

ZAS FILM

PRESENTS

SENIORS ROCKING

directed by Ruedi Gerber

World Premiere: MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL 2010
Other Festivals: SOLOTHURNER FILMTAGE 2011
WARSAW INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL 2011

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Synopsis

SENIORS ROCKING, a companion piece to the feature length film **Breath Made Visible**, is a short documentary that unveils the artistic process and captures the communal energy behind the unique performance created by American dance pioneer Anna Halprin with senior citizens from all walks of life from the Redwoods Community of Seniors and the Sunshine Club in Marin County, CA.

Led by Anna Halprin's belief in dance's power to teach, heal and transform, the film portrays and follows these senior citizens expressing their legacy through dance -- from the initial tentative rehearsals to the joyful celebration of the culminating performance.

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Credits

Running Time: 28 minutes

Aspect Ratio: 16:9

Sound: Stereo

Shot on location in California

Featuring

Anna Halprin, Lawrence Halprin, Jim Glycer, Verna L. Bynum, Ann Early, Doris I. Crittenden, Dorothy, Ida VSW Red, Fred Jackson, Patricia Garfield, Brian Hand, Larry Halprin, Alice L. Bachelder, Judi Wilson, Gracie Stover, Evelyn Magee, Dorothea Betts and all the participants and facilitators from The Redwoods Community of Seniors and the Sunshine Club.

Producer & Director

Ruedi Gerber

Director of Photography

Adam Teichman

Edited by

Francoise Dumoulin & Ruedi Gerber

Co-Producer

Mike King

Original Music

Mario Grigorov

Sound Editor

Margaret Crimmins

On-line Editing

Brigae Haelg

Jan Mathys

Technical Consulting

Ueli Nüesch

Language: English

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Director's Statement

In 2005, Anna Halprin called me and said: "Ruedi, I'm offering you exclusive rights to film my new project SENIORS ROCKING – it has a real time-bomb theme."

I agreed immediately. For three years I had been wanting to make a film about Anna and her life. I found her idea for this film thrilling: to break through the stereotypes about getting older, and to empower the elderly. These were her main goals when she began working with the seniors who would eventually be "rocking".

Anna works very systematically in a workshop form. The biggest challenge for me was to faithfully show this in a film while making it interesting for viewers. I decided that the best way would be to take a very close look at all the details, in order to discover every little thing that happened -- because it is the little things and happenings in Anna's work that are important. So, we brought some first-class cameras and a big jib arm with us, and started working. I think that our meticulousness really paid off.

With this group of approximately fifty so-called non-dancers aged 65 to 100, Anna lets dancing take off in SENIORS ROCKING – and takes it away from star-studded stages and towards all of us who think we can no longer dance. Her message is simple: dancing is for everyone, wherever we are, however old we are, and whatever state we are in.

SENIORS ROCKING also portrays one of Anna's most notable traits: the way she tries to fathom her own life through working with her co-performers and workshop participants. At the age of 86, one of her most important concerns is her legacy, "what shall I leave behind me as a dancer and performer?", she asked. "After I have gone, will my art be gone as well? The works of great painters and composers last a lot longer than their lives do -- what kind of a legacy can I leave?"

Anna wanted to find her own legacy, together with her peers. So she asked everyone taking part in SENIORS ROCKING what they thought was the most important thing in life: "What do you want to pass on? It has nothing to do with money or when is the time to go. What I mean is: what message from the heart do you want to leave behind to your friends and family?" By combining all her co-performers' responses, Anna has put together a real work of art, and one that is faithful to her own aesthetic of expressing personally fundamental life issues in artistic form.

This issue of legacy struck a chord in me. I went to Anna and said: "Anna, I have to make a film about your entire life and *your* legacy." And, after balking at this idea for years, she finally came around. This is how the feature film about Anna, BREATH MADE VISIBLE, came to be made.

SENIORS ROCKING also opened my eyes to the highly important issue of how to remain creative as you grow older. Anna Halprin is the best walking (and dancing!) example I know of how to do so. She is also a fantastic role model for realizing your fullest potential—not only how she does so herself, but how she helps others to do so as well. This is exactly what inspires me so much about SENIORS ROCKING.

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Anna Halprin Biography

Anna Halprin's diverse career has spanned the field of dance since the late 1930s, creating revolutionary directions for the art form and inspiring fellow choreographers to take modern dance to new dimensions. James Roose – Evans author of “Experimental Theatre” called Anna one of the most important theatre artists of the 20th century.

Anna Halprin founded the groundbreaking San Francisco Dancer's Workshop in 1955 and the [Tamalpa Institute](#) in 1978 with her daughter Daria Halprin. Her students include Meredith Monk, Trisha Brown, Yvonne Rainer, Simone Forti, Ruth Emmerson, Sally Gross, and others, some of who become involved in the progressive and experimental Judson Church Group. Over the years, her famous outdoor deck has been an explorative haven for numerous dancers and choreographers, including Merce Cunningham, Eiko and Koma, and Min Tanaka; composers such as John Cage, Luciano Berio, Terry Riley, LeMonte Young, and Morton Subotnick; visual artists such as Robert Morris and Robert Whitman; poets such as Richard Brautigan, James Broughton, and Michael McClure; and countless others.

Halprin is an early pioneer in the expressive arts healing movement. She has led countless collaborative dance programs with terminally ill patients, long committed to a belief in the connection between movement and the healing power of dance. Halprin has also investigated numerous social issues through dance and through theatrical innovations. For the past decade, she has led "Circle the Earth", a contemporary community dance ritual to confront real-life issues facing participant communities around the world. Her "Planetary Dance: A Prayer for Peace" between peoples and the earth was staged in Berlin at an event commemorating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Potsdam Treaty to end World War II, and involved over 400 participants. In 1995, she was invited by Mikhail Gorbachev to present an invocation at the State of the World Forum in California.

Anna Halprin has recognized new directions for dance and courageously followed those paths into unknown territories, ever-willing to adapt her work to the present moment, a philosophy that led to a broad redefinition of dance.

She has created 150 full-length dance theater works, which are extensively documented in photographs, books and on film. She is the recipient of numerous honors and awards including a lifetime achievement in choreography from the American Dance Festival. She is the author of three books and has released numerous videotapes about her work. She has received numerous honors from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Guggenheim Foundation, the American Dance Guild, and many others. In 1997, Anna received the Samuel H. Scripps Award for Lifetime Achievement in Modern Dance from the American Dance Festival. The Dance Heritage Coalition has named Anna Halprin one of “America’s Irreplaceable Dance Treasures.”

Halprin continues to make revolutionary work exploring the beauty of the aging body and its relationship to nature. Recent works include the award winning video “Returning Home”,

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in September 2004, she performed the confronting “Intensive Care: Reflections on Death and Dying” at the Festival D’Automne in Paris. In 2005, Anna developed the performance “Seniors Rocking”, filmed by Ruedi Gerber. In 2006 The Museum of Contemporary Art presented a major one-woman exhibition of her life’s achievements. In 2009, the film "Breath Made Visible", a documentary of Anna Halprin's life and work premiered and has since been showing in cities around the world. In 2009 Anna Halprin presented "Spirit of Place", a tribute to Lawrence Halprin for his gift to the city at Stern Grove in San Francisco. In May of 2011 she presented "Song of Songs", the first in a trilogy called "Remembering Lawrence" at her Mountain Home Studio in Kentfield, California.

At the age of over 90, she continues to perform, travel and teach with fervor. Anna gets the most out of her life, living by her adage “Aging is like enlightenment at gunpoint”.

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Crew Biographies

Ruedi Gerber (Director, Producer)

The Swiss filmmaker Ruedi Gerber began his career as a professional theatre actor, performing in over 30 plays throughout Europe. He also toured with his own one-man show “Spiwit of Spwing”.

Upon graduating with honors from NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in 1990, Gerber produced and directed a series of award-winning fictional shorts, including CAFÉ MECANIQUE, a dreamlike tale about an evening encounter between a man and a woman (award in Chicago and best short movie in Solothurn), MIDNIGHT BARBEQUE, a thriller spoof inspired by William Burroughs's infamous 'William Tell' experience (Best Director Award, NYU), and COMMUNICATION AT YOUR WORKPLACE, a commissioned series of short comedy films about miscommunication (award of EDI, Switzerland).

Gerber made some feature length documentaries, including LIVING WITH THE SPILL, a classic anti-corporate film told from the unique point of view of Alaskan residents for Channel 4, and META-MECANO, a film about Jean Tinguely and Niki de Saint Phalle's move into the Tinguely Museum (awarded Best Architecture Documentary, Paris 1997).

His first narrative feature in the U.S. was HEARTBREAK HOSPITAL, starring Patricia Clarkson, John Shea, Demián Bichir, and Diane Venora, a romantic comedy and spoof about the blurry lines between reality and fiction.

In 2005, he started to work on what would become BREATH MADE VISIBLE, a feature length documentary about Anna Halprin's inspiring, trailblazing life and work, and SENIORS ROCKING.

FILMOGRAPHY

2010	SENIORS ROCKING (short documentary; Director, Producer)
2009	BREATH MADE VISIBLE (documentary; Director, Producer)
2002	HEARTBREAK HOSPITAL (feature film; Director, Producer and Writer)
1997	META-MECANO (as Rudolf Gerber – documentary; Director, Producer and Writer)
1992-94	COMMUNICATION AT YOUR WORKPLACE (short film series; Director)
1991	MIDNIGHT BARBEQUE (short film; Director, Producer)
1991	LIVING WITH THE SPILL (short documentary; Director, Producer)
1990	CAFÉ MECANIQUE (short film; Director, Producer)

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Mario Grigorov (Composer)

Mario Grigorov is a Bulgarian born film composer. His background reveals him as a musical prodigy; who at the age of five became the youngest student ever admitted to the Sofia Conservatory. He would go on to study music in four different countries before age of eighteen, becoming an accomplished concert pianist and improviser in the styles of jazz, classical and world music. Mario studied performance and composition in the Vienna Conservatorium and later jazz and electronic music at the New South Wales Conservatorium in Australia. His extensive experience has segued him to be the prolific composer he is today.

Mario's most recognizable film work comes from his long-standing collaboration with director Lee Daniels, scoring three films: SHADOWBOXER, TENNESSEE, and the 2009 Academy Award-winning PRECIOUS. "Mario," Daniels quotes, "adds superb score to my insanity." His documentary work is some of his most celebrated. His credits include the festival favorites THIRD WAVE: A VOLUNTEER STORY presented by Sean Penn, the Anna Halprin biographical doc Breath Made Visible by filmmaker Ruedi Gerber and the war documentary TAXI TO THE DARKSIDE by Alex Gibney, which won the 2008 Academy Award.

Adam Teichman (Director of Photography)

Adam Teichman has been working as a director of photography in film and TV for over 25 years in both dramatic and documentary films. His documentary credits and work as a contributing cinematographer include THUG ANGEL, THE LIFE OF TUPAC SHAKUR, WELCOME TO DEATH ROW RECORDS, STAND AND BE COUNTED, THE LIVING CENTURY, and HEALTHY BABY GIRL. His work can also be regularly seen on many prime time network shows such as "The Oprah Winfrey Show," "The Dr. Phil Show," and "The Doctors" as well as numerous archival documentaries for the Grammy Foundation, NARAS, with much of his work on display in the new Grammy Museum in downtown Los Angeles. He is the owner of the LA based AT Productions.