

Merce Cunningham Announces Precedent-Setting Plan For Future of His Dance Company and His Work

*\$8-Million Campaign Launched to Support Ongoing Production and Performances,
Preservation of Cunningham's Artistic Legacy, and Company Transition*

New York, NY, June 9, 2009—The Cunningham Dance Foundation announced today a precedent-setting plan delineating the future of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (MCDC) and ensuring the legacy of Merce Cunningham's work. The "Living Legacy Plan" represents Mr. Cunningham's vision for continuing his work in the coming years; the transitioning of his Company once he is no longer able to lead MCDC; and the preservation of his oeuvre. The plan includes a documentation and preservation program, a final international tour, and, ultimately, the closure of the Foundation and the Company and transfer of all assets to the Merce Cunningham Trust, established by Cunningham to serve as the custodian for all his works.

The Foundation has also announced the launch of an \$8-million campaign in support of the multifaceted Living Legacy Plan. The campaign has been set in motion with lead gifts totaling \$2 million, including \$1 million from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and \$1 million from "Leading for the Future Initiative," a program of the Nonprofit Finance Fund, funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation.

"My idea has always been to explore human physical movement," said Cunningham. "I attempt to teach students and dancers about my technique, but in a way that allows room for individuality. I would like the Trust to continue doing this, because dancing is a process that never stops, and should not stop if it is to stay alive and fresh."

The first of its kind in the dance world, the Living Legacy Plan outlines an innovative and comprehensive roadmap for the future of the Company in the coming years. Supported by the campaign, the plan allows the Foundation and MCDC to:

- **Continue to create and perform** new work under Cunningham's leadership, and maintain its educational and training programs;
- **Preserve Cunningham's oeuvre** in digital form by creating dynamic "dance capsules" that will document his legacy for future generations and allow ongoing study and enjoyment of his work;
- **Celebrate Cunningham's work with a world tour** and a final performance in New York City;
- **Provide dancers, musicians and staff** with compensation and resources for career transition upon closure of the Company;
- **Transition to Merce Cunningham Trust**, which has been established by Cunningham as the successor organization to the Foundation and will hold and administer all rights to his work.

"Merce's career is distinguished by a constant desire to expand creative boundaries and explore new ideas," stated Trevor Carlson, Executive Director of the Cunningham Dance Foundation. "The Living Legacy Plan is comprehensive, multifaceted, and—like Merce himself—precedent-setting. It offers a new model for dance companies and other artist-led organizations transitioning to a post-founder existence."

Living Legacy Plan

Designed to address key artistic, preservation, and administrative issues, the Living Legacy Plan will enable the Company and its partners worldwide to celebrate Cunningham's creative achievements and to ensure that present and future generations of students, scholars, artists, and audiences will be able to study and enjoy the work of this groundbreaking artist. The main components to the Living Legacy Plan, which the Foundation's \$8-million capital campaign will help to underwrite, include:

Continuation

Cunningham is one of the major creative forces of our time, inspiring innovation not only in dance, but in music, the visual arts, new media, and technology. The campaign will ensure that he continues to create and connect with audiences for as long as possible and will support the Company's ongoing work, which this year includes the creation and premiere of the new work *Nearly Ninety*; national and international touring; educational and training programs; and the production of *Mondays with Merce*, a pioneering web series that provides the public unprecedented access to Cunningham's creative process.

Preservation

MCDC is developing "Dance Capsules" as a means to preserve Cunningham's work for future generations of students, artists, scholars, and members of the public, and to ensure that pieces from his repertory can be studied and performed in perpetuity with knowledge of how they originally came to life. Each Dance Capsule is a digital package containing complete documentation of a Cunningham repertory work, including performance videos, sound recordings, lighting plots, décor images, costume design, production notes from rehearsal and performance, and interviews with dancers and artistic staff.

Patricia Lent, a former dancer with extensive knowledge of Cunningham's work and experience in reviving works, is working directly with Cunningham; Robert Swinston, Assistant to the Choreographer; and a select group of dancers from each decade of the Company's history to identify repertory pieces for preservation. Longtime Company Archivist David Vaughan will also be deeply involved in the preservation process.

Celebration

When Cunningham is no longer able to remain actively involved with the Company, MCDC will commence a series of programs to celebrate his lifetime of creativity and to cement a full understanding of his artistic contributions and achievements. MCDC will begin incorporating the revival of seminal works into its performances, and will commence a two-year world tour featuring both recent and revived works, providing people around the world one last opportunity to see Cunningham's work performed by the company he personally trained. Cunningham has specified that tickets to the final performance in New York City be \$10.

Company Transition

The dancers, musicians, and staff who have invested their time, resources, and creative efforts into the realization of Cunningham's work will be honored and provided with compensation and resources for career transition upon the closure of the Company.

Transfer to the Merce Cunningham Trust

Upon the completion of the final world tour, the Foundation will close and its assets will be transferred to the Merce Cunningham Trust, which Cunningham has established to hold the rights to his work and manage his artistic legacy. These assets include artwork and production elements including décor, props, and costumes; a copy of archival materials including audio and video footage and Cunningham's choreographic notes; and the Dance Capsules assembled by the Foundation. The activities and the work of the Trust will be managed by trustees who will be appointed by Cunningham directly.

Merce Cunningham Trust Mission

Established by Cunningham in 2000 and recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit foundation in 2002, the Merce Cunningham Trust was created to promote education and artistic development in the field of modern dance through instruction and performance of works choreographed by Cunningham, and by making his choreography available to dance companies.

About the Merce Cunningham Dance Company

Merce Cunningham has been at the forefront of the American avant-garde for more than sixty years and is considered by many to be the greatest living choreographer. Founded in 1953, Merce Cunningham Dance Company has had an unparalleled impact on American culture. Guided by Cunningham's radical approaches to space, time, and technology, the Company has forged a distinctive style, illuminating the near limitless possibility for human movement. For over half a century, MCDC's collaborations with groundbreaking artists have redefined the way audiences experience the visual and performing arts, and inspired generations of artists.

About the Cunningham Dance Foundation

Cunningham Dance Foundation is dedicated to sustaining and advancing the activities of Merce Cunningham through the support of the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, the Cunningham Repertory Group, the Studio Performance Program for Young Artists, Educational Outreach, and the Merce Cunningham Archives.

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