PAUL TAYLOR
DANCE COMPANY

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More than a half-century ago, Paul Taylor became the youngest member of the pantheon that created American modern dance.

Now in his 80th year – an age when most artists' best work is behind them – Mr. Taylor is acclaimed for the vibrancy, relevance and power of his dances. As prolific as ever, he continues to offer cogent observations on life's complexities while tackling some of society's thorniest issues. He may propel his dancers through space for the sheer beauty of it, or use them to wordlessly illuminate war, spirituality, sexuality, morality and mortality. If, as Balanchine said, there are no mothers-in-law in ballet, there certainly are dysfunctional families, ex-lovers, fallen preachers, rapists, angels and insects in Taylor dance.

In the 1950s, when his work was so cutting-edge that it could send confused audience members flocking to the exits, Martha Graham dubbed Mr. Taylor the "naughty boy" of dance. In the '60s he shocked the cognoscenti by setting his trailblazing movement to music composed 200 years earlier, and inflamed the establishment by lampooning America's most treasured icons. In the '70s he put incest center stage and revealed the beast lurking just below humans' sophisticated veneer. In the '80s he looked unflinchingly at marital rape and intimacy among men at war. In the '90s he warned against religious zealotry and blind conformity to authority. In the first decade of the new millennium he has condemned American imperialism, poked fun at feminism and looked death square in the face. And yet, while his work has largely been iconoclastic, since the very start of his career Mr. Taylor has also made some of the most purely romantic, most astonishingly athletic, and downright funniest dances ever put on stage.

People in cities and towns throughout the world have enjoyed live modern dance performances due largely to the far-reaching tours Mr. Taylor pioneered as a virtuoso dancer in the 1950s. Having made his first dance in 1954, he has amassed a growing collection of 130 dances performed by his celebrated Company of 16 dancers and the six-member Taylor 2. He has set movement to music so memorably that for many people it is impossible to hear certain orchestral works and popular songs and not think of his dances. He has influenced dozens of men and women who have gone on to create dances or establish their own troupes. He has collaborated with such artists as Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, Ellsworth Kelly, Alex Katz, Tharon Musser, Thomas Skelton, Gene Moore, John Rawlings, William Ivey Long, Jennifer Tipton and Santo Loquasto. As the subject of the documentary, *Dancemaker*, and author of the autobiography, *Private Domain*, and *Why I Make Dances*, he has shed light on the mysteries of the creative process as few artists ever have.

Hailed for uncommon musicality and catholic taste, Mr. Taylor has set dances to Ragtime, Reggae and Rock, Tango, Tin Pan Alley and Barbershop Quartets; works by baroque masters Bach, Boyce and Handel and iconoclasts Feldman, Ligeti and Varése; monotonous time announcements, plaintive loon calls and hysterical laughter. While he has covered a breathtaking range of topics, recurring themes have included the natural world and man's place within it; love and sexuality in every gender combination; life, death and what may follow; and iconic moments in the history of the nation. His poignant looks at soldiers in battle and those they leave behind caused *The New York Times* to say in 2009 that he "ranks among the great war poets."

Mr. Taylor was born in 1930 and grew up in and around Washington, DC. He was a swimmer and student of painting at Syracuse University in the late 1940s until he discovered dance, which he began studying at Juilliard. By 1954 he had assembled a small company of dancers and was making his own works. A commanding performer despite his late start, he joined the Martha Graham Dance Company in 1955 for the

first of seven seasons as soloist while continuing to choreograph on his own troupe. In 1959 he danced with New York City Ballet as a guest artist. Having created the slyly funny **3 Epitaphs** in 1956, he captivated dancegoers in 1962 with his virile grace in the landmark **Aureole**, set cheekily not to contemporary music but to a baroque score, as **Junction** had been the year before. He struck chords again with the apocalyptic **Scudorama**, intended to be as dark as **Aureole** was sunny, and the controversial **Big Bertha**. After retiring as a performer in 1974, Mr. Taylor devoted himself fully to choreography and masterpieces continued to pour forth, including **Esplanade**, **Cloven Kingdom**, **Dust**, **Airs**, **Mercuric Tidings**, **Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rehearsal)**, **Arden Court**, **Last Look**, **Musical Offering**, **Syzygy**, **Speaking in Tongues**, **Company B**, **Eventide**, **Piazzolla Caldera**, **Promethean Fire**, **Banquet of Vultures** and **Beloved Renegade**. He remains among the most sought-after choreographers working today, commissioned by ballet companies and presenting organizations the world over.

From its earliest years, the Paul Taylor Dance Company brought modern dance to America's college campuses and small towns as well as its large cultural centers, and in 1960 the Company made its first international tour. It has since performed in more than 520 cities in 62 countries. In 1966 the Paul Taylor Dance Foundation was established to help bring Mr. Taylor's works to the largest possible audience, facilitate the making of new dances, and preserve his repertoire. Since 1968, when **Aureole** first entered the repertoire of the Royal Danish Ballet, his works have been licensed for performance by more than 75 companies worldwide. In 1993 Mr. Taylor formed Taylor 2, which brings many of his masterworks to smaller venues around the world. Taylor 2 also teaches modern technique and Taylor style in schools and workplaces, at community gatherings, and during annual workshops for pre-professional dancers.

In celebration of the Paul Taylor Dance Company's 50th Anniversary in 2004-05, his works were performed in all 50 States.

Mr. Taylor has received every important honor given to artists in the United States. In 1992 he was a recipient of the Kennedy Center Honors and received an Emmy Award for **Speaking in Tongues**, produced by WNET/New York the previous year. He was awarded the National Medal of Arts by President Clinton in 1993. In 1995 he received the Algur H. Meadows Award for Excellence in the Arts and was named one of 50 prominent Americans honored in recognition of their outstanding achievement by the Library of Congress's Office of Scholarly Programs. He is the recipient of three Guggenheim Fellowships and honorary Doctor of Fine Arts degrees from California Institute of the Arts, Connecticut College, Duke University, The Juilliard School, Skidmore College, the State University of New York at Purchase, Syracuse University and Adelphi University. Awards for lifetime achievement include a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship – often called the "genius award" – and the Samuel H. Scripps American Dance Festival Award. Other awards include the New York State Governor's Arts Award and the New York City Mayor's Award of Honor for Art and Culture. In 1989 he was elected one of ten honorary American members of the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters.

Having been elected to knighthood by the French government as *Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres* in 1969 and elevated to *Officier* in 1984 and *Commandeur* in 1990, Mr. Taylor was awarded France's highest honor, the *Légion d'Honneur*, for exceptional contributions to French culture, in 2000.

Mr. Taylor's autobiography, originally published by Alfred A. Knopf and re-released by North Point Press and later by the University of Pittsburgh Press, was nominated by the National Book Critics Circle as the most distinguished biography of 1987. *Dancemaker*, Matthew Diamond's award-winning, Oscar-nominated feature-length film about Mr. Taylor, was hailed by *Time* as "perhaps the best dance documentary ever."