

For Immediate Release
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**Dance icon Anna Halprin debuts a new,
large-scale performance work at Stern Grove**

Presented free as part of Dancers' Group's ONSITE series

May 1-3, 2009

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—December 17, 2008—Dancers' Group is proud to present a new, large-scale work by postmodern dance and performance pioneer Anna Halprin, at Stern Grove from May 1-3, 2009.

How does the human body integrate with our land and our environment? Halprin has been meditating on this question throughout her 50-year dance career. For this work the 88-year old Halprin brings together dancers, musicians, performers and the Stern Grove concert meadow, which was designed by Halprin's husband, legendary landscape architect Lawrence Halprin. The immense scale of the grand stone bleachers, interspersed with grass terraces, stone ziggurats, and granite boulders, creates, in Halprin's words, "a mystical place where one would be inspired to reach into oneself."

In this new work, Halprin, who has spent more than five decades challenging the conventions of modern dance—and is who celebrated for blurring boundaries between art forms, professional and amateur, performer and audience—will reverse the locations of spectators and performers, placing the audience on the stage and the dancers in the stands.

Halprin, who was deeply inspired by both the architecture and the way the space is used everyday by the public, writes: "people walk their dogs, parents stroll their baby carriages, runners do their daily runs, people are meditating and practicing chi gong. Once I watched 30 children run through the space, screaming with delight, climbing over the ziggurats and boulders. Yes, I thought, whatever dance is created here must allow these everyday activities to take place."

The Stern Grove project grew out of a conversation between Halprin and Dancers' Group Director Wayne Hazzard, who asked Halprin to conduct a workshop in the urban environment of San Francisco. It was not until her husband finished the Stern Grove renovation two years later that she found the site that motivated her to take up the commission.

“Watching a dance performance in a place other than a traditional stage can be a fascinating experience,” said Dancers’ Group Director Wayne Hazzard. “Alternative spaces shift our perception and something new is revealed in the moving bodies in space. This performance project with Anna and Larry Halprin will be a one of a kind experience for Bay Area residents and visitors. At 88, Anna is the youngest artist I know.”

The Stern Grove project will be a cornerstone event at the 2009 Bay Area National Dance Week.

Anna Halprin

Anna Halprin's diverse career has spanned the field of dance since the late 1930s, creating revolutionary directions for the art form and inspiring fellow choreographers to take modern dance to new dimensions. James Roose – Evans author of “Experimental Theatre” called Anna one of the most important theatre artists of the 20th century.

Anna founded the groundbreaking San Francisco Dancer's Workshop in 1955 and the Tamalpa Institute in 1978 with her daughter Daria Halprin. Her students include Meredith Monk, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, Ruth Emmerson, Sally Gross, and others, some of who become involved in the progressive and experimental Judson Church Group. Over the years, her famous outdoor deck has been an explorative haven for numerous dancers and choreographers, including Merce Cunningham, Eiko and Koma, and Min Tanaka; composers such as John Cage, Luciano Berio, Terry Riley, LeMonte Young, and Morton Subotnick; visual artists such as Robert Morris and Robert Rauschenberg; poets such as Richard Brautigan, James Broughton, and Michael McClure; and countless others.

Halprin is an early pioneer in the expressive arts healing movement. She has led countless collaborative dance programs with terminally ill patients, long committed to a belief in the connection between movement and the healing power of dance. Halprin has also investigated numerous social issues through dance and through theatrical innovations. For the past decade, she has led "Circle the Earth", a contemporary community dance ritual to confront real-life issues facing participant communities around the world. Her "Planetary Dance: A Prayer for Peace" between peoples and the earth was staged in Berlin at an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Potsdam Treaty to end World War II, and involved over 400 participants. In 1995, she was invited by Mikhail Gorbachev to present an invocation at the State of the World Forum in California.

Halprin has recognized new directions for dance and courageously followed those paths into unknown territories, ever-willing to adapt her work to the present moment, a philosophy that led to a broad redefinition of dance.

Halprin has created 150 full-length dance theater works, which are extensively documented in photographs, books and on film. She is the recipient of numerous honors and awards including a lifetime achievement in choreography from the American Dance Festival. She is the author of three books and has released numerous videotapes about her work. She has received numerous honors from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Dance Guild, and many others. In 1997, Anna received the Samuel H. Scripps Award for Lifetime Achievement in Modern Dance from the American Dance Festival. The Dance Heritage Coalition has named Anna Halprin one of "America's Irreplaceable Dance Treasures."

Halprin continues to make revolutionary work exploring the beauty of the aging body and its relationship to nature. Recent works include the award winning video *Returning Home*. In September 2004, she performed the confronting *Intensive Care: Reflections on Death and Dying* at the Festival D'Automne in Paris. In 2005 dance Anna developed a filmed performance called "Seniors Rocking". In 2006 The Museum of Contemporary Art in Lyon, France presented a major one-woman exhibition of her life's achievements.

At the age of 88, she continues to perform, travel and teach with fervor. Anna gets the most out of her life, living by her adage "Aging is like enlightenment at gunpoint".

Dancers' Group

Founded in 1982, Dancers' Group assists and supports the San Francisco Bay Area dance community by creating a nexus of resources, expertise and knowledge. Working to advocate for dance in the Bay Area and beyond, Dancers' Group assists in the creation and production of engaging, original dance. Dancers' Group serves artists at multiple stages in their careers, and assist dancers, choreographers, teachers, funders, dance companies, students, writers, critics and audiences in the passionate pursuit and enjoyment of art. Through the ONSITE Project, Dancers' Group presents large-scale public projects that allow the organization to engage new audiences and to increase the visibility of local dance and dance artists.

More information about Anna Halprin at Stern Grove (including performance times) will be online in February 2009 at www.dancersgroup.org.