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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS
THE FINAL BERKELEY APPEARANCE BY THE
MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY
THURSDAY–SATURDAY, MARCH 3–5 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

**TWO DISTINCT PROGRAMS FEATURE THE BAY AREA PREMIERE OF *ROARATORIO*
PLUS THE U. S. REVIVALS OF *POND WAY* AND *ANTIC MEET***

**Sightlines: Pre-performance talk by David Vaughan, Company Archivist, and Trevor Carlson,
Executive Director of the Cunningham Dance Foundation, at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, March 4**

BERKELEY, January 20, 2011—Cal Performances presents the incomparable **Merce Cunningham Dance Company** (MCDC) as it celebrates the genius of its founder **Thursday-Saturday, March 3-5** at Zellerbach Hall. The engagement is part of the company’s Legacy Tour and will be the last time the troupe will dance in Berkeley. Offering a selection of works that spans the length and breadth of Cunningham’s life and collaborations, the first program is a mixed bill showcasing revivals of *Antic Meet*, set to music by **John Cage** with décor by **Robert Rauschenberg**; *Pond Way*, music by **Brian Eno**; and *Sounddance* set to music by **David Tudor** and décor by **John Lancaster** (Thursday & Friday, March 3 & 4). The second program is the first Bay Area performance of the evening-length work *Roaratorio*, based on and inspired by **James Joyce’s** *Finnegans Wake*; it is one of the most celebrated collaborations between Cunningham and Cage (Saturday, March 5).

Merce Cunningham Dance Company has had a long and rich relationship with Cal Performances beginning with the company’s first appearance in Berkeley in 1962 at Wheeler Auditorium when the company, along with Cage, toured in a Volkswagen bus. “So many high points of Merce’s repertory have happened here at Cal Performances,” said **David Vaughan**, MCDC historian. “*Ocean* in the 90s... a two week residency when both *Inventions* and *August Pace* were given for the first time. And the great piece *BIPED* was first performed here in 1992.” Cal Performances co-commissioned a number of works including *BIPED*. In 2008, a site-specific work titled *Craneway Event* was performed at the landmark former Ford assembly plant in Richmond. As part of Cal Performances’ 2009/10 season, MCDC performed the ninety

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minute *Nearly 90*, the choreographer's final work; Cunningham died at the age of 90 in July 2009. This is the 26th season MCDC has performed in Berkeley.

There will be a pre-performance *Sightlines* talk featuring David Vaughan and executive director **Trevor Carlson** on **Friday, March 4 at 7:00 a.m.** While in Berkeley, the company will offer a weeklong residency of various classes and events for UC Berkeley students.

THE PROGRAM

Program A, Thursday, March 3 and Friday, March 4 at 8:00 p.m., will highlight dances from various decades of Cunningham's career. *Pond Way* (1998) opens the bill, a lyrical and sensuous piece that sprung from Cunningham's interest in nature that began in his youth. "Ponds," Cunningham remarked, "are a way of life: bogs, water lilies, a haven for birds, myriad layers of different activities." A dream-like score by **Brian Eno** and an abstract of **Roy Lichtenstein's** *Landscape with a Boat* adds to the contemplative atmosphere. For a quick change of mood and a jump back in time of 40 years, MCDC performs the zany *Antic Meet* (1958), which was on the program of the troupe's very first appearance at Cal Performances. Prior to The Legacy Tour, *Antic Meet* was last performed at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in 1969. Structured like a series of vaudeville scenes, the dance consists of ten playful and comedic numbers. Sometimes seen as Cunningham's irreverent nod to Martha Graham, it shows off Cunningham's humorous side. The program concludes with the exuberant *Sounddance* (1975), also a reference to *Finnegans Wake*—"In the beginning was the sounddance." After a difficult work period at The Paris Opera, the choreographer was eager to make a dance with "as much activity in it of different kinds." Emerging from a backdrop by **Mark Lancaster** the dancers dart about the stage like pieces in a kaleidoscope only to be sucked back into the folds of the drop. "The whole experience, music and dancing, was an exhilarating rush—like bobbing in the ocean, being swept by wave after wave, getting sucked under and tumbled around from all directions (*Washington Post*).

Program B, Saturday, March 5 at 8:00 p.m., will be the debut of the one hour work *Roaratorio* (1983). Cage's score combines sound recordings from places in Ireland mentioned in Joyce's novel; a poem by Cage, constructed from lines of *Finnegans Wake*, read aloud during the performance; and scored sections based on Irish traditional music—jigs, reels, airs, and songs—

that are played at various times and intensities throughout the work. While the score was originally performed live, the work will be danced to a sound recording of Cage's 1979's *Roaratorio, an Irish Circus on Finnegans Wake*, originally made for a broadcast on Westdeutscher Rundfunk Köln, a German public-broadcasting institution. Irish dancing forms the basis of Cunningham's choreography but "the oddity of his coordinations, the unpredictability of his sequences, the awkwardness that he presents as another facet of grace" does to dance what Joyce did to language. "*Roaratorio* proved my most joyous, exhilarating, uplifting and sensory-intensive hour in the theater," commented the *Los Angeles Times*.

MERCE CUNNINGHAM

"**Merce Cunningham** reinvented dance, and then waited for the audience....The elegance, simplicity, and force of his work are unique and undeniable...he has taught us something new and powerful about how to dance and how to live." (Mikhail Baryshnikov).

Merce Cunningham (1919–2009) is considered one of the most important choreographers of our time and, through much of his life, was also one of the greatest American dancers. A leader of the American avant-garde throughout his 70-year career, Cunningham expanded the frontiers of not only dance, but also of contemporary visual and performing arts. His collaborations with artistic innovators from every creative discipline have yielded an unparalleled body of American dance, music, and visual art. Always forward-thinking, Cunningham developed the precedent-setting Legacy Plan prior to his death, to guide his Company and ensure the preservation of his artistic legacy.

Of all his collaborations, Cunningham's work with John Cage, his life partner from the 1940s until Cage's death in 1992, had the greatest influence on his practice. Together, Cunningham and Cage proposed a number of radical innovations. The most famous and controversial of these concerned the incorporation of chance procedures in the relationship between dance and music, which they concluded may occur in the same time and space, but should be created independently of one another.

Born in Centralia, Washington, on April 16, 1919, Cunningham began his professional modern dance career at 20 with a six-year tenure as a soloist in the Martha Graham Dance

Company. In 1944, he presented his first solo show, and in 1953 he formed the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. Over the course of his career, Cunningham choreographed more than 150 dances and over 800 Events.

Cunningham's lifelong passion for innovation made him a leader in applying new technologies to the arts. He began investigating dance on film in the 1970s, and choreographed using the computer program DanceForms during the latter part of his career. In 1997, he began to work in motion capture to develop the décor for *BIPED*, a dance that was co-commissioned by Cal Performances. Other notable works co-commissioned by Cal Performances in recent years include the world premiere of *Loose Time* (2002); and the American premiere of *Fluid Canvas* (2003), which, like *BIPED*, also incorporates the motion-capture artistry of Paul Kaiser and Shelley Eshkar. In April 1996, Cal Performances presented the American premiere of Cunningham and Cage's final collaboration, *Ocean*; the work was performed in Harmon Gymnasium on the UC Berkeley campus (the last event before the building was torn down), in an arena-like setting surrounded by the audience and a 112-piece orchestra.

An active choreographer and mentor to the arts world until his death, Cunningham earned some of the highest honors bestowed in the arts. Among his many awards are the National Medal of Arts (1990) and the MacArthur Fellowship (1985). He also received the Jacob's Pillow Dance Award in 2009, Japan's Praemium Imperiale in 2005 and the British Laurence Olivier Award in 1985. He was named Officier of the Legion d'Honneur in France in 2004.

MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY

Founded in 1953 at Black Mountain College, the **Merce Cunningham Dance Company** embarked upon a final two-year world tour to honor the life and work of Cunningham, beginning February 2010 and culminating with a final performance in New York City on December 31, 2011, after which the company will be permanently disbanded. In accordance with the Legacy Plan, developed by Merce Cunningham to ensure the preservation of his artistic vision, the two-year Legacy Tour will feature the revival of seminal works and give more than 40 cities around the world the chance to celebrate Cunningham's lifetime of groundbreaking artistic achievement.

This final engagement in Berkeley is the Company's 26th appearance at Cal Performances. The group first came to campus in February 1962 and performed *Suite for Five*, *Crises*, *Antic Meet*, *Aeon*, *Changeling* and *Night Wandering*. In total, more than 80 pieces have been presented on campus, four of which were co-commissioned by Cal Performances.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Merce Cunningham Dance Company** performing Program A (*Pond Way*, *Antic Meet* and *Sounddance*) **Thursday & Friday, March 3 & 4** at 8:00 p.m. and Program B (*Roaratorio*) **Saturday, March 5** at 8:00 p.m. at Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$22.00, \$30.00, \$38.00, 48.00** and **\$56.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at 510.642.9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens, other students and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$5 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at 510.642.9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at www.calperformances.org.

For select performances, Cal Performances offers UCB student, faculty and staff, senior and community rush tickets. Rush tickets are announced three hours prior to a performance and are available in person only at the Ticket Office beginning one hour before the performance; quantities may be limited. Rush ticket sales are limited to one ticket per person; all sales are cash only. Rush ticket prices are \$10.00 for UCB students; \$15.00 for UCB faculty and staff (UCB ID required) and seniors age 65 or older; and \$20.00 for all other community members. Information is available on Cal Performances' Facebook page, Twitter account and at 510.642.9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, three hours prior to a performance only.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:

CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, March 4 at 7:00 p.m.
SIGHTLINES

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Pre-performance talk by Cunningham Dance Foundation Archivist David Vaughan and Executive Director Trevor Carlson. Sightlines is a continuing program of pre- and post-performance discussions with Cal Performances' guest artists and scholars, designed to enrich the audience's experience. This talk is free to event ticket holders.

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Thursday–Saturday, March 3–5 at 8:00 p.m.

Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley Campus
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave, Berkeley

Dance

Merce Cunningham Dance Company

Merce Cunningham, choreographer

John Cage, composer

David Tudor, composer

Brian Eno, composer

Program A: Thursday, March 3 and Friday, March 4 at 8:00 p.m.

Pond Way (1998), music by Brian Eno

Antic Meet (1958), music by John Cage

Sounddance (1975) music by David Tudor

Program B: Saturday, March 5 at 8:00 p.m.,

Roaratorio (1983) music by John Cage (Bay Area Premiere)

All choreography is by Merce Cunningham.

Tickets: **\$22.00, \$30.00, \$38.00, \$48.00, and \$56.00**, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at www.calperformances.org; and at the door.

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