

M A R K M O R R I S



D A N C E G R O U P

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For Immediate Release

MARK MORRIS DANCE GROUP ONE OF THE FIVE WINNERS OF GOOGLE'S GIVING THROUGH GLASS CHALLENGE

PROJECT CREATES GLASS-BASED APP TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR PEOPLE WITH PARKINSON'S THROUGH DANCE AND MUSIC

GLASSWARE EXPANDS SCOPE OF ACCLAIMED DANCE FOR PD® PROGRAM

MMDG PARTNERS WITH SS+K TO DEVELOP NEW APP

(Brooklyn, NY) – Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) is one of the five winners of Google's Giving through Glass challenge — an open call for U.S. nonprofits to share how they'd use Google Glass to make an impact on their mission and programming. Mark Morris Dance Group's ***Moving through Glass*** app will create an intuitive, portable, dance-based toolkit for people living with Parkinson's disease. The project will build on the original and internationally acclaimed Dance for PD® program jointly developed by MMDG and Brooklyn Parkinson Group. MMDG joins [3000 Miles to a Cure](#), [Classroom Champions](#), [The Hearing and Speech Agency](#), and [Women's Audio Mission](#) in receiving the award.

MMDG's Glassware will amplify the company's 13-year, global initiative to improve the lives of people with Parkinson's disease by leveraging technology to provide dance-based movement cuing and initiation. The project's goal is to enable people with Parkinson's to harness the strategies of professional dancers wherever they are, extending the model of Dance for PD's live classes and its *At Home* DVD series. MMDG's Glassware will feature a menu of visual and musical cuing systems to initiate and support dance moves and fluid, rhythmic walking. All together, these innovative initiatives help people regain a sense of control and independence as they go about their daily lives.

"We think the *Moving through Glass* app will be a ground-breaking and user-friendly tool that will allow people with Parkinson's to use dancers' movement strategies in their daily lives," said

David Leventhal, Dance for PD's Program Director and a founding teacher. "People enjoy our classes and DVDs because they learn to think and move like dancers. By practicing movement patterns, embodying rhythm, harnessing the power of their imaginations, and rehearsing specific technical skills, our students develop strategies that help them initiate and sustain a diverse range of movements. The Google Glass platform allows us to extend our teaching methods beyond the studio and provide a virtual guide, coach, teacher and dance partner."

The *Moving through Glass* app will include dance-based exercises that provide visual and musical examples of a march, waltz and tango to help people initiate a first step and keep a steady, rhythmic walking cadence. The program will also feature a set of short dance phrases that users can practice and enjoy during free moments when traveling or when a TV or computer are not available.

"We're working to design the app to be as user-friendly and responsive as possible," said Leventhal. "For example, if someone is having some difficulty initiating a first step, we want them to be able to use a simple voice command to start a video—visible and audible through their Glass device—of a dancer marching to music. We hope that by watching this kind of video while surrounded by strong, rhythmic music, the viewer will receive the stimulating input he or she needs to start moving fluidly again, which is exactly what happens in a live class."

To realize the project, MMDG will partner with SS+K, a New York-based independent creative agency that established SS+K Labs, an in-house incubator of creative technologies. SS+K will provide strategic, creative and technical expertise. Kevin Skobac, SS+K's Senior Vice President of Digital Strategy and Innovation, said: "We are incredibly excited to work with Mark Morris Dance Group to explore how Google Glass, with its unique and uncharted technical capabilities, can be leveraged to empower people with Parkinson's to live their lives more fully."

The team's lead consultants will include Scott Park, owner and lead engineer at Firefall Pro, a web application development firm; Pamela Quinn, a dancer, choreographer, writer, and movement coach with Parkinson's who has lectured and taught widely; and Claire Henchcliffe, MD, a neurologist and movement disorders specialist who is Director of the Parkinson's and Movement Disorders Institute at Weill Cornell Medical Center in New York.

Google received over 1,300 applications for the Giving through Glass program, and MMDG's project was selected as a winner based on four key criteria: impact, innovation, feasibility and implementation. As a winner, MMDG will receive Glass, a \$25,000 grant, a trip to Google for training, and access to Glass software developers to make this project a reality.

Parkinson's disease (PD) is a neurodegenerative movement disorder that results when the cells in the brain that produce the chemical dopamine are damaged and can no longer produce sufficient levels of the chemical. PD usually progresses slowly in most people. Although symptoms vary from person to person, PD symptoms often include a resting tremor, rigidity, slow movement, and impairments in balance and coordination. Approximately 50-60,000 new cases of Parkinson's are diagnosed in the United States each year. An estimated 5-7 million people are affected worldwide.

Dance for PD® (www.danceforpd.org) is a unique collaboration between the Mark Morris Dance Group (MMDG) and the Brooklyn Parkinson Group (BPG). MMDG/BPG started offering free dance classes for people with Parkinson's in 2001, after BPG's Executive Director Olie Westheimer approached MMDG with the initial idea for a class. Since 2005, the two

organizations have expanded the Dance for PD® program into more than 100 communities in 11 countries around the world by engaging participants in Dance for PD® master classes, training teachers through intensive workshops, and nurturing relationships among organizations so that ongoing classes are widely available.

The Dance for PD® teaching approach is built on a fundamental premise: professionally-trained dancers are movement experts whose knowledge is useful to persons with PD. Dancers know all about stretching and strengthening muscles, and about balance and rhythm. Most importantly, dancers know about the power of dance to concentrate mind, body, and emotion on movement. Dance for PD® teaching artists integrate movement from modern and theater dance, ballet, folk dance, tap, improvisation, and choreographic repertory to engage the participants' minds and bodies, and create an enjoyable social environment that emphasizes dancing for dancing's sake. The dance class is an aesthetic experience that focuses on developing artistry and grace while addressing such PD-specific concerns as balance, flexibility, coordination, gait, social isolation, and depression.

The method has been presented at the International Congress for Parkinson's Disease and Related Disorders in Berlin (2005), three World Parkinson Congresses (2006, 2010 and 2013) and at Neuroscience 2008 in Washington D.C. Articles about the class have appeared in *USA Today*, *Neurology Now*, *The New York Times*, and *Topics in Geriatric Rehabilitation* among other publications, and the class has been featured on NPR's *All Things Considered*, PBS Frontline, PBS NewsHour, NBC Nightly News, CNN's The Next List, NBC Nightly News and CBS.

In addition to hosting classes at the Mark Morris Dance Center in Brooklyn, NY and in four other locations throughout NYC, MMDG/BPG have offered Dance for PD® classes to communities in San Francisco, Oakland, Berkeley, Louisville, Ann Arbor, Seattle, Urbana-Champaign, Toronto, Edinburgh, London, Auckland, Madrid, Sydney, Brisbane, Guangzhou, and Tel Aviv, among many others. Such medical centers as Evergreen Hospital (Seattle), Jewish Hospital/Frazier Rehabilitation Institute (Louisville), Carle Hospital (Champaign-Urbana), Beth Israel (New York) and Beth Israel Deaconess (Boston) have hosted demonstration classes in their facilities.

Since 2007, MMDG/BPG have sponsored more than 50 teacher training workshops, which have led to the replication of Dance for PD® classes in 30 states throughout the United States, and in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Israel, Italy, Holland, India, UAE, and the United Kingdom.

Preliminary research conducted in the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom shows that the Dance for PD® model may relieve debilitating symptoms, aid short-term mobility, significantly improve stability, decrease rigidity, improve facial expression, contribute to social inclusion, and improve overall quality of life.

Mark Morris has been hailed as the “the most prodigiously gifted choreographer of the post-Balanchine era” (*Time*). Since founding MMDG in 1980, Morris has created close to 150 works for the company. He has been described as “an innovator and a conservative, a satirist and a romantic” (*New Yorker*) who “easily ranks among the top five living American choreographers” (*The Denver Post*). Morris is also much in demand as a ballet choreographer. His works are in the repertory of companies worldwide, including San Francisco Ballet, American Ballet Theatre, and the Royal New Zealand Ballet. An intensely musical choreographer, Morris served as music director of the Ojai Music Festival (2013). He has conducted performances for MMDG since 2006 and has also worked extensively in opera, directing and choreographing at the Metropolitan Opera and the Royal Opera, Covent Garden, among others. He is a Fellow of the

MacArthur Foundation and has received eleven honorary doctorates to date. Morris has received the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for Lifetime Achievement (2007), the Leonard Bernstein Lifetime Achievement Award for the Elevation of Music in Society (2010), the Benjamin Franklin Laureate Prize for Creativity (2012) and the Cal Performances Award of Distinction in the Performing Arts (2013).

Founded in New York in 1980 by choreographer Mark Morris, **Mark Morris Dance Group** (www.mmdg.org) has been called “the preeminent modern dance organization of our time” (Yo-Yo Ma), receiving “highest praise for their technical aplomb, their musicality, and their sheer human authenticity.” (*Bloomberg News*). The Dance Group is distinguished as the only modern dance company with a deep commitment to live music in performance, founding the **MMDG Music Ensemble** in 1996. MMDG’s film and television projects include *Dido and Aeneas*, *The Hard Nut*, *Falling Down Stairs*, two documentaries for the U.K.’s *South Bank Show*, and PBS’ *Live From Lincoln Center*. The Dance Group has recently wrapped filming on *L’Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato*, which will air on *Great Performances* in Spring 2015.

Community engagement is integral to the dance group. At Its Brooklyn home, the Mark Morris Dance Center, the organization offers affordable dance classes, workshops, and master classes for adults of all skill levels, subsidized rehearsal space for the dance community, and the School at the Mark Morris Dance Center that provides low-cost dance classes to children and teens from 20 months to 17 years. On tour, the dance group partners with local cultural institutions and community organizations to present Access/MMDG, a program of arts and humanities-based activities for people of all ages and abilities.

Highlights of MMDG’s 2014-15 season include the premiere of Morris’ 20th opera production, Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*, arranged by Mozart and *MMDG Excursions*, a unique multi-continent tour that will split the dance group in two from October through November. The tour will promote cultural exchange and bring diverse communities together through dance and music. This multifaceted tour will feature *Words*, a new work by Mark Morris and extensive cross-cultural community and educational programming through Access/MMDG and the U.S. State Department’s DanceMotion USASM program.

SS+K is an independent creative agency that exists to help brands and organizations through moments of change. SS+K’s mission and passion is to engage people online and off. The firm introduced the yellow wristband for LIVESTRONG, helped President Obama capture the youth vote by historic margins in '08 and '12, and won 5 Cannes Lions for recent work on HBO. The company also recently launched SS+K Labs, an in-house incubator of creative technologies. For more information, visit www.ssk.com.

Firefall Pro meticulously engineers standards-based Web applications, combined with marketing and e-commerce solutions for creative agencies, retail brands, and enterprises. A platform-agnostic organization, Firefall Pro believes in standards-compliant and device-independent solutions to give clients flexibility and peace of mind.

Pamela Quinn danced professionally for 20 years with ODC/San Francisco and with actor/writer Michael O’Connor before she was diagnosed with Parkinson’s Disease at the age of 42. Since that time she has used her extensive movement background, along with her personal experience of the disease, to investigate and create movement therapy for people with Parkinson’s. Her innovative approach has gained growing recognition and made her a sought

after therapist, adviser, speaker and teacher for PD groups. She was the subject of a profile on the CBS Evening News with Katie Couric, and was featured in a piece on WABC in New York. Her writing has been published by *Neurology Now* as well as *Dance Magazine* for which she wrote a feature article on her experience as a dancer who developed a life-altering movement disorder. In addition to her private practice and work as a consultant, she currently teaches PD Movement Lab, sponsored by the Brooklyn Parkinson Group and for NYU's Edmund J. Safra Wellness Program for PD at the JCC in Manhattan. Her teaching and speaking engagements around the country include U Penn., University of Maryland, Atlanta, Savannah, St. Louis and Houston. In both the Second and Third World Parkinson Congresses she was asked to teach and present her work. In 2010 her video, *Welcome to our World*, was also co-winner of their first prize, in addition to receiving a Dance Media award. Pamela is a graduate of PDF's Clinical Research Learning Institute and the Applied Teacher Training program. She was a consultant to Christopher Walken who played a cellist diagnosed with Parkinson's in the recently released film, "A Late Quartet". Visit www.pamelaquinn.net for more information.

Claire Henchcliffe, MD, D.Phil received her medical degree from Columbia University, College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York, and her doctorate from the University of Oxford, UK. She completed her training at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York, with internship in the Department of Medicine and residency in Neurology at the Neurological Institute of Columbia Presbyterian. This was followed by a fellowship in Movement Disorders, also at the Neurological Institute. Dr. Henchcliffe now serves as Director of the Parkinson's Institute, and as Vice Chair for Clinical Research in Neurology at the NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center. In addition to seeing patients with Parkinson's disease and other movement disorders, Dr Henchcliffe's team conduct a number of clinical trials available for patient participation.

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