

## ***Anna Halprin***

Anna Halprin's diverse career has spanned the field of dance since the late 1930s, creating revolutionary directions for the art form and inspiring fellow choreographers to take modern dance to new dimensions. James Roose – Evans author of "Experimental Theatre" called Anna one of the most important theatre artists of the 20th century.

Anna founded the groundbreaking San Francisco Dancer's Workshop in 1955 and the Tamalpa Institute in 1978 with her daughter Daria Halprin. Her students include Meredith Monk, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, Ruth Emmerson, Sally Gross, and others, some of who become involved in the progressive and experimental Judson Church Group. Over the years, her famous outdoor deck has been an explorative haven for numerous dancers and choreographers, including Merce Cunningham, Eiko and Koma, and Min Tanaka; composers such as John Cage, Luciano Berio, Terry Riley, LeMonte Young, and Morton Subotnick; visual artists such as Robert Morris and Robert Rauschenberg; poets such as Richard Brautigan, James Broughton, and Michael McClure; and countless others.

Halprin is an early pioneer in the expressive arts healing movement. She has led countless collaborative dance programs with terminally ill patients, long committed to a belief in the connection between movement and the healing power of dance. Halprin has also investigated numerous social issues through dance and through theatrical innovations. For the past decade, she has led "Circle the Earth", a contemporary community dance ritual to confront real-life issues facing participant communities around the world. Her "Planetary Dance: A Prayer for Peace" between peoples and the earth was staged in Berlin at an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Potsdam Treaty to end World War II, and involved over 400 participants. In 1995, she was invited by Mikhail Gorbachev to present an invocation at the State of the World Forum in California.

Halprin has recognized new directions for dance and courageously followed those paths into unknown territories, ever-willing to adapt her work to the present moment, a philosophy that led to a broad redefinition of dance.

Halprin has created 150 full-length dance theater works, which are extensively documented in photographs, books and on film. She is the recipient of numerous honors and awards including a lifetime achievement in choreography from the American Dance Festival. She is the author of three books and has released numerous videotapes about her work. She has received numerous honors from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Dance Guild, and many others. In 1997, Anna received the Samuel H. Scripps Award for Lifetime Achievement in Modern Dance from the American Dance Festival. The Dance Heritage Coalition has named Anna Halprin one of "America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures."

Halprin continues to make revolutionary work exploring the beauty of the aging body and its relationship to nature. Recent works include the award winning video *Returning Home*. In September 2004, she performed the confronting *Intensive Care: Reflections on Death and Dying* at the Festival D'Automne in Paris. In 2005 dance Anna developed a filmed performance called "Seniors Rocking". In 2006 The Museum of Contemporary Art presented a major one-woman exhibition of her life's achievements.

At the age of 86, she continues to perform, travel and teach with fervor. Anna gets the most out of her life, living by her adage "Aging is like enlightenment at gunpoint".

## *Words From Lawrence Halprin*

---

—Anna and I have been married for 65 years and our work has been interwoven all that time. Early on, Anna abandoned Modern Dance developed by the American pioneers Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey and Charles Weidman because it was based on the personalities of those dancers. For her instead dance essentially draws on primitive needs that express life forces. Her earliest background emphasized the anatomy and physiology of the human body and its relation to the forces of nature and the environment. She was able to develop her processes in nature on an outdoor dance deck I designed for her which removed the proscenium arch, presented new and different spatial relationships and enveloped the performers with the natural sounds and elements of nature. It has since become a world wide icon of creativity with nature and has drawn a cadre of brilliant dancers from around the world after world war 2 up until the present time including Merce Cunningham, Min Tanaka, Meredith Monk, Simone Forti, Trish Brown, Yvonne Rainer , Eiko and Koma and many new young dancers. With her students she developed new sources of group creativity based on a series of workshop exercises called "experiments in the environment" in which, as in life, outcome itself emerges as a result of interactions with the environment and with group members; flexible, intense and life affirming.

More and more her dance has developed as myths and rituals in which the focus is on issues of everyday life; psychological, or physical, and community as well as personal. In this sense she has reverted to the early meaning of dance in human society, joyful and healing as well as tragic, and based on the most primitive needs of the human condition. These dances are universal.

For this reason Anna's dances have plowed new deep ground which is unlike any other performer today. Dance for her is humanistic and searching and its importance lies in the process of creativity she has developed as much as the performance itself.

**Lawrence Halprin**