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**CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS
MERCE CUNNINGHAM DANCE COMPANY
IN CUNNINGHAM'S LAST CREATION *NEARLY 90²*
FRIDAY & SATURDAY MARCH 26 & 27 AT ZELLERBACH HALL**

***Sightlines*: Pre-performance talk will be given by Trevor Carlson, Executive Director of the Cunningham Dance Foundation, at 7:00 p.m. on Friday, March 26**

BERKELEY, February 19, 2010—Cal Performances presents legendary choreographer Merce Cunningham's final work, the evening-long *Nearly 90²*, performed by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company (MCDC) Friday and Saturday, March 26 and 27 at 8:00 p.m. at Zellerbach Hall. *Nearly 90²*, created shortly before Cunningham's death at the age of 90, reverberates with the knowledge and dance-making skill he honed over his 70-plus year career. The production, which mixes languid, meditative phrases with vigorous ensembles, is the alternate version of *Nearly Ninety*, created by Cunningham so that the production could be presented in a variety of venues. *Nearly Ninety* premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in April 2009; *The New York Times* stated, "the thrill of *Nearly Ninety* is in the skill, inventiveness and flow of its dance-making. And in the beauty of its performances." *Nearly 90²* is performed to the original score composed by former Led Zeppelin bass player **John Paul Jones** and mixed-media sound composer and longtime MCDC Music Director **Takehisa Kosugi**, with live performances by **John King** and Kosugi. New costumes and lighting were designed by **Anna Finke** and **Christine Shallenberg**, respectively. *Nearly 90²* is performed without intermission. Merce Cunningham died July 26, 2009.

A *Sightlines* pre-performance talk will be given by Cunningham Dance Foundation Executive Director Trevor Carlson Friday, March 26 at 7:00 p.m. at Zellerbach Hall. This talk is free to event ticket holders.

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 not only of 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 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 to take place there before the building was torn down), in an arena-like setting surrounded by 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, the British Laurence Olivier Award in 1985, and 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** has embarked upon a final two-year world tour, beginning February 2010 and running through 2011, to honor the life and work of Cunningham. 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 offer audiences in more than 40 cities around the world the chance to celebrate Cunningham's lifetime of groundbreaking artistic achievement.

This is the Merce Cunningham Dance Company's 25th engagement 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 Wheeler Hall.

Cal Performances audiences will have a final opportunity to see Cunningham's work performed by his company when the troupe returns March 2011. The company's final performance will be in New York City on December 31, 2011, after which it will disband.

TICKET INFORMATION

Tickets for **Merce Cunningham Dance Company** performing *Nearly 90² Friday & Saturday, March 26 & 27* at **8:00 p.m.** at Zellerbach Hall are priced at **\$30.00, \$40.00** and **\$50.00**. 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 two 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 and at 510.642.9988, press 2 for the rush hotline, three hours prior to a performance only.

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Cal Performances 2009/10 season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE: CAL PERFORMANCES PRESENTS

Friday, March 26 at 7:00 p.m.
SIGHTLINES

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

Pre-performance talk by Cunningham Dance Foundation 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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Friday & Saturday, March 26 & 27 at 8:00 p.m.

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

Dance

Merce Cunningham Dance Company

Merce Cunningham, choreographer

Takehisa Kosugi, Music Director and composer

John Paul Jones, composer

John King, musician

Anna Finke, costumes

Christine Shallenberg, lighting

Nearly 90² (2009), music by Takehisa Kosugi and John Paul Jones, choreography by Merce Cunningham

Tickets: \$30.00, \$40.00 and \$50.00, 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.

- Cal Performances -