

MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY DURING ANN ARBOR RESIDENCY

***Kronos Quartet to perform live with Merce Cunningham Dance Company
on Saturday, March 13***

ANN ARBOR (January 30, 2004) — The **University Musical Society (UMS)** presents the **Merce Cunningham Dance Company** in two performances featuring different repertory on **Friday, March 12 at 8 pm** and **Saturday, March 13 at 8 pm** in Ann Arbor's **Power Center for the Performing Arts** (121 Fletcher Street). These performances mark the return of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company after its highly successful Ann Arbor residency in February 1999. In addition to the performances, the company will participate in numerous free educational activities while in Ann Arbor, many of which are open to the public.

For tickets or additional information, contact the **University Musical Society** at **734-764-2538** or online at www.ums.org. Tickets may also be purchased in person at the League Ticket Office (911 North University Avenue). New ticket office hours are Monday–Friday 9 am to 5 pm and Saturday 10 am to 1 pm (NOTE: hours have changed from previous years). Tickets may also be purchased at the Power Center beginning 90 minutes before each performance, subject to availability.

The Merce Cunningham Dance Company will perform two different programs featuring choreography that spans a nearly 40-year period, from *How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run* (created in 1965 and performed in Hill Auditorium with Merce Cunningham and composer John Cage in 1971) to a MinEvent with Kronos Quartet, created this year. In addition to the two performances, the Company's week-long residency in Ann Arbor includes nine master classes with the U-M and EMU dance departments as well as a series of public interviews, screenings of dance films, and special events. More information about the public events is available in the box at the end of this release.

Merce Cunningham, born in Centralia, Washington, received his first formal dance and theater training at the Cornish School (now Cornish College) in Seattle. From 1939 to 1945, he was a soloist in the company of Martha Graham. During that time, he began to choreograph independently, presenting his first New York solo concert with John Cage in April 1944. He continued to present annual concerts, by himself or with an ad hoc group of dancers, until the formation of Merce Cunningham Dance Company at Black Mountain College in the summer of 1953. Since that time Cunningham has choreographed over 150 for his company.

Cunningham's works have been included in the repertoires of numerous ballet and modern dance companies around the world, among them New York City Ballet, American Ballet Theater, the ballet of the Paris Opéra, the Boston Ballet, Charleroi/Danses, Cullberg Ballet, GRCOP (the experimental wing of the Paris Opéra Ballet), Ohio Ballet, Pacific Northwest Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, Rambert Dance Company (London), Repertory Dance Theatre (Salt Lake City), and Théâtre du Silence (France).

In addition to his dance choreography, Cunningham has collaborated with filmmaker Charles Atlas on three original works for video: *Westbeth* (1974), *Blue Studio: Five Segments* (WNET/TV Lab, 1975), and *Fractions I and II* (1978); and three film-dances: *Locale* (1979), *Channels/Inserts* (1981), and *Coast Zone* (1983). *Fractions*, *Locale*, *Channels/Inserts*, and *Coast Zone* were all subsequently remade for stage presentation.

Deli Commedia, a video dance made in collaboration with Elliot Caplan, who had succeeded Atlas as filmmaker-in-residence, was presented on the PBS "Great Performances" series in November 1985. *Points in Space*, the most recent original video dance by Caplan and Cunningham, was co-produced by the Cunningham Dance Foundation and the BBC and shot in London in May 1986. *Points in Space* has also been remade for the stage. Cunningham and Caplan again collaborated on *Changing Steps*, which was taped in October 1988 at the Sundance Institute and the Osmond Studio, in Utah, and has been broadcast worldwide. In September 1990 Caplan's film portrait, *Cage/Cunningham*, produced and distributed by the Cunningham Dance Foundation, received its world premiere at the Cinémathèque de

la Danse in Paris. In December 1990 Cunningham and Caplan collaborated on *Beach Birds for Camera*, a film version of a dance choreographed that year.

Cunningham's other activities include classes and workshops at the Merce Cunningham Studio, and workshops and lectures both in the United States and abroad, most recently in March 1995 with Robert Swinston, who presented a workshop in Cunningham technique in Moscow sponsored by the Trust for Mutual Understanding.

Cunningham has collaborated on two books about his work: *Changes: Notes on Choreography*, with Frances Starr (Something Else Press, New York, 1968), and *The Dancer and the Dance*, interviews with Jacqueline Lesschaeve (Marion Boyars, New York and London 1985). The latter, originally published in French, has also been translated into German and Italian. *Merce Cunningham/Dancing in Space and Time*, a collection of critical essays edited by Richard Kostelanetz, was published in 1992 by a cappella books.

Cunningham has received countless awards and honors including two Guggenheim Fellowships for choreography, in 1954 and 1959; the Dance Magazine Award, 1960; an honorary Doctorate of Letters from the University of Illinois, 1972; the New York State Award, 1975; the Capezio Award, 1977; and the Samuel H. Scripps/American Dance Festival Award for lifetime contribution to dance, 1982. Also in that year, Cunningham was made Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters by the French Minister of Culture. In 1983, he received the Mayor of New York's Award of Honor for Arts and Culture, and in 1984 was inducted as an Honorary Member into the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters. In June 1985, he received a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, and the following December he was a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors at the White House.

Cunningham's dance *Pictures*, which will be performed in Ann Arbor on Friday, March 12, was given the Laurence Olivier award for best new dance production in London in 1985. In October 1987 Cunningham received the Algur H. Meadows Award for Excellence in the Arts, at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, TX. In January 1988, he was awarded the Dance/USA National Honor in New

York City. In 1990 Cunningham was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Bush in a ceremony at the White House and the Award of Merit from the Association of Performing Arts Presenters. In May 1993, the Wexner Prize was awarded to John Cage and Merce Cunningham at the Wexner Center for the Arts in Columbus, OH. In 1993 Cunningham was inducted into the Hall of Fame at the National Museum of Dance in Saratoga Springs, NY and given a "Bessie" Award presented by New York's Dance Theater Workshop in recognition for outstanding creative achievement for his dance, *Enter*. The International Society of Performing Arts Administrators (ISPAA) honored Cunningham with the Tiffany Award in December 1993. For Cunningham's 75th birthday, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York City proclaimed April 16, 1994 "Merce Cunningham Day." In 1995, he received the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Fine Arts, from Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut, and the Golden Lion of the Venice Biennale.

For the Saturday, March 13 performance, the Merce Cunningham Dance Company will be joined by the **Kronos Quartet**, which will provide live music for a new MinEvent centered on John Cage's *30 Pieces in 30 Minutes*, which was written for the ensemble. Kronos is known for its unique artistic vision and fearless dedication to experimentation and will perform its own concert celebrating its 30th anniversary in the Power Center on Sunday, March 14 (see separate release). Since its inception in 1973, Kronos has assembled a body of work unparalleled in its range and scope of expression, and in the process, has captured the attention of audiences worldwide. Kronos has been commissioning new work since its earliest days, and more than 450 pieces have been written or arranged for the group.

Kronos performs annually in many cities and tours extensively with more than 100 concerts each year in concert halls, clubs and at jazz festivals throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Japan, Mexico, South America, Russia, Asia and Australia. The ensemble last appeared in Ann Arbor under UMS auspices in 1994.

The Quartet records exclusively for Nonesuch Records, and the group's recorded performances have been heard throughout the world on radio and television, in films, and in live dance and theater performances. Of the nearly 30 records released on Nonesuch, seven have been Grammy nominees.

The **University Musical Society** was founded in 1879 and presents its 125th season in 03/04. One of the oldest performing arts presenters in the country, UMS serves diverse audiences through multi-disciplinary performing arts programs in presentation, creation, and education. With a program steeped in music, dance, and theater, UMS hosts approximately 75 performances and 150 free educational activities each season. UMS also commissions new work, sponsors artist residencies, and organizes collaborative projects with local, national, and international partners. While proudly affiliated with the University of Michigan and housed on the U-M campus, UMS is a separate not-for-profit organization that supports itself from ticket sales, grants, contributions, and endowment income.

This residency marks the third appearance in Ann Arbor by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. The Company performed in Ann Arbor's Hill Auditorium in 1971 and again in the Power Center for two performances in February 1999. The 2004 residency is co-sponsored by **Crowne Plaza Hotels and Resorts** and funded in part by the **Wallace Foundation, Altria Group Inc.**, and the **National Endowment for the Arts**. Additional support is provided by media sponsors **WDET 101.9 FM** and **Metro Times**.

The Ann Arbor residency by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company is presented in collaboration with the U-M Department of Dance; the U-M Department of Film and Video Studies; the U-M Music Library; the U-M Life Sciences, Values and Society Program; the U-M Health System Gifts of Art Program; the Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit, and Dance Gallery Studio

Merce Cunningham Dance Company

Friday, March 12, 8pm

Saturday, March 13, 8pm (with Kronos Quartet)

Power Center for the Performing Arts (121 Fletcher St., Ann Arbor)

Program (Fri 3/12)

Pictures Choreography by Cunningham / Music by David Behrman / Design by Mark Lancaster

Native Green Cunningham / John King / William Anastasi

How to Pass, Kick, Fall, and Run Cunningham / John Cage / Robert Rauschenberg

Program (Sat 3/13)

MinEvent with Kronos Cunningham / Cage / Rauschenberg
BIPED Cunningham / Gavin Bryars / Paul Kaiser and Shelly Eshkar

Tickets: \$16-\$44

Sponsored by **Crowne Plaza Hotels and Resorts**. Funded in part by **Wallace Foundation, Altria Group Inc**, and the **National Endowment for the Arts**. Media Sponsors **WDET 101.9 FM** and **Metro Times**.

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Free Educational Events

THIRD ANNUAL DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL: SELECTIONS FROM THE NEW YORK DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL. Featuring the latest internationally acclaimed dance videos, the Dance on Camera Festival presents cutting edge work that redefines the latest trends in video dance. *Sunday, March 7, 7 pm, U-M Dance Building Betty Pease Theater (1310 North University Court).*

THIRD ANNUAL DANCE ON CAMERA FESTIVAL: MERCE ON CAMERA. As part of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company residency, the Dance on Camera Festival is devoting one night to the contributions of this pioneering artist. David Vaughan, archivist for the Cunningham Foundation, will select and introduce each of these videos, some of which have rarely been seen in public. *Monday, March 8, 7 pm, U-M Dance Building Betty Pease Theater (1310 North University Court).*

STUDY CLUB: MERCE CUNNINGHAM. Merce Cunningham is widely considered one of the master artists of the 20th century, and his ideas and art have profoundly influenced all of contemporary culture. However, his work can still be elusive and perplexing. Jessica Fogel, U-M Professor of Dance, will lead this Study Club to help audiences understand the important role that Cunningham has played in dance history, with a focus on his choreography, his collaborations, his use of technology, and his avant-garde philosophies. *Tuesday, March 9, 7 pm, U-M Dance Building Betty Pease Theater (1310 North University Court).*

ARTIST INTERVIEW AND PANEL: "THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON DANCE: THE INTERSECTION OF DANCE, HEALTH, AND TECHNOLOGY". After 50 years of studying the body and creating dance, Merce Cunningham holds a unique perspective on the role that movement can play in the mind and body. Demonstrating his own choreographic software, DanceForms, Mr. Cunningham will respond to some of U-M's leading medical experts from the Departments of Psychology, Kinesiology, Radiology, and Neurology, and their latest research. Moderated by U-M Dance Professor Peter Sparling, this special interdisciplinary presentation will also feature Jill Sonke-Henderson, Artist-in-Residence and Professor at the University of Florida Shands Arts in Medicine Program. Reception to follow. *Wednesday, March 10, 4 pm, U-M Life Sciences Palmer Commons Building, Forum Hall, 100 Washtenaw Ave.*

unCAGED: THE EXPLORATION OF NON-INTENTION. The Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (CAID) and Dance Gallery Studio present a special "event" inspired by the musical approaches of John Cage. *unCAGED* is a (late) night of music, dance, and spontaneity, honoring the residency by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company. *unCAGED* features Detroit-area exploratory artists, musicians, and performers working and playing in the Cage frame of chance. In this "exploration of non-intention," the possibilities of mixed medium collaboration are endless, reflecting the pure energy felt in Cunningham's guided improvisation. Featured artists include Nazanin Arandi, Mike Dykehouse, Elliot Earls, Viki Hott, Jeremy Kallio, Erin Knowles, Melanie Manos, Chris McNamara, Brent Sommerhauser, and Scott Zacharias; DJs provided by Ghostly International. **\$5 cover charge at the door.** *Friday, March 12, after the Cunningham performance, Dance Gallery Studio (815 Wildt Street).*

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UMS Ticket Office

734-764-2538

Outside the 734 area code, call toll-free 800-221-1229.

(These numbers should be published.)

<http://www.ums.org>

Mail or fax orders to:

University Musical Society
Burton Memorial Tower
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1270
fax: 734-647-1171

Special discounts for groups of 10 or more! Call 734-763-3100

Press information/photos contact: Sara Billmann, 734-763-0611

Television crews and still-photographers are welcome to cover UMS events; however, please provide 48 hours notice so that we may secure permission from the artists and alert the production staff. Please contact Sara Billmann at 734-763-0611 to arrange media coverage.

Media Inquiries/Further Information:

Sara Billmann, University Musical Society

734-763-0611

sarabill@umich.edu