



A Letter

To the Students of Paolo Grassi and Fabbrica Europa

from

**Shen Wei**

**Brett Egan, Executive Director**

**Sara Procopio, Senior Dancer, Artistic Associate and Teaching Artist**

And

**Kathleen Jewett, Rehearsal Director**



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# SHEN WEI DANCE ARTS 2010-11 TENTH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

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Dear all,

We are thrilled to start this project with you! Earlier this year, I so very much enjoyed coming to see your classmates in Lucinda Childs' presentation. It is an honor to be working with such talented and dedicated students of this craft.

This year, we will be doing something slightly different. Over the next six months, we will dedicate ourselves to share with you elements of my technique. You will study with our Teaching Artist, Sara Procopio, and Rehearsal Director, Kathleen ("Kate") Jewett, and together you will cultivate a common vocabulary. This vocabulary will be used to culminate with a collaborative, open format "work-in-progress" that showcases your talent in response to the technique. While this will not be a formal "performance", we hope it will show the diversity of your talent and, perhaps, some elements of my technique you find inspiring.

While we have enjoyed several residencies as a company—at Duke University, Syracuse University, and the Kennedy Center, to name three—this is the first time we have undertaken something of this magnitude in Europe. We are honored by the invitation to be part of your family. We hope this will develop into a long standing relationship with you, your instructors, and your school.



Sara Procopio will be coming next week to share some of my techniques with you, and Kate will join you next year to begin to shape a presentation that we can all share with the community. In exchange we feel there will be much to learn from you!

I look forward to seeing all of you again when we return to Milan for our performances in February of 2010.

Until then I send you my very best!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shen Wei', with a long, sweeping underline.

**Shen Wei**  
Artistic Director and Choreographer

# SHEN WEI DANCE ARTS 2010-11 TENTH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

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Dear Students and Faculty of the Paolo Grassi School and Fabbrica Europa,

When ATER approached us earlier this year with the idea of collaborating with you and your school—we were thrilled. Shen Wei and I had an opportunity to visit your amazing campus, to meet several of you, to see your presentation in collaboration with Lucinda, and to witness first-hand the breadth of your resources and passion.

What followed after was a discussion nearly a year in the making—wherein your administrators and colleagues worked with us to craft what we hope will be a world-class creative and learning experience.

I hope you are all able to participate in some way with Kate, Sara, Shen Wei and the Company—whether in the classroom, on stage, or as an audience to the evolution of this common vocabulary over the course of the next six months.

We are so pleased to be a part of this project, and I personally wish you all my best—both with us in this residency, at Grassi and Fabbrica Europa, and in your careers beyond.

Best regards,



**Brett Egan**  
Executive Director

PS: If you are ever in New York, please do contact us. We would be delighted to open our rehearsal and classes to you!

**From the Teaching Artist and Rehearsal Director**

Hello everyone,

We are excited to begin this unique residency program!

Over the course of the seven-week program, we will work together to explore movement concepts and qualities to aid in the development of a collaborative “work-in-progress” that we can share with your colleagues and community. We hope that in this process you will come to understand the central ideas in Shen Wei’s work, and that you will find inspiration in them as well!

Sara will use the first three weeks (November 16-28 and January 11-16) to introduce you to Shen Wei’s “Natural Body Development Technique” (NBDT). In class we will explore breath, internal energy, center-shifting, momentum, spirals, rotations and flow. The focus will be to provide an informed pathway for opening the body and mind to new ways of approaching dance. Sara will lead a technique class each day from 10.30-13.00, followed by a concept and improvisation class from 14.00-16.00.



Kate Jewett

Sara Procopio

During the company’s performance week in Milan (February 22-March 1), you will participate in workshop rehearsals with the company. You will also have an opportunity to participate in master classes led by us and Shen Wei.

The next three weeks (March 10-April 1) in Firenze will focus on the development of a common vocabulary between participants and Kate. It is hoped that this period will lead you to develop, with Kate, movement in response to some of the technical ideas you have explored with Sara. Kate will lead both a daily technique class (in the morning) and focused rehearsal and development time (in the afternoon).

Together we will explore and develop passages that we can ultimately share with the community as a “work-in-progress”, a presentation of ideas and a starting point for future dialogue. We are honored to share our experience with you, and look forward to working with each of you on this exciting project!

Cheers,  
Kate and Sara

## ABOUT THE INSTRUCTORS AND THE COMPANY

### More information:

Website: <http://www.ShenWeiDanceArts.org>

Blog: <http://swda.wordpress.com>

Twitter: SWDA

Facebook: Shen Wei Dance Arts

YouTube: Shen Wei Dance Arts

**Shen Wei** (Artistic Director and Choreographer) Choreographer, director, dancer, painter and designer, Shen Wei is widely recognized for his defining vision of an intercultural, interdisciplinary, and original mode of movement-based performance.

Born in Hunan, China, Shen Wei studied Chinese opera from the age of nine. In 1991 he became a founding member (dancer and choreographer) of the Guangdong Modern Dance Company, the first modern dance company in China. In 1995 he moved to New York to study with the Nikolais/Louis Dance Lab. Following his debut at the American Dance Festival that same year, his work was soon seen in Taiwan (1996), New York's Asia Society (1997), Stockholm Dance House (1999), Brighten Arts Festival (2000), the Edinburgh Festival (2000), and the Millennium Moves Festival (Germany, 2000). In July 2000, he formed Shen Wei Dance Arts with performances of *Near the Terrace* at the American Dance Festival. In 2003 his company made its New York debut at the Lincoln Center Festival.

For the past eight years, SWDA has toured extensively on five continents. Shen Wei's recent works include *Near the Terrace (Part One)* (2000), *Folding* (2000), *Behind Resonance* (2001), *Near the Terrace (Part Two)* (2001), *Rite of Spring* (2003), *Connect Transfer* (2004), *Second Visit to the Empress* (2005), *Map* (2005), *Re- (Part I)* (2006), *Re- (Part II)* (2007), *Connect Transfer II* (2008), and *Re- (Part III)*. In 2008, Shen Wei was commissioned to choreograph part of the Opening Ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics. For each work created with his company, Shen Wei also creates the sets, costumes, and make-up designs.

Shen Wei has received numerous recognitions, commissions, and awards. He is a 2009 Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum and a 2007 MacArthur

“Genius” and USA Prudential Fellow. He has received a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, a New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowship, and the American Dance Festival’s Ben Sommer Fellowship. He is also the recipient of the 2004 Nijinsky Award for Emerging Choreographers, Australia’s 2005 Helpmann Award for Best Ballet or Dance Work, and the 2006 Les Etoiles de Ballet, Palais des Festival, in Cannes, France. In China, he received first prize for both choreography and performance at the 1994 Inaugural National Modern Dance Competition. Shen Wei has received ten commissions from the American Dance Festival (1995, 2000–2006, 2008, 2009); two from Lincoln Center Festival (2005; 2009); two from Het Muziektheater Amsterdam (2004 and 2007); and additional commissions from Le Grands Ballets de Canadiens de Montreal (2007); the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2007); and New York City Opera (2005); among others.

Independent of the work with his company, Shen Wei is a painter, designer, and photographer. A series of paintings created in conjunction with his ballet *Rite of Spring* were first exhibited as part of the company’s New York debut at the Lincoln Center Festival in 2003. His recent book of photography, *Tibet*, was created to raise awareness of that region. Its proceeds support the Pandedajie School and Dickey Orphanage in Lhasa.

**Kathleen Jewett**, born in Quincy, MA and raised in Sardinia, OH, Kate attended North Carolina School of the Arts, receiving her BFA in 2002. While working with the Merce Cunningham Repertory Understudy Group, she had the opportunity to work with Mr. Cunningham during his creation of ‘Split Sides’ and ‘Views on Stage.’ In 2005, Kate joined Shen Wei Dance Arts and was involved in the creation process of ‘MAP,’ ‘RE- part 1 and 3.’ As a company member, teacher, rehearsal director and teaching artist, she has conducted master classes at various venues and performed all over Europe, Asia, Australia and the U.S. Her own works have been performed at DeSales University, Ur and Bushwick Star. Named Director of Education and Outreach for Shen Wei Dance Arts in 2008, she created a dance education program for New York City Schools, while also working on various company outreach activities. Kate has been Rehearsal Director for Shen Wei Dance Arts since January 2009.

**Sara Procopio** is a founding member of Shen Wei Dance Arts who currently serves as a company member, as well as artistic associate and teaching artist. She began her dance training at the Center of Ballet & Dance Arts in Syracuse, NY and studied extensively at the American Dance Festival and at Hollins University where she earned both her undergraduate and masters degrees. While at Hollins, Sara co-founded the Hollins Dance Project under the artistic direction of Donna Faye Burchfield. Since moving to New York in 2001, Sara has performed with Shen Wei Dance Arts at renowned festivals and venues throughout the world. Sara has taught at Hollins University, the ADF/NY January Intensive and is a teaching artist for Shen Wei Dance Arts throughout the U.S. and abroad.

## Shen Wei Dance Arts

Shen Wei Dance Arts (SWDA) creates interdisciplinary, cross-cultural performance for forward-looking audiences. Each work by Artistic Director Shen Wei develops an original vocabulary using visual and storytelling elements from the theater, Chinese opera, traditional and contemporary visual art. The result, at turns figurative and abstract, combines dance with strong scenic elements to create what the *Sydney Herald Sun* calls “a fascinating fantasy in movement.”

In the nine short years since its inception at the American Dance Festival (ADF), SWDA has performed in premier festivals on five continents—from Spoleto to Jacob’s Pillow, Montpellier to Rome, Mexico City to Sydney. Additionally, it has earned return invitations to leading halls worldwide, including the ADF, Lincoln Center Festival, Venice Biennale, Los Angeles Music Center, Het Muziektheater Amsterdam, Kennedy Center, and Hong Kong New Vision Festival.

In recent years, the company has increased emphasis on collaborations with regional presenters, museums, and non-traditional spaces, expanding its presence in the university, the concert hall, and other unconventional venues. In June, 2009, the company was invited to respond to Ernesto Neto’s serpentine installation in the Park Avenue Armory’s massive Wade Thompson Drill Hall. In 2008, the company collaborated with the historic Judson Memorial Church to present *Connect Transfer II*, a work incorporating dance, live music, and painting in an in-the-round setting for modern art museums. In 2007, SWDA gave the first dance performances on the concert stage at Frank Gehry’s Disney Hall.

For its work, the company has earned recognition in the world of dance and beyond. In 2008, Shen Wei and the company were commissioned to develop material for the Olympic Opening Ceremonies; inspired by his 2004 *Connect Transfer*, Shen Wei’s opening sequence created a traditional watercolor using paint-strewn bodies on a large scroll. In 2007, the company began a five-year residency at the Kennedy Center, where it performs yearly and collaborates on projects in education and outreach. In 2005, the company received Australia’s Helpmann Award for Best Ballet or Dance Work for its four sold-out performances at the Sydney Opera House, and in 2001 and 2003 was recognized for one of the year’s top ten best dance performances by the *New York Times*.

In 2009-10, the company makes return appearances in Hong Kong, Singapore, Bolzano, Bari, Modena, Portland, and the ADF, together with six American debuts and several others abroad, including Milan and Monaco. Selected other recent engagements include: Equilibrio, Rome’s Festival della nuova danza (2009), Ottawa’s National Arts Centre (2009), Budapest’s National Dance Theatre (2008), the New Zealand International Arts Festival, Wellington (2008), Barcelona’s Mercat De Les Flors (2008), the inaugural Toronto Luminato Festival (2007), Zellerbach Hall (2004, 2007), Barbican Centre (2007), Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montreal (2006), MODAFE (Seoul, 2006), Sadler’s Wells (2004), and Israel Festival (2004).

In 2007, SWDA founded a formal program in education that has since reached an estimated 4.1 million students and educators nationwide. This coming spring, SWDA will collaborate with Syracuse University and its Partnership for Better Education to reach approximately 11,000 5-12<sup>th</sup> grade students with arts-integrated curricula inspired by the *Re-* series. This Fall, In collaboration with SU's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, SWDA will produce a two day summit on issues in Cultural Diplomacy. In 2009-10, the company will also send teaching artists to six schools in three NYC boroughs. SWDA further plans to develop an "Eastside Arts-in-Restoration Corridor," touching schools from Chinatown to East Harlem with a series of nine "classroom intensives" that integrate dance and core curricula, with a focus on the renewal and restoration of school communities through a renewal of traditional arts. SWDA is a resident company at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC; in March, 2010, SWDA begins a year-long residency at the Park Avenue Armory in Manhattan.

