film, *Keep Dancing*, about legendary dancers Marge Champion and Donald Saddler. The film was an Official Selection at over 20 international film festivals including South by Southwest, SilverDocs and DocuWeeks, and received the People's Choice award at the Starz Denver Film Festival. *Keep Dancing* was nominated by the International Documentary Association for the 2010 Distinguished Short Documentary Award. In addition to directing the feature documentary film *The Life of Martha Hill*, Greg is now also producing *Music of the Hemispheres*, a documentary film about the musical structure of the brain.

### DOCUMENTARY PRODUCTION STAFF

Director - Greg Vander Veer, Editor/Prod. Manager - Elisa Da Prato, Cinematography - Peter Buntaine, James Fideler, Content Consultants - Elizabeth McPherson, Janet Soares, Coordinating Producer - Vernon Scott, Pro Bono Attorney - Joshua Gelfand, and many interns!

### FLASH NEWS

360° Dance Company returns to DTW June 2,3 & 4, 2011, with an evening featuring revivals including renowned Graham artist Yuriko's signature solo *Cry*, and Jane Dudley's 1944 solo *Cante Flamenco* as well as new works by Alessandra Prosperi and Artistic Director Martin Lofsnes.

HENNING RÜBSAM (Board Member) joined the faculty of Purchase College Conservatory of Dance.

KATIE DORN (Young Professional Award '06) has been performing with Lucinda Childs since 2009, touring the US as well as internationally. She is looking forward to the re-staging of Philip Glass's opera *Einstein on the Beach* in 2012 with the original creators, Philip Glass, Robert Wilson, and Ms. Childs. Last summer she performed a duet choreographed by Gus Solomons for her and Ty Boomer-shine at Dixon Place, and with Mary Seidman at the American Dance Festival. She is currently working with photographer Jesse Anders on stop motion/time lapse dance video works.

LILLI-ANNE TAI (Young Professional Award '08) has been performing with Ronald K. Brown/Evidence for the past two years. Most recently, in February, the company premiered *On Earth Together* at the Joyce Theater, NYC. She has enjoyed touring the US, Europe and Africa. Last summer, in addition to performing, she spent a month teaching in Senegal, Nigeria and South Africa. Back in the city, she also works with choreographers Francesca Harper and Ja'Malik.

JACQUELINE GREEN (Young Professional Award '09) has joined Ailey II and is a senior in The Ailey/Fordham B.F.A. Program in Dance.

ELIZABETH MCPHERSON (Board Member) has re-staged Hortense Lieberthal Zera's *Never Sign a Letter Mrs.* and Charles Weidman's *Lynchtown* for the Montclair State University Dancers as part of their concert Danceworks. Performances will be held April 6-10 in the Kasser Theatre at MSU. For more information go to [www.peakperf.org](http://www.peakperf.org). *Lynchtown* will also be performed at the 92nd Street Y on April 15.

PLEASE SEND YOUR CURRENT E-MAIL ADDRESS TO [info@marthahilldance.org](mailto:info@marthahilldance.org)  
OR WRITE TO US AT **MARTHA HILL DANCE FUND**  
C/O ERNESTA CORVINO, 451 WEST 50TH STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10019

### FLASH NEWS, continued

ANI UDOVICKI (Board Member) has received a grant from Tony Bennett's foundation Exploring the Arts to stage *From the Horse's Mouth* by Tina Croll and Jamie Cunningham with her senior dance majors at the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts. Performances will be on March 18.

SYLVIA WATERS (Advisory Board Member) continues to lead Ailey II to new, uncharted, territory. After decades of successful domestic tours, the company is beginning to tour internationally with performances throughout Europe. In Ms. Waters words: "We are in the UK now, performing to very enthusiastic audiences...The dancers are doing an incredible job and at last the sun came out!"

PLEASE NOTE THAT NO AWARDS WERE GIVEN IN 2010 DUE TO FUND-RAISING EFFORTS FOR THE DOCUMENTARY  
**Lifetime Achievement Award** 2009 Beverly Blossom, 2008 Ethel Winter, 2007 Pearl Lang, 2006 Mary Anthony, 2005 Ruth Grauert, 2004 Donald McKayle and Doris Rudko, 2003 Francis Mason, 2002 Doris Hering and May O'Donnell, 2001 Alfredo Corvino **Mid-Career Award** 2009 Virginia Johnson, 2008 Janet Panetta, 2007 David Dorfman, 2006 Doug Elkins **Young Professional Award** 2009 Jacqueline Green, 2008 Lilli-Anne Tai, 2007 Levi Marsman, 2006 Katie Dorn, 2005 Christopher Vo, 2004 Mollie Mae McGregor

**Carl Wolz Award** 2003 Mira Kim **Special Citation** 2009 Hortense Zera

## REMEMBERING

Elizabeth Sawyer 1931- 2010



Elizabeth Sawyer died peacefully in her sleep on December 23, 2010. She was 79. A funeral service was held on January 19, 2011. She is buried in Greenwood Union Cemetery in Rye, NY.

Elizabeth taught dance history and music at Purchase College Conservatory of Dance since her return to the U.S. from her beloved England, where she lived from 1975 - 84. Before that she had taught music and musical coaching at Juilliard's Dance Division from 1964 on.

Well known as an accompanist and rehearsal pianist to Antony Tudor - with whom she collaborated both at Juilliard and at the Metropolitan Opera Ballet - she also worked with Margaret Craske, Alfredo Corvino, Maggie Black, David Blair, and Vitale Fokine among others. She studied piano and composition at Juilliard and early on pursued a career as a composer. Betty Jones and José Limón choreographed to her scores. Elizabeth fell in love with dance, and the dance world was lucky to count her among its ranks not only as a musician but also as a dance historian, whose passion for the art inspired readers and students alike.

Some caught a glimpse of her wealth of knowledge at a panel discussion at Barnard in 2003. Among her publications are her first book, *Dance with Music* (1985) and essays on Tudor, Massine and others (*Dance Chronicle*). Since Elizabeth, who was a vital part of the Antony Tudor Centennial Celebration held at Juilliard in spring 2008, did not leave a will, the future publication of her manuscripts is uncertain. A memorial celebration is planned at Purchase College for Wednesday, March 23 at 12:30pm - 2:00pm. Please, contact [sensedance@gmail.com](mailto:sensedance@gmail.com) for further information.

(Henning Rübsam)

Newsletter designed and edited by Ani Udovicki

**MHDF BOARD** We welcome new board members Lance Westergard and Megan Williams!  
Vernon Scott - President, David K. Manion - Chairman, Hudas Liff - Vice President, Hortense Zera - Vice President, Andra Corvino - Vice President, Elizabeth McPherson - Secretary, Ernesta Corvino - Treasurer, Henning Rübsam, Ani Udovicki