

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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***Philadelphia Dance Projects Presents Act One Preview
of Christopher Williams' & Gregory Spears' WOLF-IN-SKINS***
*First section of critically acclaimed choreographer's epic "dance-opera" features local
movement artists Gabrielle Revlock, Gregory Holt, Beau Hancock and more*

PHILADELPHIA — **Philadelphia Dance Projects** opens its 2013 season with the Philadelphia preview of Act One from ***Wolf-in-Skins***, an epic "dance-opera" created by choreographer **Christopher Williams** and composer **Gregory Spears**. Hailed by *The New York Times* as "one of the most exciting choreographic voices out there," Williams draws his inspiration for Act One's libretto from ancient Welsh lore, reimagining lost mythology through hybrid contemporary performance.

Act One of *Wolf-in-Skins*, at Temple University's **Conwell Dance Theater, January 25 – 26, 2013**, is the first part of what Williams envisions as a larger, six-part dance-opera cycle inspired by early mythology from the six remaining Insular Celtic cultures of the British Isles. Beginning in Wales, *Wolf-in-Skins* features marginalized or outmoded cultural relics, and celebrates the "otherness" inherent in early Welsh literature through a contemporary lens. Quasi-archaic English becomes the language of the human ensemble, while dancers accompanied by shadow figures singing in Welsh embody the supernatural characters. Through this re-appropriation of historical materials, and the crossbreeding of traditional and postmodern stylistic elements, *Wolf-in-Skins* offers an opportunity to explore themes concerning identity transformation, gender ambiguity and queer politics traditionally absent from operatic works while challenging the norms that typify contemporary dance.

"This piece draws inspiration from a cycle of Welsh romance tales that preserves pre-Celtic and pre-Christian elements such as the idea of transformation and passage to underworld, and that's what ultimately drew me in," says Williams. "I've been interested in interweaving some of the earliest elements of these tales with my own personal mythology to create a contemporary staged ritual."

Adds **Terry Fox**, executive director of Philadelphia Dance Projects (PDP): "Christopher's work is a bit of an anomaly. He has a rigor about dance that in some ways has a classical edge but always has a particular embellishment that looks contemporary. Watching how he incorporates archaic forms into his choreography is a delight."

The first fully produced version of Act One, PDP's presentation boasts a cast of 30, a 10-piece chamber orchestra with period instruments, New York-based early music specialists and opera singers; the cast includes acclaimed local dancers **Beau Hancock, Gregory Holt, Drew Kaiser, Stuart Meyers, Alec Moss and Gabrielle Revlock**.

Act One of *Wolf-in-Skins* takes place Friday, January 25, 7:30 p.m.; and Saturday, January 26, 2:30 and 7:30 p.m. Conwell Dance Theater is located on the northeast corner of Broad Street and Montgomery Avenue in Philadelphia on the campus of Temple University. Tickets are \$5-\$20 and can be purchased at DanceBoxOffice.com or by calling 215-546-2552. For more information, please visit PhilaDanceProjects.org.

About Christopher Williams (choreographer/librettist/director) | <http://www.christopherwilliamsdance.org>

Christopher Williams, hailed as “one of the most exciting choreographic voices out there” in *The New York Times* and “the downtown prodigy” in *The New Yorker*, is a choreographer, dancer and puppeteer who has been devoted to crafting and performing choreographic works in New York City and abroad since 1999. His pieces have been presented at many New York City venues including Dance Theater Workshop, City Center, Danspace Project, P.S. 122, La Mama, the 92nd Street Y and DanceNew Amsterdam, among others, and have toured nationally to Kalamazoo, Michigan, and internationally to Bogotá, Colombia. He has held artistic residencies at Movement Research, Joyce SoHo, Dance New Amsterdam, Djerassi, White Oak Plantation, Yaddo, The Yard and the Liguria Study Center for Arts & Humanities in Bogliasco, Italy. He has received fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts and The Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and has received multiple grants from the O’Donnell-Green Music & Dance Foundation, the Greenwall Foundation and the Jim Henson Foundation. In 2005, he received a New York Dance & Performance “Bessie” Award for his work *Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*. He graduated from Sarah Lawrence College and the École Internationale de Théâtre Jacques Lecoq in Paris, and has since performed for Tere O’Connor Dance, Douglas Dunn & Dancers, John Kelly, Yoshiko Chuma & the School of Hard Knocks, Rebecca Lazier’s TERRAIN, Sally Silvers, Jon Kinzel and Yvonne Meier, among others, as well as for puppetry artists Basil Twist and Dan Hurlin. He also serves on Danspace Project’s Artist Advisory Board.

About Gregory Spears (composer) | www.gregoryspears.com

Gregory Spears writes instrumental and vocal music that blends together stylistic aspects of romanticism, minimalism, and early music. His work has been called “astonishingly beautiful” (*New York Times*), “coolly entrancing” (*The New Yorker*), and “some of the most beautifully unsettling music to appear in recent memory” (*The Boston Globe*). His music has been performed by Houston Grand Opera (HGOco), the American Composers Orchestra, American Opera Projects, Center City Opera Theater, Opera Index, the NOW Ensemble (MATA), Present Music Ensemble, So Percussion, the Sebastian Chamber Players, and the Eighth Blackbird Ensemble. Spears was recently commissioned by poet Tracy K. Smith to write two new songs for the 2011 Rolex Arts Weekend at the New York Public Library and by the JACK Quartet to write a piece based on his experience as composer-in-residence at the Buttonwood Psychiatric Unit in New Jersey. Other commissions have come from OPERA America, the Present Music Ensemble, choreographer Christopher Williams, and Houston Grand Opera (HGOco). New Amsterdam Records released his early music-inspired chamber Requiem to critical acclaim in 2011, and Project Schott NY (PSNY) has published his chamber works. Current projects include an evening-length opera based on the novel *Fellow Travelers* written in collaboration with playwright Greg Pierce and director Kevin Newbury. Spears’ first opera, *Paul’s Case*, was developed by American Opera Projects and was noted for its “solid dramatic timing, compassionate characterizations, and huge potential” (*Philadelphia Inquirer* - David Patrick Stearns’ Best in Classical Music for 2009). Spears has won multiple prizes from both BMI and ASCAP as well as grants and honors from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Composers Forum, and the Fulbright Foundation. He holds degrees in composition from The Eastman School of Music (BM), Yale School of Music (MM), and Princeton University (PhD) and has been an artist-in-residence at Yaddo and the MacDowell Colony.

About Philadelphia Dance Projects

Philadelphia Dance Projects (PDP) supports contemporary dance through Projects that encourage artists and audiences to more fully participate and engage in the experience and pursuit of dance as an evolving form. Since its inception in 1993, under the aegis of Jacob’s Pillow Dance Festival, Philadelphia Dance Projects has engaged stellar dance artists many of whom were enlarging the modern and postmodern vocabularies with personal and/or cultural explorations in both technique and content. PDP achieves its mission by presenting performances, workshops, classes, a dance-film fest, dialogs and forums for a broad-based audience including artists, aspiring artists, students and the general public. In 2009 PDP launched “*Philadelphia Dance Projects Presents*” a full presenting series highlighting national and local contemporary dance artists. The successful series is introducing new artists to Philly and premiering work by some of Philadelphia’s finest contemporary dance artists.

2013 Season

Wolf-in-Skins is presented in collaboration with **American Opera Projects** and the **Conwell Dance Theater of Temple University’s Boyer College of Music & Dance** with support from the PEW Center for Arts & Heritage. Philadelphia Dance Projects continues its 2013 season with SCUBA ’13 featuring Green Chair Dance Company of Philadelphia and The Real Shannon Stewart of Seattle, WA, March 22-23, 2013. For more information about Philadelphia Dance Projects, visit www.philadanceprojects.org.

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