

For Immediate Release: Noted choreographer, Rudy Perez, has died at home after a brief illness. He was 93.

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Rudy Perez (November 24, 1929 – September 29, 2023)  
Rudy Perez, a post-modern dance Everyman

Noted choreographer, Rudy Perez, born Rudolph Anthony Perez, has died at home after a brief illness. Knowing that his end was soon approaching, he gathered all his remaining strength to remember and either speak with or receive emails from family, his former dancers, collaborators, students and the many friends with whom he took care to stay in touch over the years.

Born at the beginning of the Great Depression, when the world was thrown into a time of imposed frugality, the sense of sparseness that was part of his early life became a hallmark of his work. Nothing was extra or wasted. It was uncluttered, sculpted, compressed essences of motion, crafted and compressed to give us equally telling essences of emotion. It was through how he assembled movement, sound, costumes, props and lighting, we sensed what might lie sometimes restlessly or unrecognized below the veneers we construct whether knowingly or not.

His childhood included the loss of his mother to TB and his own two-year hospitalization and immobilization for it. The son of immigrants from Puerto Rico, after his mother's death, his father who had been a Merchant Marine, became the caretaker of a Bronx synagogue to be with his three sons, of whom Rudy was the eldest, and they lived next to the synagogue.

Rudy graduated from Manhattan's High School for the Arts in 1948 and began working at various day jobs including computer programming. Up to that point, dancing was for social events and entertaining friends and family. "I could have gone bowling. I didn't set out to be a dancer. It was just something I did because I had to work. It was either that or bowling, so I thought dance would be more interesting. I needed a balance in my life which dancing unexpectedly provided."

He began his studies at the New Dance Group in 1950, continuing with Martha Graham, Merce Cunningham, Erick Hawkins and Mary Anthony to name a few. "I say that from Merce I got the intelligence, from Martha I got the passion, and from Mary Anthony I learned how to structure a class so that it's an overall experience and deals with what is necessary for technique, improvisation and building work." Anthony emphasized dance as a connection to not only the physical, but the emotional and spiritual aspects of the individual. Another important experience

was the time he spent working under the tutelage of the founder of Dance Therapy, Marian Chace in the psychiatric section of Bellevue Hospital. Chace's work was based on seeing movement as symbolic of the unconscious.

Joining the newly formed Judson Church Workshop in New York in 1962, who became the first group of post-modern dancers, he began showing work in 1963. It was there he was able to take his numerous influences and develop his own singular approach to choreography that he was able to show in solos, small groups and in large group "People Pieces," with 30 or 40 often student or non-dancers that filled gymnasiums or other non-traditional spaces. One such work, "District One." was filmed by WGBH in Boston for Public Television, which became the forerunner of the series *Dance in America*. From 1968-78, he was Resident Artist at Marymount Manhattan College. He also taught regularly at Dance Theater Workshop.

He arrived in Los Angeles in the fall of 1978 to begin a year's residency at UCLA and decided to move to LA where he has remained for the rest of his life. Along with teaching and choreographic residencies and teaching at the Los Angeles High School for the Arts (1992-2002), he received numerous grants and awards which have sustained his work and his company, the Rudy Perez Performance Ensemble. They include National Endowment for the Arts Choreographic Fellowships, the Irvine Fellowship in Dance. He was the recipient of honorary doctorates from Otis Institute of Art and Design and California Institute of the Arts (CalArts).

*Countdown: Reflections on a Life in Dance*, a documentary on Rudy Perez's life and work, by Severo and Rachel Perez (no relation), was premiered at MOCA/Museum of Contemporary Art on November 21, 2004, in Los Angeles and broadcast nationally on PBS. *Countdown* was also screened at the ADF International Festival of Film and Video Dance in 2005 in Durham, North Carolina; in 2006 at the Museum of Latin America Art/Long Beach; and for Dance Camera West at REDCAT in Los Angeles.

For more information on Mr. Perez please go to [www.rudyperezdance.org](http://www.rudyperezdance.org)

A memorial will be planned for a future date.