Cunningham, Merce (1919-) Encyclopedia Article

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The dancer and choreographer Merce Cunningham influenced 20th century art with his postmodern dance and his collaborations with other important figures of the American art scene such as John Cage, Robert Rauschenberg, and Andy Warhol. With his own dance company, founded in 1953, Cunningham challenged traditional ideas of dance and the expectations of audiences. Cunningham declared all elements of a performance —music, dancing bodies, set, and costumes—to be of equal importance, and dispensed with conventional plots. His pioneering video work further questioned the use of the stage. Cunningham and his collaborators incorporated chance into the elaborate systems of their performances, creating abstract and haunting dances.

Further Reading:

Harris, Melissa, editor. *Merce Cunningham: Fifty Years.* New York, Aperture, 1997.

Kostelanetz, Richard, editor. *Merce Cunningham: Dancing in Space and Time.* New York, Da Capo Press, 1998.