

## IN MEMORIAM

Alma M. Hawkins

1904-1998

Dr. Alma Hawkins was a modern dance educator and pioneer in developing the field of dance in higher education. Born in 1904 in Rolla, Missouri and raised on a dairy farm by parents who “were open to life,” Dr. Hawkins excelled in basketball in high school, going on to study physical education at the University of Missouri, where she earned her B.S. degree. Her interest in modern dance was sparked while she was a student at Columbia Teachers College in New York City. She studied dance at Bennington College, Vermont, and Steamboat Springs, Colorado, while completing the M.A. and Ed.D. degrees at Columbia University. She taught at Emporia State Teachers College in Kansas and George Williams College in Chicago prior to accepting the chairmanship of the dance program at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) in 1953, chairing continuously until her retirement in 1977.

The UCLA program became the flagship of a nationwide effort to establish dance as a discipline, an academic field of inquiry with unique methodology to deal with nonverbal expression and the creative process. From 1953-1958, the curriculum was expanded and revised to support a graduate program; in 1962 Dr. Hawkins led the nation in establishing an autonomous Dance Department in the College of Fine Arts at UCLA, equal in status to departments of art, music, and theater arts. With a teaching/learning process that wove together theoretical and experiential learning, Dr. Hawkins expanded the dance curriculum to include degrees in dance/movement therapy, theoretical studies in dance history, aesthetics and education, as well as choreography and performance. Recognizing the rich ethnic diversity of UCLA’s students and the expertise of arts faculty in other departments, she encouraged the establishment of an interdepartmental program in Ethnic Arts that later became World Arts and Cultures.

Dr. Hawkins worked closely with presenters to bring leading dance companies from the U.S. and abroad to Royce Hall, educating audiences in the Los Angeles area to innovative and cutting-edge creativity in the field. Many of these artists taught within the department; many found new dancers, lighting and costume designers, and technical personnel for their companies among the students at UCLA. By the end of the 1970s, more than half the chairs of dance departments throughout the country—and some abroad, including Indonesia, Africa, England, and Europe—were graduates of UCLA’s Dance Department under Dr. Hawkins’s chairmanship. Graduates of the program number more than five hundred and are active in performing, teaching, documenting, and researching dance. They also carry dance-based learning into other arts activities and fields as diverse as law, management, and filmmaking. In childhood education (K-12), graduates have developed and implemented model arts education programs regionally and nationally.

The department under Hawkins’s direction reaped numerous awards for leadership from organizations such as the American College Dance Festival and California Dance Educators Association. In the 1970s, Hawkins obtained a Rockefeller grant which enabled the development of the Graduate Dance Center, a nearly professional student company whose members

choreographed and performed while completing requirements for their graduate degrees in dance. This model was emulated by many other dance programs in the U.S. and England.

The Council of Dance Administrators (CODA) was formed by Dr. Hawkins in 1967, the outcome of a national conference on dance funded by the U.S. Office of Education, Arts and Humanities Division. Under her leadership as chair, this nationwide body published Standards for Dance Major Programs (1979) that led to a dance certification program, a way for the field to evaluate its own programs that is still in use today.

Dr. Hawkins's explorations in the study of creativity, her early association with Mary Whitehouse and other dance therapy innovators on the West Coast, and her own work as a dance/movement therapist contributed to unique understandings of what she called "basic movement" and its relationship to the creative process. Parallel to her duties in the Dance Department, Hawkins worked as a dance/movement therapist and researcher at the Neuropsychiatric Institute at UCLA from 1960 to 1977. She utilized movement as a psychotherapeutic modality with patients from all age groups, often involving graduate students in training sessions, and created a series of educational research films for this emerging field, including *Imagery and the Thought Processes*, *Centering and Self Space*, and *Spatial and Energy Components of Movement Therapy*. In her work with the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), she helped found the Council of Graduate Dance/Movement Therapy Educators and served on their approval committee for graduate programs across the country.

After retiring from UCLA, Hawkins taught for more than ten years in the Dance Department at Santa Monica College, continuing to develop a new approach to creativity for the young choreographer. From these explorations came her last book, *Moving from Within: A New Method for Dance Making* (1991), which added to her earlier works: *Creating through Dance* (1964/88), *Dance; a Projection for the Future* (1968), and *Modern Dance in Higher Education* (1953). She also authored numerous articles on dance creativity, choreography, administration, and movement therapy; and gave many lectures and workshops on her theories and methods until the mid-1990s. Honors include UCLA's Distinguished Teaching Award, California Dance Educators' Award (1980), Harvey L. Eby Memorial Award, ADTA's Marian Chace Award, a CODA Award, and the University of Missouri's Outstanding Woman of the Year.

She is survived by her sister, Alice Hawkins. A memorial service was held at the UCLA Faculty Center on February 27, 1998. Donations in memory of Alma Hawkins may be made to the Alma Hawkins scholarship fund, UCLA Foundation, Alma M. Hawkins Fund, P.O. Box 24209, Los Angeles, CA 90099-4214, telephone (310) 312-9466.

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