

cornfield dance



VISION

Cornfield Dance, a NYC based dance company, aims to enhance audiences' ways of seeing and interacting with the world. Using a non-verbal expression, her work transcends boundaries, connecting with diverse communities across the city and beyond. Cornfield creates a world unto itself capturing audiences with the rhythms of the movement and the sheer kinesthetic energy of the dancing. Her dances quicken our feeling of being alive and provide sustenance for living.





Cornfield Dance has “...among the most proficient, technical, and kinetically expressive dancers around,” (Gus Solomons, choreographer and critic) stellar performers who have been animating Ellen Cornfield’s work since the company’s New York City debut in 1989. Ellen’s long-standing interest in making her work available to a wide spectrum of audiences has been realized through performances around the world in gardens, museums, hotels, and plazas, as well as in traditional theater spaces.

In New York City, Cornfield Dance has been presented at the Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors Festival and the Harkness Dance Festival, among many others, and outside of NYC at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Dragon’s Egg in Connecticut, The Yale Center for British Art, Jacob’s Pillow in Massachusetts, the Yard in Massachusetts, Windhover in Massachusetts, and at universities around the country. Internationally, Cornfield Dance has performed in nine countries, at venues such as the OPEN LOOK Festival in St. Petersburg, Russia, the International Dance Festival in Bytom, Poland four times, and Theater X and Session House in Japan.

Ellen’s lush, abstract, and full-throttle dance language is interspersed with surprising details that suggest stories that never become literal or obvious. Her singular choreographic vision creates a dance architecture that celebrates movement driven by kinesthetic energy, and the richness of the humanity of the dancers. It is art that is accessible, and at the same moment inspires.

HISTORY

"... a feast of ravishing dancing with an unexpected emotional punch. The cast is superb. It takes decades of application to make this kind of work."

David Parker - Director, The Bang Group NYC

"Ellen Cornfield's choreography is pure genius!"

Jane Nowosadko – Manager of Public Programs,
Yale Center for British Art

Ellen Cornfield is one of our most inventive pure abstract dance makers.

Joan Finkelstein – Executive Director,
Harkness Foundation for Dance

WHAT PEOPLE ARE

SAYING

"Much of the drive and fascination of the inventive choreography... arises from how it forces the performers to get in their own way and, without hesitation, keep going."

Brian Seibert - The New York Times

"Every gesture ... is elegantly rendered – and the product of elegant choices."

Deborah Jowitt - Village Voice

"Ms. Cornfield... interspers[ed] playful, everyday gestures... with rocketing leaps and lifts."

Siobhan Burke - The New York Times

"Rich choreographic imagination..."

Zachodni Newspaper Poland

Her choreography is knotty and ingenious... and her topnotch dancers are up to the challenge.

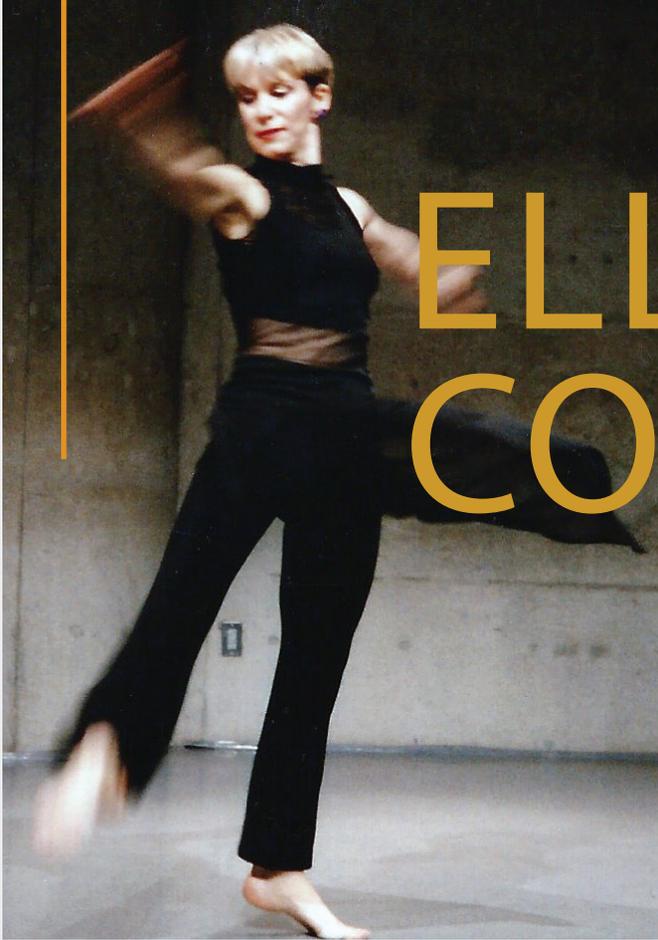
Brian Seibert - The New Yorker

"The seven strong, blithe dancers of Cornfield Dance devour the space... fully committed to the athletic demands of the choreography, powered by their vigorous joy for the craft. It's the kind of imprimatur that signals a master at work, and Ellen Cornfield's reputation precedes her."

Brian McCormick - Baryshnikov Arts Center

"Cornfield Dance has an internal power generated from the abstraction of the choreography. It was fascinating. I was intoxicated from the combination of the tension and release of the dancing, as I drank in the space and time the dancers created through their bodies."

Dance Magazine Japan



ELLEN CORNFIELD

Ellen Cornfield has been active in the dance field for over 45 years as a dancer, teacher, and choreographer. Her career path was set during her athletic and physical upbringing in the outdoor country space of her Virginia childhood home, where she developed what would become a lifelong passion for moving in open space.

Ellen moved to NYC in 1972 after training in Graham technique at the University of California at Berkeley. She joined the Merce Cunningham Dance Company in 1974 and toured the world, earning a reputation as one of the foremost Cunningham dancers of her generation. She was known for her great jump, her precise rhythm, her power, her speed, and her joy and bright light as a performer. She was in the original casts of his choreographed works from 1974 – 1982, in all of his early video works, and was on the teaching roster at his studio from 1972 - 2003.

To support her choreographic investigations, Ellen formed Cornfield Dance in 1989, and has been active as a choreographer with her company and others ever since. She was in residency with the Jose Limón Dance Company in 2008 at the Maggie Allessee National Center for Choreography at Florida

State University, where she created two new works on the company, and at the Baryshnikov Arts Center in NYC in 2019, where she collaborated with a video artist to create a short video piece. She has received numerous commissions and funding for her work from both private and government sources, and has set works on companies and dancers such as Dartmouth Dance Company, Reflex Dance Company in Holland, Scranton Civic Ballet, and students at Ohio University, The Ohio State University, CalArts, and Rutgers University.

A master teacher, Ellen has taught at many of the world's major dance institutions, including North Carolina School of the Arts, Harvard Summer Dance Center, SUNY Purchase, The Ohio State University, Hofstra University, and the University of California at Berkeley. Ellen lived in Europe 1986-1987, teaching at The Laban Centre and The Place in London, the Rotterdamse Dansacademie in Holland, and for several European companies including Ballet Rambert in London, Companie Emile Dubois in Grenoble, France and Charlesleroi Danses in Charleroi, Belgium.

Continuing education and learning has been a cornerstone of Ellen's development as an artist. She received her MA in Performance Studies from New York University in 2000, and over the years has worked with private practitioners to continue refining her physical practice. Her experience as a dance artist has guided her more deeply into the beauty of the body's energy and spiritual systems, a path that has become her constant guide and informs her art at every turn.

BOOKING

OPPORTUNITIES



Performances

Residencies

Teaching

Community Partnerships



PERFORMANCE

Cornfield Dance performs in a variety of venues from the proscenium stage to outdoor spaces and museums. Ellen is interested and skilled in creating and adapting works based on specific performance environments, and deeply values creating partnerships with presenters to ensure that works come to life in their space. Cornfield Dance welcomes opportunities both to perform repertory works and to create new works. Much of the repertory is flexible and can be adjusted both in terms of length of piece and available venue size.





CURRENT REPERTORY

“Ellen Cornfield is one of our most inventive pure abstract dance makers. Her newest works – beautifully danced by top-notch performers – are replete with engaging movement detail and a continuous stream of fresh, surprising moments. Thoroughly enjoyable!”

Joan Finkelstein – Executive Director,
Harkness Foundation for Dance

PORTAL (2019)

Portal connotes the passageway from one state to another—from agitation into a state of peace and from the quotidian into the sacred. With swirling human orbits contrasted with solo moments and an explosive drum score juxtaposed with a silent stage, Portal depicts the spiritual eye in the midst of a storm. This piece, moving between episodes of aggression and ecstasy, leaves the audience with an empty stage pulsing with an unseen yet deeply felt essence.

20 minutes/7 dancers
Music: Andreas Brade
Costumes: Karen Young



SCRAMBLED LEGS (2023)

Inhabited by rich full-bodied movement and saucy character, “Scrambled Legs” is replete with physical and emotional traveling. Cornfield builds phrases with a detailed and rhythmic movement vocabulary composed of formal material and a gestural vernacular, evocative of emotional states and functional activities, all with a lighthearted touch. She develops a tapestry of characters, drawing heavily on the individual movement qualities, personalities and strengths of the dancers. Our expectations of their interactions and the logical order of their behavior throughout the piece are scrambled, as the dancers engage and disengage, stumble in and around one another, dipping and soaring.

32 minutes/7 dancers

Music: Jerome Begin

Costumes: Kimberly Manning

THE WASP IN THE WINDOW (2022)

The Wasp in the Window, conceived in the peaceful, bucolic surroundings of Rockport, MA, focuses on the contradictions within our lives. Even when all seems “normal,” or occasionally even sublime, we live with the ever-present possibility of “getting stung,” by unforeseen events that buzz frantically in our environs and consciousness.

34 minutes/6 dancers

Music: Andreas Brade

Costumes: Karen Young



SPACED OUT (2020)

Celebrating the joy of movement, Spaced Out is driven by a full-throttle dance language, contrasting and layered movement activities boldly showcase the dancers cavorting on and around a set of eight bright red folding chairs. The title, a nod to the feeling of disorientation created during the pandemic, also refers to the “rules” of the piece, as the dancers maintain a 6 foot distance from one another at all times. Originally created and rehearsed over zoom for students at the University of Georgia, this work has enormous adaptability, and can be reconfigured for a variety of site-specific spaces; outdoors, on college campuses, city streets and parks, and indoors, in gymnasiums and museums, making it’s lively and exhilarating rush of movement available to audiences everywhere.

Can be performed Indoors or Outdoors

16 minutes/5-8 dancers

Costumes & Set/Ellen Cornfield





CLOSE-UP (2017)

A luscious and playful work, Close-Up mixes robust dance phrases with 'close-up' gestures and facial expressions that provide a window into the performers' emotional landscape. The contrast between the large-scale and the intimate-scale of the material pulls the eye's focus back and forth between the breadth of the full stage space to the intimacy of the gestures, from the thrill of an expansive leap to the minutia of a beckoning finger.

43 minutes/5-8 dancers
 Music: Andreas Brade
 Costumes & Set: Andrew Jordan



PAS DE DETOUR (2015)

Pas de Detour physicalizes the idea of obstacles that seemingly detour us on our journeys, whether these are emotional obstacles or challenging life events. The voracious movement bullets through the space at breakneck speed, hurtling into the air and plummeting to the ground. This contrasts with a calm, mellifluous vocabulary that neutralizes the chaos caused by the uncertainty and interruptions.

47 minutes/4 dancers
 16 minutes/8 dancers
 Music: Andreas Brade
 Costumes/Video Collaboration: Andrew Jordan/Grant Worth



SMALL STAGES (2013)

Choreographed for a 6' X 6' stage, this work follows the development of relationships in small stages. Sporting a robust movement vocabulary from everyday movements and facial expressions to rigorous dance sequences, this piece creates a large canvas on a small stage, ranging through humor, exuberance, conflict, passion, and tenderness. Small Stages can also be performed as an event without the 6' X 6' stage.

Original version: 30 minutes/3 dancers, 2 performers
 Event version: 20 minutes/4 dancers
 Music: Andreas Brade
 Costumes: Ellen Cornfield



SITE SPECIFIC

...the trio...charted interweaving pathways with exciting precision, never sacrificing the fullness or directness of their movement to the confines of the square. It could have been a metaphor for living — or dancing — in New York. Why rent rehearsal space, why bother with a theater, when you can do so much with a platform the size of your bathroom?

Siobhan Burke - The New York Times
Review of Small Stages performed at the
Elizabeth Street Garden, NYC 2014

Cornfield Dance presented an innovative and breathtakingly beautiful dance performance at the Yale Center for British Art during its major reopening in May, 2016. In a mesmerizing program called “Small Stages” dancers experimented with spatial constraints on a 6’X6’ platform stage, performing with impressive energy and impeccable skill. The performance was compelling and thought provoking, and Ellen Cornfield’s choreography is pure genius!

Jane Nowosadko – Manager of Public Programs,
Yale Center for British Art
Commenting on performance at the
Yale Center for British Art, New Haven 2016



RESIDENCIES

Cornfield Dance offers residency programs that can be adapted and customized to fit the specific needs of unique organizations, and can range from a few days to long-term partnerships.

Residency Offerings Include:

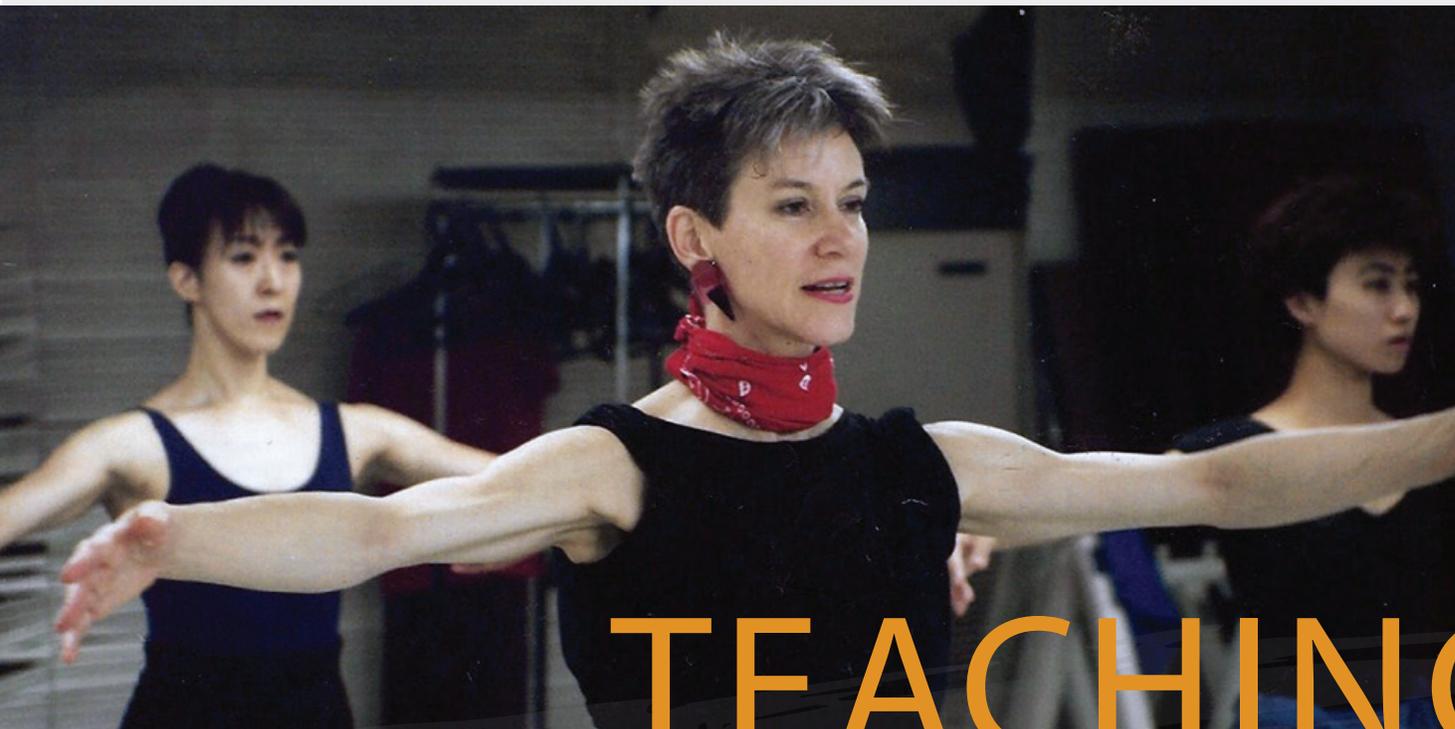
- Repertory Performance(s)
- Site Specific Performance(s)
- Open Observation of Company Class and/or Rehearsal
- Master Class
- Choreography Class
- Repertory Class
- Creation of New Work
- Setting Cornfield Dance Repertory Work
- Company Performance with Integration of Host Organization's Performers
- Pre-performance Lecture Demonstration and Discussion
- Post-performance Discussion

It is so well crafted and directed, and the students look wonderful! The entire project as you have conceptualized it - video, sound, costumes, movement invention - demonstrates great depth of creative research and of course, aesthetic sophistication. Your work serves an excellent model for our students - it is exactly the type work we want them to experience as dancer/performers, and to aspire to create as choreographers.

Julia Ritter,
Former Chair at Rutgers Mason Gross School of the Arts

Ellen Cornfield's premier was a one of a kind dance experience for Scranton and the Civic Ballet Company... I must emphasize the incredible opportunity for every local performer... Each and every one came away experiencing artistic growth and education.

Kathy Emanuelson,
Board of Directors at Scranton Civic Ballet



TEACHING

Ellen Cornfield is a master teacher with long experience, able to teach students of any level, from the non-dancer all the way up to the professional company dancer. Classes can incorporate her gifted collaborators, dancers and composers, adding additional layers of artistic knowledge to her class offerings. Each class can be taught as a master class or a series of classes, and the length of the class can be adjusted to fit individual circumstances.

Class Offerings include:

- Technique
- The Spacious Body
- Composition
- Aesthetics
- Music
- Video for Dance
- Repertory

Details about these class offerings can be found on the company website.

“The [students] voiced how much they learned from you and how much they appreciated your energy, your joy of dance, and your wealth of knowledge. The individual attention and guidance the students received under your leadership was very impressive. You explained the various concepts of movement in a clear manner and demonstrated the exercises and phrases so all the students, those with limited experience and those of more advanced level, could grasp and feel confident in their presentation. There was a marked improvement in the students.... the Dance Program has benefitted greatly by your presence.

Stormy Brandenberger,

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

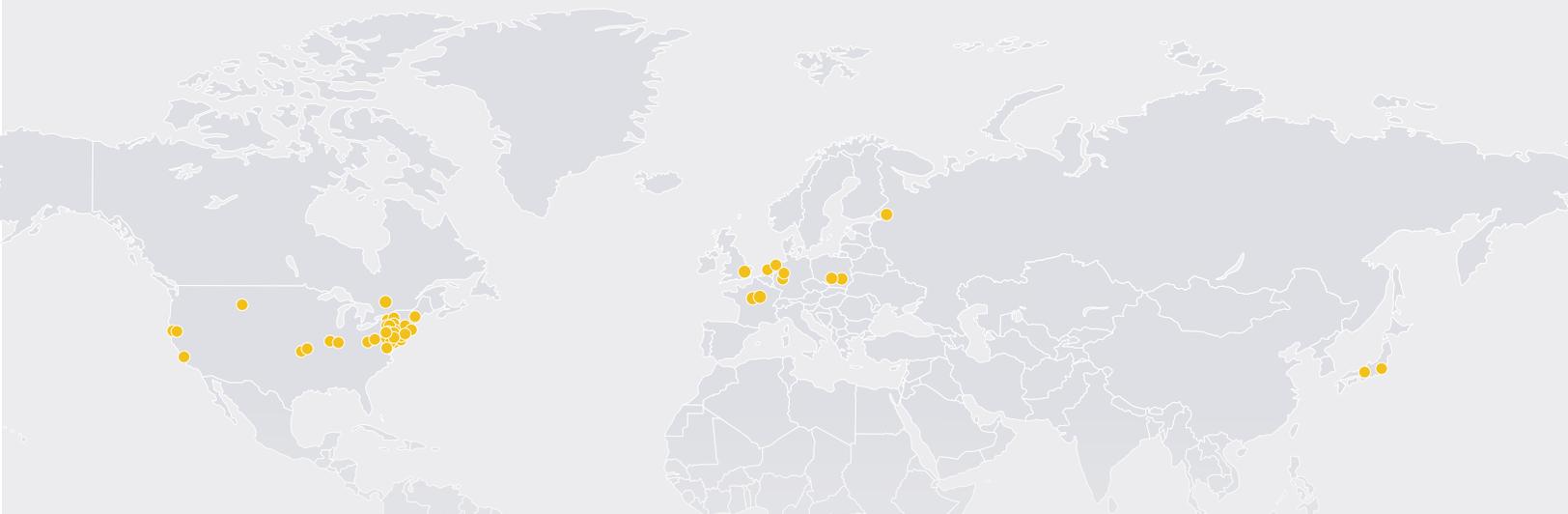
Ellen is able to adapt the offerings of the company to fit any setting, and is happy to be able to serve the community through partnering with community organizations and events. Cornfield Dance can tailor performances, classes, and workshops to become arts education opportunities that benefit specific communities.

Past examples of community partnerships include Ellen's work as a Teaching Artist for the Lincoln Center Institute and her work with the Henry Street Settlement in NYC. For the Lincoln Center Institute, Ellen worked at various elementary schools in the NYC metropolitan area, teaching young students principles about dance to help them more fully appreciate a dance performance coming to their school. For the Henry Street Settlement, the company was engaged in a similar process with high school students.





SELECTED ENGAGEMENTS



New York City

Barnard College
Baryshnikov Arts Center
Danspace Project
92nd St Y - Harkness Dance Center
Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors
Playhouse 91
Symphony Space
Tribeca Performing Arts Center
West End Theater
Howl Festival

National

Bard College, NY
CAL Arts, CA
Jacob's Pillow, MA
Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA
Sarah Lawrence, NY
Scranton Cultural Center, PA
SUNY Purchase, NY
The Yard, MA
UC Berkeley, CA
Yale Center for British Art, CT

International

BrotFabric, Germany
Captain Fiddler Theater, Holland
Charles Munch Theater, France
Gelbun-Kan Theater, Japan
International Dance Festival, Poland
Open Look Festival, Russia
Studio 303, Canada
Studio Session House, Japan
Theater X, Japan
The Place Theater, Great Britain



BOOKING & CONTACT

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