



May 17, 2021

Dear colleagues, students and friends of dance at Harvard,

It is with profound gratitude and admiration for her service that we write to announce that Jill Johnson will be stepping down as Senior Lecturer in Theater, Dance & Media and Director of Dance at the end of this academic year. Jill's vision for dance at Harvard has been transformational, and she will be sorely missed. We wish her the very best as she embarks on an exciting series of artistic, educational, and advocacy projects worldwide.

Jill arrived in 2011 as part of an initiative launched by President Drew Gilpin Faust to develop art-making at Harvard. Throughout ten extraordinary years, Jill has been a critical leader who has reinvented the place of dance, movement, and performance at Harvard. She was integral to the design of the concentration in Theater, Dance & Media. In the words of Professor Martin Puchner, who spearheaded the creation of TDM, "Jill is leaving us the gift of an enormous legacy. When we first started to make noises about a new concentration, we only thought about theater. Then Jill came along and taught us to think bigger. It is thanks to her that there is a D in TDM."

The impact that Jill and her team have had on Harvard dance is profound. They have expanded the scope and level of Dance Center offerings across all programs. This includes the creation of eighteen new curricular courses and many more noncurricular courses. The latter are now offered tuition-free to undergraduates.

The Dance Center's annual series of masterclasses and workshops has been equally wide-ranging, embracing practices, traditions, and methodologies that have broadened the community's perspective on dance. Jill also sparked innovative new programs: Emerging Choreographers, a Peer Mentorship Program, and the Harvard Dance Project, to name just a few. Each of these programs fosters the artistic and personal development of Harvard dancers—in many instances, through relationships with world-class teaching artists. All of this was accomplished while guiding and mentoring student-led dance groups involving over 1,000 undergraduates.

Jill has prioritized interdisciplinary inquiry and performance research across a host of fields. Numerous students under her guidance used dance as a form of inquiry to explore conceptual ideas across a range of disciplines. The Dance Center also collaborated with a host of Harvard partners, including the Harvard Choruses,

Mahindra Humanities Center, the American Repertory Theater, Smith Campus Center, the Graduate School of Design, the Carpenter Center, and many more.

Of equal importance, together with students and teachers, Jill and her team have created a community culture that honors equity, dignity, transformation, and belonging for students across all identities, communities, and abilities. The Dance Center is a space of openness, one that fosters community values. Under Jill's leadership, the HDC has undertaken committed equity and inclusion work and become a beacon for advancing DEIJ practices across the campus.

In all of this, Jill has brought a spirit of joy to her work, from teaching and facilitating, to mentoring and advising. As Rakesh Khurana, Dean of Harvard College, writes: "Jill has been a tireless advocate for student performers at the College. Her inclusive spirit has opened doors to possibilities in the performing arts for generations of undergraduates."

Please join us in expressing Harvard's deepest thanks to Jill. We are grateful for her inspired leadership, and we expect to hear great things about her work for many years to come.

Yours sincerely,



Kate van Orden, Chair
Theater, Dance & Media



Jack Megan, Director
Office for the Arts at Harvard