

Margaret Jenkins Biography



Margaret Jenkins (Artistic Director) is a choreographer, teacher, and mentor to many young artists as well as a designer of unique community-based dance projects. Jenkins began her early training in San Francisco. In the sixties, she moved to New York to study at Juilliard, continued her training at UCLA and returned to New York to dance in the companies of Jack Moore, Viola Farber, Judy Dunn, James Cunningham, Gus Solomons and Twyla Tharp's original company with Sara Rudner. In addition, Jenkins was a member of the faculty of the Merce Cunningham Studio and often restaged his works for companies in Europe and the United States.

In 1970 Jenkins returned to San Francisco and formed her own company. She also opened one of the West Coast's first studio-performing spaces at 2005 Bryant Street, a school for the training of professional modern dancers. This venue quickly became the center for local and traveling companies to show their work. Viola Farber and Merce Cunningham were frequent guests, and dozens of young choreographers had the chance to experiment and take risks. This San Francisco rehearsal and performance space also became the "stage" for Jenkins and her Company.

From 1980 until 1993, Jenkins continued to manage her repertory-based company, administer her curriculum, and provide a performance space for local and touring companies. In 1993, she restructured her organization to become a project's-based company, in order to focus all of her artistic, economic, and administrative resources into the making of new work.

In addition to the over seventy-five works she has made for her Company, Jenkins' choreographic work has been commissioned by the New Dance Ensemble in Minneapolis, the Repertory Dance Theatre in Salt Lake City, the Oakland Ballet, the Cullberg Ballet of Sweden and Ginko, a modern dance company in Tokyo, Japan. She has received commissions from the National Dance Project, the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts, Arizona State University, the University of Arizona, and Columbia College in Chicago, as well as being a recipient of a National Dance Residency Project grant. She has set work on various college and university dance departments: CSU Hayward Dance Company through the National College Choreography Initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, UC Santa Cruz, Mills College, and three times for UC Berkeley. Jenkins' career has also embraced a commitment to training the professional dancer. Over the last thirty-five years, she has taught at major universities and colleges in this country and abroad.

In spring of 2003 Jenkins celebrated the 30th anniversary of her Company with a unique season of performances and exhibitions at Fort Mason's Herbst Pavilion, a 30,000-square-foot warehouse in San Francisco, never before used for dance for which she was presented with a special Isadora Duncan Dance Award.

Margaret Jenkins Biography

As an organizer and enthusiast for dance, Jenkins facilitated a showcase for presenters to be introduced to the work of Swedish choreographers in Stockholm, some of whom subsequently came to San Francisco and other venues in the U.S.. She served on the steering committee for the 2002 International Women's Day Conference in San Francisco, and as Artistic Consultant to DanceAbout, a dance facility at the UC Berkeley Extension in San Francisco that has since closed. She was a founding member of the Bay Area Dance Coalition and of Dance/USA, serving on its first Board of Directors. She remains an active participant on panels across the United States.

She is committed to an art of inquiry and to advance the health and future of the field of dance through a variety of projects. She conceived The National Dance Labs (NDL) a “product-driven,” as opposed to “market-driven,” model for creativity in the performing arts. Dance Lab starts with content and process and uses the device of a transparent laboratory to identify potential audiences and methods to reach those audiences. NDL was inaugurated in 2000 by the MJDC, the New England Foundation for the Arts, the University of California, Berkeley, and Yerba Buena Center for the Arts.

In 2004 Jenkins and her Company launched a new program, Choreographers in Mentorship Exchange (CHIME). The notion behind this artist mentorship program is to foster creative exchange and long-term relationships between emerging and established choreographers, and to create an arena for continuing education for choreography outside of the academic environment. Coinciding with the commencement of her choreographer mentorship program, CHIME, she opened her new studio, the Margaret Jenkins Dance Lab, in the South of Market area of San Francisco.

Jenkins has also helped to structure and implement Choreographers in Action (CIA) a unique gathering of local choreographers who, in combination and collaboration, posit solutions to the myriad of issues that surround the working artist. In addition, the Center for Creative Research based in New York is a collection of ten senior choreographers who have come together under the leadership of Sam Miller to create research residencies within the university. Jenkins is one of its founding members.

Highlights of Jenkins’ recent activities have included a residency in Kolkata, India (2003) to create a new dance at the Ananda Shankar Center for Performing Arts, the premiere of a new site-specific work, *Danger Orange* (2004) San Francisco, a three-week teaching residency in Hong Kong, Guangzhou and Beijing, China (2004), and the premiere of *running with the land* (2005) at the opening of the new de Young Museum in the Barbro Osher Sculpture Garden, commissioned by the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation. In November of 2005, Jenkins and five members of her Company were invited to Kochi, India to participate in a four-week rehearsal and performance residency to develop source material for the evening-length piece, *A Slipping Glimpse*, which premiered in May of 2006 at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. In 2007, Jenkins and her Company performed in a poetry and dance festival in Tokyo, Japan, conducted a five-city domestic tour of *A Slipping Glimpse*, and presented *Other Suns*, the first part of new trilogy of work inspired by her 2004 workshops in China. In 2008, Jenkins and her company traveled to Guangzhou, China for a five-week rehearsal and performance residency with

Margaret Jenkins Biography

the Guangdong Modern Dance Company to further develop the *Other Suns* trilogy. *Other Suns* will have it's world premiere in the spring of 2009 at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco, followed by a highly anticipated U.S. tour.

For her unique artistic vision, Jenkins has received numerous commissions and awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, an Irvine Fellowship in Dance, the San Francisco Arts Commission Award of Honor, three Isadora Duncan Awards (Izzies), and the Bernard Osher Cultural Award for her outstanding contributions to the arts community in San Francisco and the Bay Area. April 24, 2003 was declared "Margaret Jenkins Day" by San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown. On that day she also received a Governor's Commendation from Governor Gray Davis. For the 75th anniversary of the San Francisco Ballet in 2008, Margaret Jenkins was commissioned to create *Thread*, a new work for which long-time collaborator, Paul Dresher, created a new musical score.

"The dancers/collaborators, artistic collaborators and administrative support--a host or remarkable people, have made it possible for me to do my work with energy, commitment and honesty. This unique intersection of people is the foundation, from which all risks are taken, questions posed and new directions formed."