**Jarvis, Judy (b. 6 June 1942, Ottawa, Ontario; d. 1 November 1986, Toronto, Ontario)**

**Summary**

Judy Jarvis, choreographer, dancer and teacher, was a significant figure within the Canadian modern dance community. Following early dance studies in Toronto, she spent two years at the Mary Wigman School in Berlin, and considered Wigman her mentor. On her return to Canada, she launched a solo career, and soon opened a Toronto studio, starting a school as well as The Judy Jarvis Dance and Theatre Company. Over the period from 1967 to 1983, she worked with numerous dancers, creating and touring across Canada and to the Edinburgh Festival. In 1974, Jarvis was the first modern-dance winner of the prestigious Jean A. Chalmers Award for Choreography.

Her significant works include *Bird* (1967, later renamed *Flight*), *Clouds* (1972) and *People…People* (1974).Jarvis’ work became increasingly theatrical and difficult to categorize, contributing to the company’s 1983 loss of funding. Jarvis disbanded her company in 1983, and spent her final years teaching dramatic arts at Madonna High School. She is remembered through the legacy of her influential teaching, through remounts, including *Bird/Flight,* which was performed by Denise Fujiwara in 1986; remounts by Gina Lori Riley Dance Enterprise in 1989 of *Clouds, People…People, Three Women,* and other works; and repertoire performed by the Danny Grossman Dance Company. The Judy Jarvis Foundation, established in 1988, protects Jarvis’ work.

**Training**

Athletic as a child, Judy Jarvis also studied dance with early Toronto-area proponents of ‘German’ modern dance, including Bianca Rogge. In 1962, after completing a degree in English at University of Toronto, she spent two years at the Mary Wigman School in Berlin. Jarvis was profoundly influenced by Wigman’s teaching, and developed a close relationship with Wigman, the prime mover of German expressionist dance. Later, from 1970-73, Jarvis frequently studied at the Merce Cunningham Studio in New York City.

**Major contributions to the field and to modernism**

In the early 1960s, Jarvis was in the vanguard of a new generation of dancer/choreographers who enriched and developed the field in Toronto. On returning to Canada from Berlin, she was celebrated as a brilliant soloist, noted for her passion and precision. Her early choreographies often had mythic, poetic or literary sources, such as *Prophet,* (1967)*, Ophelia/Water* (1967) and *Bird/Flight* (1967). Jarvis also performed in Berlin, earning accolades as a proponent of Wigman’s dance legacy.

Jarvis started a dance group and opened a studio on St. Joseph Street in downtown Toronto, which became a centre for teaching and creation. She was joined by Frau Til Thiele, a teacher of mime and ‘tanz gymnastic’ who taught at the Wigman School for thirty years, and who emigrated to Canada at Jarvis’ invitation. When fire gutted the St. Joseph Street studio, Jarvis closed her first company and spent a period of time in New York.

Throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, Jarvis taught widely, inspiring a generation of young dancers through her peripatetic teaching. She taught at Queen’s University until 1970, then at the University of Waterloo, from 1970-73, contributing to the foundation of the undergraduate dance programme. She led intensive workshops at numerous other schools. Her teaching was based on breath as the source of movement, and on improvisation as a rich creative resource; for Jarvis, dancing and creation went hand in hand.

From 1967-1983, she worked with many dancers under the umbrella of The Judy Jarvis Dance and Theatre Company, incorporated in 1974. Significant among these were her dance partner Larry McCullogh, and company members Pamela Grundy, Sallie Lyons and Gina Lori Riley. She created *Bella,* an enduringly whimsical duet,with Danny Grossman in 1977.

Jarvis was a prolific, devoted choreographer, and in 1974 was the first modern-dance recipient of the prestigious Jean A. Chalmers Award for Choreography. Gradually, her work shifted from readily identifiable dance to theatrical, dramatic pieces, including *Clouds* (1972), an epic conversation between a pair of ineffable, irascible clouds, and *Just Before and In Between* (1974), a harrowing evocation of illness. She grew less interested in dance for dance’s sake, more fascinated by intense theatricality; she was unafraid of the grotesque and unusual.

Funding from cultural agencies declined, reflecting confusion about the genre of Jarvis’ work. Meanwhile, growth by burgeoning dance companies during Canada’s ‘dance boom’ years of the 1970s challenged Jarvis’ status and increased competition for funding.

Jarvis closed The Judy Jarvis Dance and Theatre Company in 1983, after the company’s funding from Canada Council for the Arts and the Ontario Arts Council was terminated. She earned an education degree and subsequently taught dramatic arts at Toronto’s Madonna High School, until her death in 1986.

**Legacy**

Jarvis is remembered through reconstructions of her work (*Bird*/*Flight*, Denise Fujiwara, 1986) (*Three Women, People…People* Gina Lori Riley Dance Enterprise, 1989). Her legacy is supported by The Judy Jarvis Foundation, established in 1988 to promote and protect her work. Jarvis was influential to all who worked and studied with her, evoking an individualistic aesthetic that owes its roots to tenets of expressionism, and challenges normative views of dance.

**Works**

*The Way of the Cross* (1965)

*Prophet* (1966)

*Ophelia/Water* (1966)

*Figure of Fate* (1967)

*Prayer for Peace* (1967)

*Bird/Flight* (1967)

*Amen* (1967)

*If I Were a Carpenter* (1967)

*Trance* (1967)

*Woman Who Looks Back* (c. 1967)

*Viet Rock* (1967)

*The Cathedral* (1967)

*Cycle* (1968)

*Journey* (1968)

*Silence* (1968)

*Stay Down Where You Belong* (1968)

*Missa Luba* (1968)

*Marriage Song* (1969)

*Allegro* (1969)

*Reflections* (1969)

*Blake Piece* (1969)

*The Hunt* (1969)

*Search* (c.1969)

*Survivor* (c. 1969)

*Love Cycle* (1970)

*Sacrifice* (1970)

*Resurrection* (1970)

*Breath* (1970)

*Tribal* (1970)

*Offering* (1970)

*Ceremony* (1970)

*Genesis* (1970)

*Castle* (1970)

*Changes* (1971)

*Circus* (1971)

*Circle Game* (1971)

*Street* (1972)

*Earth Move* (1972)

*Space Game* (1972)

*And So On* (1972)

*Clouds* (1972)

*Tapestries* (1973)

*Rain Flow* (1973)

*Sun* (1973)

*The Red Hat* (1974)

*Totem* (1974)

*Nora, Blacklack and B*. (1974)

*People…People* (1974)

*Just Before and In Between* (1974)

*Metalways* (1975)

*Anatomies* (1975)

*In the Long Ago Land* (1976)

*In Transit* (1976)

*Apartments* (1976)

*The River* (1977)

*Give Me Time* (1977)

*Bella* (created with Danny Grossman) 1977

*Fiasko* (1977)

*Wall* (1977-80)

*Marat* (1978)

*Exit* (1978)

*Anchorman* (1978)

*Dark Animal* (1978)

*The Hairy Edge* (1978)

*Wings* (c. 1978)

*The Little Potentate* (1978)

*Chester* (1978)

*Dream Snaps* (c. 1978)

*Pierre Gynt* (1978)

*Nuntius* (1979)

*Shell* (1979)

*Cosmos* (1980)

*Catherine the Great* (1982)

*Remembrance Day* (1986)

**References and Further Reading**

Anderson, C. (1993) *Judy Jarvis, Dance Artist: A Portrait*. Toronto: Dance Collection Danse Press/Presses.

**Websites**

<http://www.dcd.ca/exhibitions/jarvis/index.html>

**Moving Image Material**

http://www.dcd.ca/exhibitions/jarvis/media.html

**Paratextual Information**

<http://www.dcd.ca/exhibitions/jarvis/gallery.html>

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