

International Theatre Institute ITI

World Organization for the Performing Arts



Biography

Trisha Brown (Artistic Director and Choreographer) was born and raised in Aberdeen, Washington. She graduated from Mills College, California, in 1958 before moving to New York City in 1961. She instantly immersed herself in what was to become the post-modern phenomena of Judson Dance Theatre. It was here that she honed her movement investigations to find the extraordinary in the everyday. By challenging existing perceptions of performance, Brown, along with like-minded artists, pushed the limits of choreography and changed modern dance forever.

In 1970, Brown formed her company and began producing works inspired by her environs such as *Walking Down the Side of a Building* (1970), and *Roof Piece* (1971). It was also around this time that she began her collaborations with Robert Rauschenberg. The 1980s saw her create many innovative productions, such as the now iconic *Set and Reset* (1983), with original music by Laurie Anderson and visual design by Robert Rauschenberg; this marked the completion of Brown's first fully developed cycle of work, *Unstable Molecular Structures*.



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This cycle epitomized the fluid yet unpredictably geometric style that remains a hallmark of her work. Brown then began her relentlessly athletic Valiant Series pushing her dancers to their physical limits and exploring gender-specific movement. Next came the elegant and mysterious *Back to Zero Cycle* in which Brown pulled back from external virtuosity to investigate unconscious movement. Brown collaborated for the final time with Rauschenberg to create *If you couldn't see me* (1994), in which she danced entirely with her back to the audience.

Ever keen to reinvent herself and experiment, Brown turned her attention to classical music and opera production, initiating what is known as her Music Cycle. Her choreography set to J.S. Bach's monumental *Musical Offering*, *M.O.* (1995) was hailed as a "masterpiece" by Anna Kisselgoff of the *New York Times*. This led her to immerse herself more fully in operatic productions, going on to choreograph and direct countless high-quality operas.

Continuing to venture into new terrain, Brown forayed into explorations of relevant topics such as new technology, and created the witty and sophisticated *I love my robots* (2007), with Japanese artist and

robotics designer Kenjiro Okazaki. Brown's last work, *I'm going to toss my arms- if you catch them they're yours* (2011), is a collaboration with visual artist Burt Barr, whose striking set is dominated by industrial fans.

As well as being a prolific choreographer, Brown was an accomplished visual artist, as exemplified in *It's a Draw* (2002). Her drawings have been seen in exhibitions, galleries and museums throughout the world.

Trisha Brown has created over 100 dance works since 1961, and was the first woman choreographer to receive the coveted MacArthur Foundation Fellowship "Genius Award." She has been awarded many other honors besides, including five fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 1988, Brown was named Chevalier dans l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres by the government of France, and was eventually elevated to the level of Commandeur. At the invitation of President Bill Clinton, she served on the National Council of the Arts from 1994 to 1997. In 2003, Brown was honored with the National Medal of Arts. She has received numerous honorary doctorates, was an Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and in 2011, was awarded the prestigious Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for making an "outstanding contribution to the beauty of the world and to mankind's enjoyment and understanding of life".

Trisha Brown died on March 18th after a lengthy illness. As one of the most acclaimed and influential choreographers and dancers of her time, Trisha's ground-breaking work forever changed the landscape of art. Her passing signifies a great loss to dance and the performing arts.